

The Crescent & The Cradle: (Playtest)

Chapter 1: Introduction and Saga

Mysteries of the East

Ahlan wa sahan! Welcome to *The Crescent and the Cradle*, the guide to the Middle East for **Ars Magica Fifth Edition**. This book explores a part of the Mythic world beyond the control of the Order of Hermes, including the lands known in the modern day as the "cradle of civilization," from which our earliest records of human civilization stem, but also looking beyond the Crusader States, Egypt and Turkey – the lands to the east of the Hermetic tribunal of the Levant, lands known in Europe only through occasional accounts of pilgrims and other travelers, supplemented by a multitude of (at times wild) rumors and speculations.

In this book we present this region as a setting for **Ars Magica** sagas. We describe the geography and history of the area, including in particular many of its mystical sites and supernatural denizens. We also give particular attention to Middle Eastern magic, the *jinn*, mythic Zoroastrianism and the Order of Suleiman.

On the Setting

In the minds of the people of Mythic Europe, the Middle East is a distant and strange place, home to all manner of monsters, spirits, sorcerers, and kings - full of great wonders for those who are brave enough to seek them out. This book reflects this perception by heightening the level of supernatural activity in the region. Most people of the Mythic Middle East have no less respect for the supernatural than do their counterparts in the west, but they are also much more used to encountering such elements. By adopting this vision of the region we will frequently be doing violence to the historical realities of the period, though many of the supernatural elements that we will be mentioning are based on beliefs and ideas expressed in historical sources from the time. However, it is important to remember that this is not a book on Middle Eastern history; it is instead a supplement for the **Ars Magica** role-playing game that merely draws inspiration from the historical texts.

How to Use this Book

This book is intended as a full-blown setting for sagas and adventures, with the expectation being that it will be a source for stories set within the region. The text assumes that there is no existing Hermetic presence in the area but throughout the book you will find story seeds, which are intended to draw Hermetic magi and their followers away from their covenants and lead them to the lands of the east. These are just some of the possibilities that this book offers to players of **Ars Magica** sagas:

Firstly, you may simply use the rules here to develop exotic characters to supplement your covenant's membership, be they spirit-summoning *sahirs*, Zoroastrian *mobeds* or impetuous *Jinn* (see Chapters 8, 9 and 10 respectively).

Secondly, this book provides tools for you to build an exotic story arc or exciting adventures set in the region or the supernatural realms it contacts as a diversion from a conventional Europe based Saga. You may also choose to use the information on Middle Eastern magic and the Order of Suleiman to develop powerful non-Hermetic antagonists or allies for your saga.

Alternatively, you may wish to set your entire saga in the region in the form of a new covenant of Hermetic magi striking out into lands previously unexplored by the Order, encountering the various challenges and magical traditions of the area.

Finally and most adventurously, you can cast Hermetic magi aside entirely, playing a group of Middle Eastern mages and their companions seeking to make a name for themselves immersing your troupe entirely in the region.

We have not given full details of every place, creature, or supernatural item found within this book. We have given suggested statistics for some of these, but in many cases the precise statistics that should be used with any given thing will depend on the power level of your saga. Thus our main emphasis has been on providing the legends and stories that may be used as inspiration.

Strangers in Foreign Lands

Non-Muslim Characters in Muslim Lands

Broadly speaking, characters who are members of other faiths living under Islam follow the usual guidelines for character creation, although very few are members of the nobility, and none may be members of the religious classes. Many Christians living under Islam are involved in the civil administration, while many Jews are merchants.

The Jews are for the most part orthodox Rabbinites, though some Karaites do still live in the region. The Exilarch, the spiritual head of the Jewish community, lives in Baghdad, making it an important city for the Jews, at least in theory.

The situation with regard to the Christians is rather more complex, as there are a large number of different Christian groups living in the region covered by this book. Melkites (Greek Orthodox) are most often found in Byzantine territory and the Levant, but there are some scattered communities further east, left over from the days when the Byzantines controlled territories in the northern Jazira, Armenia and Georgia. Jacobites (Syrian Orthodox): most often found in Syria and the Holy Land, but some Jacobites may be found in Arabia. Ethiopian Christianity has made some inroads into southwestern Arabia. The Church of the East (Nestorians) is most significantly represented in Iraq and Persia, the church of the east was outside the Roman and Byzantine empires.

Tensions between these various branches of Christianity and Judaism, and indeed between different groups of Muslim and Zoroastrian believers as well, could lead to stories as members of different

factions attempt to employ the characters in order to gain an advantage over their rivals. Divides over points of doctrine can easily flare up into violence, especially if supernatural forces become involved.

Almost all non-Muslim characters living under Muslim rule must also take the Minor General Flaw *Dhimmi*, described below, which reflects their status as *dhimmi*s. Exceptions tend to be those outside the social order, and hence beyond or beneath the notice of the Muslim authorities. Hermetic magi are the most obvious examples of such exceptions.

Muslim Views of Europeans

Muslim relations with the Europeans (whom they call *ifranj* [i-FRANJ], Franks) are best described as mixed. Some are openly hostile towards them, particularly during periods of conflict, but others have established more friendly relations. Some rulers find they benefit from diplomatic and mercantile contact with the European states, and one even occasionally finds Muslim and European rulers allying with one another against other Muslim or European rulers. Those Muslims who have had closer contact with Europeans tell tales of strange and unfathomable customs and practices, which make little sense to the Muslim mind.

The Unholy Trinity

Medieval European Christians had many misconceptions about Islam, perhaps the most common of which was that Muslims worshipped an unholy trinity composed of three deities known as Mahound, Termagant and Apollyon. In **Ars Magica** these three figures are demons, of the Order of False Gods (see *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 37), who seek to foment hostility between Christians and Muslims. They may be found operating anywhere within Europe or the Middle East, whispering their vicious lies into the ears of any who might listen. Like most False Gods, the demons usually take forms that will appeal to their listeners. In their original forms, though, they appear as follows:

The demon **Mahound** takes the form of a grotesque parody of a monotheistic prophet, clothing itself in fine robes of green silk and gold, and leering at those around it. It has immense ears, intended to mock the fact that such prophets heard the divine revelation.

Termagant takes the form of a hag with an incredibly wrinkled face and bulging eyes, literally spitting venom at any who opposes it. It has sharp, jagged fingernails with which it claws at its opponents' eyes.

Apollyon appears on first glance to be a twisted parody of the Graeco-Roman Apollo, a hunchbacked, hideously ugly blond man with a lyre, dressed only in an oversized, ill-fitting golden cloak. The cloak drips with acid and the lyre produces jangling discords that set teeth on edge and paralyze the senses.

This unholy trinity might form a suitable arch-enemy in a saga, particularly one that draws characters from western Mythic Europe into the lands of the Mythic Middle East and involves characters with both Christian and Muslim friends and allies. Characters are likely to spend much of their time promoting friendly relations between these groups while seeking to track down and combat those who are nurturing discord.

Social Structure in Muslim States

The nominal head of the Muslim world, at least for Sunnis, is the caliph in Baghdad. Serving him (at least theoretically) are the governors of various territories known as *sultans* (sul-TAWNZ). Both the caliph and these rulers are served by viziers, who run their civil and military administration for them. Beneath the caliph, *sultans* and viziers are three main classes involved in running society: the military elite, the civil

elite and the religious elite (also called the '*ulama*' ['u-la-MEH', the erudite, sing. '*alim* ['EH-lim]), each of which are arranged in approximate hierarchies, though not in such a rigid fashion as in Europe. There are several other groups in Islamic society. The peasants (*fallahun* [fal-leh-HOON]) work the land, much like European peasants. They are free subjects of the ruler, not bound to the land in the way that some European peasants are. Merchants ply their trade in cities.

The Muslim world is home to many who follow a number of other faiths, including Christians and Jews. These people are designated in Islamic law as *ahl al-kitab* (AHL-ul-ki-TEHB, the people of the book) and are permitted to live in Muslim lands as long as they accept the status of *dhimmis* (DHIM-meez). The subject peoples are required to pay a special poll tax (*jiyya* [JIZ-ya]) and to abide by a number of restrictions in society, including refraining from bearing arms, riding animals with saddles, building new places of worship or attempting to convert others to their faith. Their ability to testify in court is restricted, and the value of their testimony is less than that of Muslim men. Sometimes they are also required to wear distinctive dress. How far these restrictions are actually enforced varies.

Islamic Law

Islam is both a religion and a social contract, and so the law humans should use to regulate their lives is contained in its teachings. There are a number of sources the Muslim use for this law, which is called in Arabic *al-shari'a* (ash-sha-REE-'a).

Crime and Punishment

The *shari'a* divides crimes into categories:

- a) Deliberate killing or wounding, giving the victim or their family the right to exact vengeance, under the control of the authorities. In some cases vengeance can be replaced by a ransom.
- b) Accidental killing or wounding, dealt with by financial settlement.
- c) Five major crimes, dealt with using canonical penalties (*hudud* [hu-DOOD]):

<i>Theft</i>	Cutting off the right hand
<i>Brigandage</i>	Death, if a murder involved, otherwise as theft
<i>Adultery</i>	Stoning or flogging
<i>False accusation of adultery</i>	Flogging
<i>Use of alcohol</i>	Flogging

Some other crimes also incur severe penalties. For example, apostasy is punished by death. Less serious offenses are punished with a verbal reprimand. Islamic law often requires a number of witnesses to a crime, making it difficult to impose penalties without adequate proof and moderating the more severe penalties somewhat.

Magic in Islam

Magic is permitted in Islam, as long as it is used for good purposes. Use of magic for evil purposes, on the other hand, is punishable by beheading. Thus, while Dominion auras generated by Muslims affect magic as normal, the attitude of the Muslim inhabitants of these auras towards practitioners of magic are likely to be more nuanced. In particular, an accusation of use of evil magic is likely to be subject to the same legal processes as any other alleged crime.

Stories Beyond the Levant

As the cradle of civilization and the birthplace of many of the elements that would later enter into the “Roman” magic of the Order of Hermes, the Mythic Middle East is of interest not only to Seeker magi (see *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, page 15) but potentially to all Hermetic magi. Suggestions for stories in each geographic area are given in the summaries below.

Arabia

The Arabian Peninsula contains many sites of interest to visitors from both Europe and the Middle East. Not only is the region home to many religious sites, including Mecca and Medina, the two holiest cities of Islam, but it also harbors a number of other supernatural places, including ancient, buried cities and haunted ruins. Faeries re-enact battles in hidden regiones and magical spirits lurk in the deserts, while demons seek out the unwary and clandestine cults worship the Infernal powers and ancient deities. See Chapter 6: Arabia.

Iraq and Mesopotamia

Iraq and the provinces to its north-west represent some of the most politically-active regions of the Middle East, especially as the seat of the caliph is at Baghdad on the Tigris River. Here Muslim nobles, although mostly claiming nominal allegiance to the caliph, seek to carve out independent territories for themselves, while pilgrims travel to the region's many religious sites. At the same time, characters may become involved in the machinations of Faerie Jinn, especially at Baghdad, where an innocent-seeming doorway may lead them into one of the tales from the Arabian Nights. A journey to the north, on the other hand, may lead characters to unexplored lands where a new covenant might be founded, or even to the Fountain of the Water of Life! See Chapter 7: the Political Center / Northwest.

Mosques

Mosques serve several purposes, for in addition to prayer one finds several other activities taking place in them, including public orations, readings of the Qur'an, Sufi rituals and religious festivals.

A mosque generally takes the form of an open central space, usually a courtyard or hall, surrounded on three sides by a pillared arcade and on the fourth side, which is the one closest to Mecca, by an open, pillared hall. In the wall closest to Mecca there is a *mihrab* (MIH-rahb, prayer niche), which indicates the way that worshipers should face when praying, and a *minbar* (MIN-bar, pulpit), from which sermons are preached. A mosque also often has a water source for ablutions, frequently in the form of a fountain or pool in the courtyard.

Mosques have a Dominion aura that varies in power according to their size and importance. Most mosques have a Dominion aura of 4, while major, famous mosques will usually have auras of 5, though this may increase by a point or two if relics are kept in them. The auras of mosques will increase if prayer is performed in them or if those inside are performing the Ramadan fast (see below).

Persia

Persia is ruled by the Khwarazmshah, and a vast area stretching over 1200 miles to the east. These are the lands of the mighty simurgh, where flying carpets can be bought in markets, where the fire-temples of the Zoroastrian priests still burn in secret, and where assassins execute a shadow war against the government. In the center of Persia is the Great Desert, home to jinn and demons. Beyond the Great Desert are the exotic lands of Seistan (where the hero Rostam made his home) and Ghur (ruled by demons for many centuries). See Chapter 8: Persia.

Transoxiana and Beyond

A borderland between civilization and nomad pastoralist, the lands beyond the Oxus of the ancient world form a frontier between the mundane and stories born from the supernatural realms. Here lie the great Mountains of Qaf - ancestral home to the Faerie Jinni tribes, the trapped elementals of the Great Rivers, and the vast Mythic Steppe ruled by the great sky spirits of the horse nomads. The footsteps of Alexander the Great mark its great trade routes and his legacy lingers in the culture of its cities. Brave merchants push eastwards to trade with mythical cities for exotic wares, returning with stories of the fantastic and strange. See Chapter 9: Transoxiana and Beyond.

Soft Places: Tales into the Supernatural

The Thousand and One Nights tells of Baluqiya, son of the once Jewish king of Cairo, who travelled far beyond the mortal world. Led by the mythical *jinniyya* known as the Queen of Serpents, the prince walked across seas, over mountains and through deserts to magical lands and kingdoms ruled by giants and *jinn* alike. Criamon magi believe that this oral legend, like their own *Travels of Fedoso*, is an allegorical description of a journey into the Magic Realm to outside the Circle of Time. Merinitia magi of the Keepers of Tales cult disagree, claiming that the White Lands, Mountains of Qaf and other countries alluded to in the myth lie within the Faerie realm, bordering on or being part of Jinnistan. *Jinn* of all Realms act as guardians, guides and sponsors of such stories and are integral to journeys into these mystical locales.

Whatever the truth behind such tales, the Mythic Middle East abounds with portals both physical and metaphorical into the Supernatural Realms of Faerie and Magic. Golden Baghdad lies as a Faerie reflection of the mundane city, swarming with characters from the tales and folklore of the region. Merchants ply trade routes that cross supernatural borders and return with fabulous treasures from fantastic and mysterious lands.

Rumors abound of portals into Faerie or the Magic Realm contained *within* the books containing the various tales – whether this represents a non-Hermetic ritual effect instilled by the sorcerers amongst the *jinn* or if the books are actually an unusual form of faery acting as Threshold Guardians is unclear.

In the Mythic Middle East, the characters of the Arabian Nights are not just stories - they are woven into the everyday landscape. The player characters in turn are the threads that weave themselves into the fabric of the existing tales adding highlights and accents. This book is the loom on which you, the storyguide, can create a tapestry of adventure to rival the greatest adventures of Haroun al-Raschid, Sinbad and Mar'auf the Cobbler.

See Chapter 3: The Jinn for more details on the *jinn* and their lands.

Opponents: The Mongol Threat

The large scale death and destruction in Transoxiana may cause mystical ripples throughout Mythic Europe that reach various magi of the Order of Hermes. Like the rumored Order of Odin in the north, information on the nomads is

conflicting and incomplete. The Primus of Ex Miscellanea is troubled by strange dreams. Dire prophecies are uttered by the seers, astrologers and other diviners across various Houses. The Tremere learn secondhand through their network of this potential threat to the Order and mobilize their intelligence network and resources. The Tenens of the East is greatly troubled by the chaos emerging from beyond the Levant. Even the normally aloof Merinitia report an increased turbulence in Arcadia and the discovery of new lands and stories emerging within the Faerie realm. A strange apparition appears during the Great Tribunal at Durenmar despite the usual mystical defenses prepared for such a momentous meeting...

Details on the Mongol devastation of the eastern Islamic lands and rules for Mongol shamans are given in the sidebars of Chapter X: Transoxiana and Beyond.

The Pillars of Islam

The Muslim life is encapsulated in five basic duties, known as *arkan al-islam* (ar-KEHN-ul-is-LEHM, the pillars of Islam). These are as follows:

Shahada (sha-HEH-da, testimony): Muslims witness to their faith through two statements, which signify conversion to the faith. These are “*la ilaha illa Allah*” (there is no god except God) and “*Muhammadun rasul Allah*” (Muhammad is the messenger of God). These are repeated regularly as part of the ritual prayers.

Salat (sa-LAWT, prayer): Muslims must perform ritual prayer five times every day, at fixed times.

Zakat (za-KEHT, alms-tax): All Muslims who are able are required to give a portion of their wealth as charity. Exactly where it is actually directed varies, depending on the political and social situations in any given place.

Sawm (SOWM, fasting): All Muslims are required to fast during **Ramadan** (ra-ma-DAWN), the ninth month of the Muslim year and the month when Muhammad first began to receive the revelation. Fasting is undertaken from sunrise to sunset, and includes abstention from food, drink and sexual activity.

Hajj (pilgrimage): All Muslims who are able are required to make the major pilgrimage to Mecca at least once during their lives. Further details on the *hajj* are given in the section on the Hijaz in the Mecca section (See Chapter 6: Arabia).

Each pillar has associated mechanical effects, detailed further in *Realms of Power: the Divine*, pages XX.

Saga Seed: A Covenant in the East?

FOUNDING A NEW COVENANT

Although the default choice for many sagas, founding a Hermetic covenant in the potentially hostile lands of the Mythic Middle East creates an even more challenging starting scenario. Although perhaps better suited for more experienced troupes, this option adds the elements of direct potential magical confrontation, isolation from the wider Order and the tantalizing option of non-Hermetic integration and discovery into a conventional beginning. Combining great freedom with great danger, such Sagas would rely heavily on cooperation amongst individual magi to survive and prosper. A group of Seeker magi from various backgrounds looking to delve into the ancient non-Hermetic mysteries of the cradle of civilization would be an example of this. An isolated area, such as the deeper deserts (see Chapter 6: Arabia and Chapter 7: Iraq and Mesopotamia) or the less settled eastern provinces (see Chapter 9: Transoxiana and Beyond) may be the most suitable location for a Hermetic colony.

FOUNDING A CHAPTER HOUSE

Similar to founding a new covenant above, but relying on the tradition begun in the Greater Alps and prevalent in the Rhine, this option is perhaps more attainable for a starting troupe. Sponsorship by one of the established Greater Alps covenants, one of the *Domus Magnae* or perhaps the highly resourced and expansionistic Fengheld covenant of the Rhine would be a prerequisite. This scenario trades off some of the danger and isolation by sacrificing freedom - having the young magi beholden to the politics and agendas of senior magi and the wider Order in what is an unstable and charged region. The chapter house may act as an offensive bridgehead, an embassy to the Order of Suleiman, a trading post, an original research base, a translation school or a combination of these ideas. For an existing European saga, this option provides an introduction to the Mythic Middle East and the potential for long term play without requiring too much initial commitment or research on the part of the storyguide or players. This scenario is dependent on some form of constant link between the Hermetic colony and the motherhouse such as a Mercere Portal or similar, although such a gateway creates a large security liability should the covenant's defenses be breached.

ITINERANT COVENANTS

This choice reflects a group of mobile magi similar and provides almost unlimited choice of adventures and the opportunity to fully explore the material contained in this book. The lack of a permanent settlement may create issues for Hermetic magi heavily interested in laboratory work and both mundane and supernatural security issues come heavily to the fore. This scenario may work best for a more low-magic style saga where the stories are predominantly Companion based or require magi with more diplomacy than magical firepower. The covenant may be posing as simple merchants, be acting as an advanced reconnaissance party for the Order or have another explicit magical goal that requires travel through the Mythic Middle East. The *Itineris Serica* covenant (see sidebar in Chapter 9: Transoxiana and Beyond) details a suggestion for a Seeker covenant dedicated to discovering the mythical land of Serica, at the end of the fabled Silk Route.

JOINING A HOUSE OF WISDOM

Perhaps the most complex and provocative of Hermetic based scenarios, in this option a small group of magi join an existing *bayt al-hikma* (Arabic: "House of Wisdom") of agreeable sahir. As the Houses of Wisdom are places of teaching as well as gathering places for unGifted sahir, Gifted magi may be welcome as fellow scholars if they agree to respect their culture and laws of their hosts. Such an inter-Order community creates numerous tensions and conflicts, although it is possible that the group may be able to cooperate and prosper despite the considerable external pressures and initial differences. Magical techniques may be compared and traded, although teaching the *Parma Magica* to an outsider would spark a violent Wizard's War against the traitors unless the sahir agreed to join House Ex-Miscellanea first.

Story Seed: War on Two Fronts?

The requirements of a member of the Order of Suleiman are less strict than that of the Order of Hermes, requiring only the demonstration of some form of summoning power. However, although the Code may permit joining the Order of Suleiman, any Hermetic magi undertaking a second oath may be viewed with extreme suspicion. Likewise, although

non-Hermetic sahir may find sponsorship into House Ex-Miscellanea, they will face opposition from hostile Hermetic elements such as House Flambeau and even their lost cousins, the Hermetic sahir of Iberia. Thus despite being able to achieve internal harmony, such a group of mixed magi may find itself ostracized by both Orders, facing powerful enemies on two separate fronts...

Tales of Two Orders

There are several scenarios that could potential embroil Hermetic magi with their Order of Suleiman counterparts in the Mythic Middle East, ranging from overt conflict or guerilla warfare to uneasy standoff through to diplomatic overtures and peaceful cooperation and alliance. See Chapter 4: The Order of Suleiman for further details on sahir and their culture.

Story Seed: The Hermetic Crusades

The conflict between medieval Christendom and Islam is not completely confined to the Levant and Egypt. Hermetic magi have become aware of the Order of Suleiman through the supernatural actions of individual Syrian sahir in battles between the invading Franks and the local forces of Salah al-Din. Seeking to trace back this threat to its source, more aggressive Hermetic magi may seek to penetrate behind the battle lines to combat their perceived enemy on their home turf. Others may seek out the legendary armies of Prester John said to dwell far to the east or search for allies amongst the encroaching Mongol horde. Even now, a major war against the Order of Hermes may be brewing.

Story Seed: The Followers of the Circle Return

Although isolated from their eastern brethren since the early 10th century, the Hermetic sahir of Iberia have not forgotten their origins, even if their knowledge of Solomonic Magic has long since faded beneath the protection of the Code of Hermes. Younger Iberian sahir opposed to the reconquest of their lands by the northern Christian principalities may seek out their lost eastern brethren for support or magical weapons to use in the war to defend Andalusia from the vengeful scions of Alfonso the Battler and Flambeau the Founder. The successful involvement of the Order of Suleiman in the Iberian conflict will have wide reaching consequences for the relationship between the two Orders, potentially precluding any attempts at peace for decades to come.

Story Seed: A Hermetic Embassy?

In 1220, a new danger breaks in the east – the latest in a wave of nomadic hordes from the mysterious steppes. Led by the mysterious figure known as Genghis Khan, the Mongols first begin their assault on eastern Islam but reports of their savagery begin to filter back to western Mythic Europe. Despite their differences, the Order of Hermes and the Solomonic magi may see the threat of the encroaching Mongols as great enough to force an alliance, at least temporarily. Such enforced cooperation and intermingling may have profound effects on the culture, magic and future of the two great supernatural organizations of Mythic Europe. Will such an uneasy truce last long enough to stave off the nomad threat?

Saga Seed: Magi of a Different Order

Although the majority of material in this book is designed for use with Hermetic magi as the protagonists, the various resources can all be used to support a saga where the magi are sahir of the Order of Suleiman detailed in Chapter 6. The default option for this is a group of sahir using a common *bayt al-hikma* as the equivalent of a “covenant” and meeting place, although Gifted sahir may live apart from their fellows in a separate location that forms the equivalent of a chapter house. Baghdad alone has several hundred sahir that congregate and meet in at least half a dozen *buyut*, although only a few hundred live in the actual city limits. The “covenfolk” can include both the mundane and magical servants of the sahir, as well as associated Middle Eastern hedge magicians visiting or studying at the site, adapting the rules in *Covenants*. As a collective of powerful individual wizards with different magic and personalities, the members of a *bayt al-hikma* can engage in all the potential activities, challenges, squabbles and adventures that would be encountered in a conventional Hermetic saga.

As the majority of sahir lack the Gift and are less interested in laboratory activities, such a saga might involve a greater degree of interaction with the mundane world and more high fantasy, adventure based story arcs. Opponents and challenges to such a group of non-Hermetic magi could be based around local threats, including the splinter Nizari assassins, devious jinn, the Mongol hordes or the political machinations of the feuding dynasts of the region. Alternatively, the sahir may venture further afield into western Mythic Europe and participate in stories where they interact with Hermetic magi, European Faeries and the Christian church.

See “The Middle East in Ars Magica” insert below and Chapter 4: The Order of Suleiman for further resources for playing a fully non-Hermetic Saga.

Story Seed: Thus spoke Zarathustra...

The descendants of the Zoroastrian priests that once dominated Persian politics and magic are now a scattered handful of wizards in danger of extinction. Zoroastrian magi form a small mystery cult of holy magi within the Order of Hermes and a handful of sahir still quietly follow the ancient Mazdean faith. Isolated villages of faithful cling to their customs amidst persecution and distrust within the wider medieval Caliphate. A disparate collective of Zoroastrian wizards from different backgrounds and across Mythic Europe may attempt to unite their shattered faith by establishing a community under their combined protective magic. Will they establish a new homeland for their people to shelter from the forces of Ahriman or be tempted to establish a base from which to re-carve the former greatness of their pre-Islamic empire (see Chapter 5: Zoroastrianism for details on non-Hermetic mobed wizards and their faith).

Story Seed: Holy Knives of Alamut

The Nizari sect of assassins has one goal in mind: the institution of an Isma'ili state through the elimination of the Shi'a and Sunni rulers. They show remarkable adaptability in the pursuit of this goal, employing whatever tools come to hand: religious zealots willing to die for their masters, their own peculiar brand of magic, diplomacy at the point of a knife and perhaps even the Order of Hermes. To the Nizari, the Order of Suleiman is part of the problem, and much as they have helped the Crusaders against the occupying forces of Jerusalem, they might be prepared to help Hermetic magi against their sahir enemies. If this means that the Nizaris first have to convince the Order that it has sahir enemies in the first

place, the sect is not beyond manufacturing situations to persuade them of this. If the Order still seems reluctant, the Nizaris might attempt to directly coerce individuals by kidnapping and extortion; of course, this might drive the Order towards allying with the *sahirs* against a Nizari threat. One thing is sure: with the Nizari involved, blood will be spilt (see Chapter 8: Persia for more details on the medieval Nizari assassins).

The Middle East in *Ars Magica*

This is not the first supplement to deal with topics Middle Eastern, and players may find it helpful to consult other **Ars Magica** supplements when running sagas that make use of the material contained herein. This boxed section lists the supplements that contain significant content pertaining to the Middle East.

Realms of Power: The Divine is the most important supplement in this regard, containing information on both the mundane and supernatural characteristics of the three major monotheistic faiths, all of which have their origins in the greater Middle Eastern region, either the Holy Land, within the Tribunal of the Levant, or Arabia, far beyond its borders, and all of which have members who live in the area covered by this supplement. The rules presented on character creation are also of particular use, especially for generating Muslim and Jewish characters from the Middle East.

Realms of Power: The Infernal: this book also provides much information that will be useful for Middle Eastern sagas. In addition, it contains some background information on the *Jinn* (see page 26) and includes rules that may be used to create infernally corrupted *Jinn*. It also gives information on the Mazzikim, a group of demons that include some infernal *Jinn* in their ranks (see page 73), and describes a demoness who masquerades as a *jinniyya* (Aqrab the Conjuror, see pages 58-59). A Zoroastrian demon, Naonhaithya, is also detailed (see pages 73-74). In addition, it details a Middle Eastern Infernal tradition, the Mulhidun (see pages 136-137), who are found principally in the Jazira.

Realms of Power: Magic contains rules that may be used to create Magical *Jinn*, including some commentary on these creatures; see in particular pages 106-107.

Realms of Power: Faerie contains information that may be used to create Faerie *Jinn* and those who deal with them. It also contains examples of Middle Eastern faeries, Lamashu (page 64-65) and the Ghula (page 72); describes how to create characters with Ghula Blood (page 106); and provides various suggestions for incorporating elements from Middle Eastern folk tales into **Ars Magica** sagas.

The Mysteries Revised Edition includes a number of mysteries that draw on the magical traditions of the Middle East. These include Hermetic Alchemy (pages 39-46) and Hermetic Astrology (pages 47-57), and a journey to the east could form an appropriate part of an Initiation Script for both the Order of the Green Cockerel and the Magoi of the Star. By the same token, the Legion of Mithras (pages 118-22), should it ever decide to explore its possible links to ancient Zoroastrianism, could require Initiates to travel to Persia to investigate as an Initiation Quest.

Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults includes brief information on the Keepers of Tales, a Merinitia sub-tradition originating in the Middle East (pages 81-82). It also presents the Criamon Path of Walking Backwards, which was inspired by Sufi mysticism, along with information on its founder, the Primus Abdkypris (see pages 56 and 70-73).

The description of the Hermetic *sahirs* in *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, while concerning itself with an Iberian tradition of Islamic magi, also includes information on the *Jinn*, including a sample character, Wahhab; see pages 133-136.

Ancient Magic describes some of the magical secrets that might be found in the region covered by this book, including the language of Adam, ancient Babylon, the Garden of Eden and Cain (see pages 10-29); a source of Grigori magic on mount Ararat (see pages 70-73) and the Altars of Alexander the Great (page 125). In addition, information on some of the naming conventions used in the Middle East may be found on page 46. On names, see also Appendix A in this book.

Hedge Magic Revised Edition describes two traditions of Islamic elementalists, the *Ikhwan al-Safa'* and the *Tulab ibn Sina*; see pages 28-32. Middle Eastern counterparts to Folk Witches (see pages 33-53), Learned Magicians (see pages 79-99) and Mythic Alchemists (see page 100) are possible with only minor modifications to fit an Islamic setting. Characters descended from nomadic shamans of the northern steppe tribes or deep deserts of Arabia may be represented by the rules for Nightwalkers (see pages 102-118).

Rival Magic gives details about Soqatra, an island in the Gulf of Aden south of Yemen ruled over by non-Hermetic sorcerers and their magical tree spirit companions. This book also details the Amazons and their magical tradition descended from Trianoma's sister Veia – the warrior women are based on an island in the Sea of Khazars (the Caspian Sea) but hunting parties may have ranged into Khwarazm or further. Both groups may be potential allies or enemies in sagas set in the Mythic Middle East.

Muslim Characters

Muslim characters, be they rural or urban in origin, are generated in the same way as other characters but some Virtues and Flaws require renaming or minor alterations. They have access to some additional Virtues and Flaws. Finally, two new Academic Knowledges are also described: Theology: Islam and Islamic Law. Virtues and Flaws

Virtues

Educated (Islamic)

Minor, General

You have been educated in a mosque or Qur'an school. The 50 experience points should be spent on some or all of Arabic, Persian, Greek, Latin, Theology: Islam, Islamic Law and Artes Liberales, due to a different education "system."

Flaws

Dhimmi

Minor, General

You are a non-Muslim living under Muslim rule. If you are adult and male, you must pay the *jizya*, and all *dhimmi*s must abide by certain social restrictions (described above), in return for which they receive tolerance and protection from the Muslim authorities.

New Abilities

Islamic Law*

Academic

This is the Muslim version of Civil & Canon Law. The major sources of Islamic Law are the Qur'an and the Sunna. **Specialties:** any one of the sources of Islamic Law, particular topics, customs of a particular area.

Theology: Islam*

Academic

This is the Islamic equivalent of Christian Theology. The major sources for Islamic theology are the Qur'an and the Sunna. **Specialties:** the Qur'an, debates, history, prophets.

History of the Middle East

And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

Genesis 2: 8.

In Mythic Europe, scholars trace the origins of humanity to the Middle East and to the final acts of creation undertaken by God, when Adam and Eve were created to tend the Garden of Eden at the junction of the Pison, Gihon, Euphrates and Hiddekkel (or Tigris) rivers. They ate of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge and were driven from the garden. Worse was to follow, with the casting down of the Tower of Babel and eventually the Great Flood, which destroyed almost all of humanity.

The Ancient Empires

In the wake of the flood the earth was repopulated, and the Middle East became home to a series of empires that dominated the region. At its centre, the area known as Mesopotamia (the area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers), the ancient peoples developed the earliest form of writing, and there appeared city-states that traded or warred with each other as the inclination suited them. Dynasties of rulers rose and fell, including various Babylonian and Assyrian kings, some of whom ruled empires that stretched as far west as the Holy Land and Syria. Meanwhile, the lands to the east of Mesopotamia were home to a variety of peoples living either as nomads or in urban centers.

The ancient Mesopotamians were pagans, worshipping a variety of deities, most of whom were powerful faerie creatures that demanded worship from mortals. These pagan practices were to be their downfall, however. In 539 BC, the Babylonian king Belshazzar provoked the ire of God by drinking from the sacred vessels of the Temple of Jerusalem, which had been taken by his forefather Nebuchadnezzar when he led the Jews of the Holy Land into captivity. Three days after this act, his empire was overthrown by the armies of Cyrus the Great, who had united the Persians and adopted Zoroastrianism, becoming an instrument of the Lord's wrath in the face of this profanation.

Story Uses: The Sacred Vessels

What became of the sacred vessels from the temple after Belshazzar's feast? Cyrus restored the Jewish community in

the Holy Land, and undoubtedly many of the Temple treasures were also taken back there. However, the profanation of the vessels could have rendered them unusable in the eyes of the Jewish priests, in which case they may have been left behind and still be somewhere in the Middle East. Perhaps the profanation has transformed them into Infernal objects, which even now are being passed from one owner to the next, bringing ruin upon each. Or perhaps the priests were mistaken, and they are in fact holy relics that may bring great benefits to those who are judged worthy enough to find their resting place in the ruins of Babylon.

Cyrus and his successors ruled the Middle East until the late fourth century BC, when they were overthrown by the Greeks under Alexander the Great. After Alexander's death in 323 BC the Middle East came under the control of one of his generals, who founded the Seleucid dynasty, which ruled in the region until its conquest by the Romans from the west and the Persian Parthians from the east in the second century BC. Thereafter the Middle East became divided between the Romans, and their successors the Byzantines, on the one side, against whom stood the Persian dynasties of the Parthians and their successors, the Sasanids. The situation remained thus until the seventh century AD, when a new force entered the scene.

The Rise of Islam

*Read: In the name of thy Lord Who createth,
Createth man from a clot.*

*Read: And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous,
Who teacheth by the pen,
Teacheth man that which he knew not.*

Qur'an 96: 1-5

In 610, an Arab merchant named Muhammad began to receive the divine revelation. However, his message was not well received by the authorities of his home city of Mecca, which was a major trading center that included a major pagan shrine, the Ka'ba (KA'-ba), which brought in pilgrims and trade from all over Arabia. Thus he was forced to emigrate to Medina in 622, from which he fought and defeated the Meccans in a war lasting eight years. In 630 Mecca submitted to Muhammad's authority, and he confirmed the Ka'ba's importance to Islam as a shrine originally constructed by the angels, then rebuilt by Adam and later by Abraham with the help of his son Ishmael, the ancestor of the Arabs. Meanwhile, Islam was spreading across the Arabian Peninsula, and by Muhammad's death in 632 most of the inhabitants of the region were Muslims.

The Caliphates

Muhammad was succeeded as leader of the Muslim community by a sequence of rulers known as *khalifas* (kha-LEE-faz, caliphs, successors to the Prophet), who were both the religious and secular leaders of the Muslim state, though none claimed to be prophets themselves. The first four caliphs were chosen by general consensus of the community, but the last of these, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (r. 656-661), spent his entire reign fighting against enemies within the Muslim community, eventually losing his life to a political opponent with a poisoned blade. He was succeeded as caliph by the leader of his enemies,

Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufyan (r. 661-680), who set up a dynastic caliphate, known as the Umayyad (u-MY-yad) caliphate, with its capital at Damascus.

The Umayyads ruled from Damascus for nearly a century, and during this period the Muslim world expanded through a mixture of force and diplomacy to its greatest extent, stretching from North Africa and Spain in the west to the borderlands of Central Asia and India in the east. The Umayyads also set up many of the administrative, cultural and social structures of the Muslim world. Arabic became the language of the administration, a uniform coinage was established, and scholars began to debate issues of law and theology.

However, the Umayyads were not unopposed. The supporters of 'Ali continued to assert the claims of his descendents to the caliphate, meanwhile gradually dividing into a number of groups collectively known as the Shi'is (SHEE-'eez, Shi'ites), a process that would continue in the centuries that followed (for more on Shi'ism, see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, pages 112-113). A number of these Shi'i groups were sources of rebellions against the Umayyads, and the latter also faced opposition from others who felt that they were impious and illegitimate rulers. The culmination of this opposition came in 750, when the Umayyads were displaced by a family descended from an uncle of the Prophet, known as the 'Abbasids ('ab-BEH-sidz, r. 750-the present).

Story Uses: Disputes over the Caliphate

When the 'Abbasids overthrew the Umayyads, they attempted to wipe out as many members of the family as possible. They missed at least one who went on to found a new ruling dynasty in Spain. It may be that they missed others, and their descendents may approach the characters seeking aid in gaining the caliphal throne. Likewise, the characters could be approached by Shi'i claimants to the caliphate for the same reason. Some of these claimants may have inherited holy relics or other powerful supernatural items from their forbears, which may tempt the characters to help them, or they may have supernatural powers that make their "requests" difficult to refuse.

The 'Abbasids built a new capital in Iraq, called Baghdad, which became a prosperous center of a flourishing Muslim world. This was the golden age of the Islamic world, when great advances began to be made in science, literature, and theology, while the caliphs sent embassies to the corners of the world. It was the time of caliphs such as the legendary Harun al-Rashid (r. 786-809), who periodically ventured out by night into the streets of Baghdad in disguise to mingle with his subjects, rewarding the good and punishing the bad, and is also known for having exchanged embassies with great Charlemagne himself. In the meantime, increasing numbers of the caliphs' subjects were converting to Islam, though it would take about another three or four hundred years before Muslims would form the overall majority in their lands.

The golden age could not last, and from the mid-ninth century 'Abbasid power began to decline. The caliphs faced increasing rebellions by Shi'is and others, financial problems, and increasing difficulty in controlling their subordinates, and over the next hundred years the Muslim world fragmented, with the various provinces becoming largely autonomous states that lived in peace or warred with each other as suited their ambitions. In 945 the caliphs came firmly under the control of their immediate deputies, a situation that remained broadly the same until the mid-twelfth century. The Seljuk Turks, lead by Togril Beg, invaded from the Great Steppe in 1037, and had gained control of the Mythic Middle East by the mid-eleventh century, relegating the caliph to a figurehead while the Seljuk Turks commanded the 'Abbasid armies and provinces. By 1157 the caliph had regained enough power to drive the Seljuk sultan out of Baghdad, and an uneasy truce between the religious and secular rulers was instituted that remains to this day.

The decline in fortunes of the Seljuks was accelerated by the rebellion of the Shansabani in 1149, and the uprising of the Ghuzz in 1151 in Persia's eastern provinces. Ala ad-Din Tekish, the leader of Khwarazm province capitalized on the collapse of the Seljuk Empire after the death of Sultan Ahmed Sanjar, and eventually defeated his successor Togrul III in 1194. His son Ala ad-Din Mohammed defeated the Shansabani in 1206, and is now the ruler of a vast empire that stretches from the River Jaxartes to the Persian Gulf. While he has declared himself *shah* ('king' in Parsi), the caliph in Baghdad has yet to recognize this claim.

The current caliph, al-Nasir (r. 1180-1225) is a vigorous ruler, but his realm is much reduced, encompassing in reality little more than Iraq, though his rule is nominally recognized by most of the Sunni (SUN-nee, followers of the majority form of Islam) Muslim provincial rulers.

The Mongol Invasion

If your saga follows the course of history, by the end of the reign of al-Nasir the eastern Muslim world has already been attacked by the Mongol hordes of Genghis Khan (r. 1206-1227), who have occupied the region east of the Jaxartes River. By Genghis Khan's death they have occupied territory as far west as eastern Persia. Subsequently they take western Persia, Georgia, Armenia, northern Iraq and Asia Minor. In 1258 they take Baghdad, where they roll the caliph up in a carpet and trample him to death (following a Mongol custom that forbids the shedding of royal blood onto the ground). They are only turned back in 1260, when their advance is checked in Syria by a Mamluk army from Egypt.

The *Jinn*

Overview of the *Jinn*

Amongst us (jinn) are some that submit their wills and some that swerve from justice. Now those who submit their wills, they have sought out the path of right conduct: but those who swerve, they are fuel for Hell-fire.

— *The Qur'an, Al-Jinn: 14-15*

According to Islamic teaching, God created three classes of intelligent beings; the angels (*mala'ika*, singular *malak*) made of light, the *jinn* ("the hidden", masculine singular *jinni*, feminine singular *jinniyya*) made of smokeless fire or aether, and lastly humans (*al-Ins*) made of clay. Angels are God's direct servants at his side, while both humans and *jinn* are capable of salvation and were sent to populate the earth. Muhammad was tasked with bringing both *jinn* and humans to salvation and many *jinn* appear to have adopted Islam but there are also *jinn* that have devoted themselves to tempting others and have rejected the message of the faith, risking damnation. It is told that the *jinn* were the original inhabitants of earth but fell away from the worship of God. Iblis, the Islamic counterpart to the Devil, is recorded as being originally one of the most powerful of the ancient *jinn*. He fell to pride and refused to bow down to Adam when commanded by God.

All *jinn* occupy a constant place in the folklore of Islam and share several common characteristics. Some myths tell of impious humans that have transformed into jinn on their deaths, although whether this describes the creation of Infernal ghosts, transformation into Magic spirits or some kind of Faerie apotheosis

is difficult to determine. The true nature of *bazarkh* ("the soul's experiences immediately after death") has not been confirmed by the few Merinitia and Cramon scholars interested in pursuing this state. See the "Terminology of *Jinn*" sidebar for further details.

All *jinn* are said to be composed of "smokeless fire" — the exact nature of this varies depending on the chosen Realm alignment of the particular *jinni*: Faerie *jinn* are composed of Glamour, Infernal *jinn* have bodies of rarefied power and Magic *jinn* are composed of pure magic. This magical body is usually aligned to the Form of Vim, rather than flame associated with the Form of Ignem, although some *jinn*, particularly Magic *jinn*, are strongly aligned to the elemental Forms. Most *jinn* can assume a physical form composed of elemental matter or solid energy using one of their powers. Many have the ability to change their shape into that of humanoid form, particular humans, animals or elemental manifestations.

Jinn divide themselves into several main tribes, that roughly correlate with their Realm alignment. Thus the *Jann* are lesser Faerie *jinn* that follow the ways of Islam and pass for human merchants, nomads or shepherds interacting with humans in stories involving hospitality and morality. The *Shaitan* are a collection of both dark Faerie and Infernal spirits, some of who have become corrupted into true terrestrial demons. The *Ghul* tribe consists of dark Faerie sexual predators and cannibalistic Infernal savages that haunt cemeteries and graveyards looking for carrion or lone travelers. The powerful *Marid* tribe are a loose alliance of ancient Magic elemental spirits of water, wind and weather found predominantly in Arabia.

Terminology of *Jinn*

The exact nature of *jinn* is difficult to define as the term is used collectively to refer to a myriad of spirits variously aligned to the Faerie, Infernal and Magic Realms. There are no Divine *jinn*, only Islamic angels.

Other terms used within the various folk tales refer to rank or power within various tribes of *jinn*. The names *'afrit* and *marid* usually refer to the stronger types of Faerie *jinn*, although their relationship to humanity can be either benevolent or antagonistic depending on their defining role. Confusingly, the terms *Ifrit* and *Marid* also refer to two of more powerful of the reportedly 112 *jinni* tribes. The term *shaitan* typically refers to dark Faerie *jinn* but is also used to refer to Infernal *jinn* in general, the specific tribe of *jinn* known as *Shaitan*, and in many cases to Iblis himself.

Jinn in Ars Magica, defined mechanically

The sahir summoning art of Sihr is defined in its scope by its limitation of summoning only *jinn* (see Chapter 4: The Order of Sulemian). In this book, the term *jinni* refers specifically to the collective group of supernatural spirits or *genii* that inhabit the Islamic lands and are integral to wider Arab culture.

This definition includes *jinn* aligned to the Faerie Realm, those *genii loci* found in Muslim lands aligned to the Magic realm and the Infernal spirits and true demons of Islamic lands and wider Arab folklore, such as Iblis and his descendents, the *ghul*, and local Middle Eastern examples of demons such as *mazzikim* and *shedim*.

Together they form a collective of entities of varied Realm alignment characterized by the following:

- they share a common special Free Virtue: *Jinni*, that denotes their unique status.
- they have True Names that can be learned, even those *jinn* of low Might Score
- they are supernatural spirits native to the lands of the *Dar al-Islam*: the Levant, Iberia, the Maghreb, Egypt, Arabia, Iraq, Mesopotamia, Persia, and Transoxiana
- they have encountered Islam and chosen to accept (Faerie), reject (dark Faerie), ignore (Magic) or oppose (Infernal) the teachings of the Prophet
- they can speak and understand Arabic (classical) either as an Ability, Pretense or via magic.
- they have the Ability (or Pretense if Faerie *jinn*): Theology: Islam (*jinn*) as part of their exposure and incorporation into Arab culture.

they have some supernatural power that allows them to remain hidden when willed – either invisibility, immateriality, illusory form or the ability to shapechange into animal guise although some *jinn* are locked into physical forms

Ultimately, the storyguide is the final arbiter on what is a *jinni* and what is not a *jinni*. Ghosts, demons that are not specifically Infernal *jinn*, and the European spirits of the Faerie and Magic Realm familiar to Hermetic magi are definitely not *jinn*. Creatures of Virtue and other physical creatures with a Might score are also not *jinn*.

Common *Jinn* Traits

Rarely encountered pre-Islamic *jinn* may claim to speak Aramaic or another ancient Semitic language other than Arabic but most *jinn* that interact regularly with humans possess the Faerie Speech Minor Virtue or an equivalent power such as the Minor Heroic Virtue Gift of Tongues instead, giving them the ability to converse in all spoken languages.

These following additional Virtues and Flaws are frequently possessed by *jinn*: Second Sight and Greater Malediction (when it enters a bargain, it is bound to the agreed terms unless its partner reneges first). The supernatural nature of *jinn* is usually apparent to regular humans and some animals, such as cats, dogs and horses, although this is reflected in different Flaws for *jinni* of different Realms as noted below. Many humanoid *jinn* possess the Skinchanger Minor Virtue and the Ways of the Land (Desert or less commonly, Mountains or Plains) and/or the Greater Immunity: Fire Major Virtues.

As spiritual beings, *jinn* must possess the Donning the Corporeal Veil Power (for Magic *jinn*) or a similar power such as Coagulation (for Infernal *jinn*) or an equivalent (for Faerie *jinn*) in order to create a physical body that can interact with material beings. Some minor *jinn* such as the Faerie *jann* and the Infernal *ghul* are spirits locked into a physical form but can shapechange into at least one other form or become insubstantial or invisible for short periods of time.

Jinn are generally considered extremely long-lived (equivalent to the effects of the Faerie Blood Minor Virtue) but are not always immortal, and many lesser *jinn* have the Age Quickly Major Flaw rather than being truly immortal spirits.

Not all *jinn* have Confidence but many Faerie *jinn* possess the Reputation as Confidence Virtue, which grants Confidence able to be used for specific actions related to their roles, similar to the Ferocity Virtue of animals. Some Infernal *jinn* have lost the ability to act contrary to the dictates of their passions, transforming into true terrestrial demons, and thus lack a Confidence score.

Other Middle Eastern Spirits: non-*Jinn*

Although they may sometimes be referred to incorrectly as *jinn* by common Muslim folk, other supernatural creatures from Arab folklore such as *dhilan*, ghosts, *ghaddars*, *hatifs*, *naddahas*, *nisnases*, *shiqq*, *udars* and the Persian *divs*, *yazatas* and *peris* are not *jinn* in the above sense although Faerie *jinn* may mimic or assume roles similar to these creatures in order to entrap humans in their stories. These creatures may have once been humans (in the case of ghosts), have been created by magical mishaps or the workings of ancient wizards, or are aligned to the Divine or Infernal Realms. Despite their name, the Faerie creatures referred to as Soqotran *jinniyah* and associated with the Myrrh trees of that island are not true *jinn* and are similarly unaffected by Sihr.

Arab folklore also blames many supernatural events and occurrences, including ghostly haunting, on the *jinn*. Thus the term *jinni* is also mistakenly used to describe any magical spirit, effect or creature. The lesser Airy Spirits, including the entities understood by Hermetic theory as Spell Spirits, are similarly explained using this lesser term although lacking the cultural identity of true *jinn*. The Named Spirits of Hermetic Theurgy such as the Astra Planeta daimons so well known to Arab wizards, are also not considered *jinn* and are referred to as *al-Nujum*, "the Stars".

To the ignorant mundane, anything supernatural is *jinn*, but to a sahir, a *jinni* is a specific creature subject to the Art of Sihr and its legacy of command passed down from the wisdom of Suleiman. This makes dealing with unknown supernatural entities potentially difficult and dangerous for a sahir, hence most prefer to rely on

knowledge passed down by their forebears and are very cautious when dealing with encountered spirits they have not summoned directly.

Sahirs using Sihr or their Solomonic Magic have no exceptional power over these other spiritual creatures but some may be able to use different magical abilities such as the Goetic Arts of Summoning and Commanding to affect these spirits.

See the Bestiary XREF for details of some of these other spirits.

Jinni Names

jinni names, while similar to those of the humans of the Mythic Middle East, have their own peculiarities. Generally such names fall into several broad categories and follow conventions similar to other Arab names including the use of *nasab*, *kunya* and *nisbas* (see the Appendix for further details). Only the more powerful ranks of *jinn* such as the *'afrit* and *marid* have multiple names, often using an honorific name to describe their greatness (*laqab*) (see the Appendix for further details on names).

The first group of names includes those *jinn* named after common animals they can assume the shape of, particularly in the case of Faerie *jinn*. Such names include: Afaa ("Snake"), Arnab ("Hare"), Baghl ("Mule"), Fa'r ("Mouse"), Feel ("Elephant"), Hemaar ("Donkey"), Hesaan ("Horse"), Jamal ("Camel"), Kalb ("Dog"), Maa'ez ("Goat"), Nasr ("Vulture"), Qett ("Cat") and so forth. Many Magic *jinn* are named after the natural feature they are associated with as their locus: Amirat al-Jabal ("lady emir of the mountain"), Ighraq al-Siq ("torrent of the gorge"). Others have titular names or nicknames (*nisba*): 'Abd al-Qinnina ("slave of the bottle"), al-Damawi ("the bloody"), al-Ghazzalin ("the weaver"), al-Khalil ("the Empty One"), al-Malik ("the king"), al-Qatil ("the slayer"). Finally, many Faerie *jinn* have names that seem almost human but have an unreal or dissonant quality to them, for example: Anees al-Galees, Jerjees, Kabikaj, Kharrat, Khyron, Qumqam, Singam, Sakr, Zamzam, Zarmabaha. Troupes are encouraged to generate these latter names by changing some of the letters of Arabic, Aramaic, Turkish or Persian names at random.

Story Seed: the List of Suleiman

King Suleiman was granted dominion over all *jinn* by God and many sahir believe that the Art of *Sihr* is directly descended from his powers. Legends speak of a codex written by the prophet containing the True Names of all *jinn*, a priceless treasure for any summoner. The list can reputedly update and edit itself magically as new *jinn* are born and die.

Some sahir claim to have found fragments of Suleiman's list amidst the pages of other books dealing with (Realm) Lore – pages on which archaic names sometimes disappear or emerge between readings. Whether these pages are truly fragments of the greater list or Faerie books created from the legend is unclear – not all the names appear to be genuine True Names. Both Hermetic magi and sahir may seek to recover such fragments in the hope of reconstructing either the whole text or discovering the means of capturing the True Names of new *jinn*.

The Bestiary XREF contains several sample Faerie, Magic and Infernal *jinn* for use with sahir characters or as adversaries in a more conventional Hermetic saga.

Jinn and Free Will

Although *jinn* appear to possess free will to Islamic scholars this may not be true. The *Ghul* and *Shaitan* tribes have already made a choice to side with evil and this decision is reflected in their predominantly dark Faerie nature. Those individual Infernal *jinn* that have become true demons have sacrificed their free will on becoming irrevocably aligned with Iblis and the Infernal. Faerie *jinn* may act as if they have freedom but in truth, their choices are restrained by the roles and stories they inhabit.

All *jinn* claim their common origin in Jinnistan. Some sahir and scholars speculate that this means *jinn* began as creatures of the Magic Realm born with free will and changed their Realm alignment to either Faerie or the Infernal only after interacting with humanity and coming into contact with Islam, losing their free will in the process.

The fact of this is unclear – *jinn* may only appear to change Realms. For example: a Magic *jinni* of a local geographic feature may be replaced by a Faerie *jinni* created through stories of its interactions with nearby Muslims. Alternatively an Infernal *jinni*, attracted by the potential for sin created by the presence of pagan Magic spirit, may destroy the original *genii locus* and pose in its place. To common folk and even magi, the *jinni* may appear to have changed Realms as the new spirit assumes the name, appearance, and role of the original entity.

Pious and Impious *Jinn*

Those *jinn* who profess to have submitted or rejected Islam are aligned to the Faerie Realm. Often referred to as pious and impious *jinn*, their religious behavior is a sham required by their roles in they appear to uphold or illustrate Islam's tenets as a example or challenge to humans. This type of *jinni* is the one most likely to be involved with mundanes and are frequently encountered in the Mythic Middle East.

These creatures often live in groups like humans and mimic the behavior and culture of their mundane neighbors, often appearing as merchants, shepherds and nomads, although some city dwelling *jinn* frequently encountered in the farther reaches of the Mythic Middle East. Such *jinn* generally live in close proximity to humans but in places humans find inhospitable: deserts, ruins, wastelands and abandoned houses or in wells, cisterns, latrines and other taboo places. Together they comprise a group of Faeries involved in meddling with humans in a variety of boundary stories, whether physically or philosophically but most commonly represent tales concerned with social distinctions or adulthood.

Most of these Faerie aligned *jinn* share the following Virtues and Flaws in addition to those noted above for all *jinn* unless otherwise noted: Eidolon, Loosely Material; Intangible Flesh and Traditional Ward (Bismallah Invocation) or rarely Sovereign Ward (Bismallah Invocation). These *jinn* commonly have powers associated with illusions, flight, shape changing (into animals, whirlwinds or other humans) and travel rather than the elemental themed powers of their Magic cousins. Many Faerie *jinn* suffer from the Minor Flaws Dutybound (Bedouin hospitality), Vulnerable to Brass, Vulnerable Magic (*mua'addhin's* call) and/or Vulnerable to Folk Tradition. Unlike most other faeries, Faerie *jinn* possess True Names as noted above, even if they have a low Might Score.

The minor Faerie *jinn* known as *jann* are highly dependent on human interaction and differ to their cousins in that they are restricted to a physical form, although every *janni* can shapechange into at least one other form, usually an animal. Such lesser Faerie *jinn* have the following Virtues and Flaws: Humanoid Form, Pass as Human, Dutybound (Bedouin hospitality), Restricted Might Recovery, Traditional Ward: Bismallah Invocation.

Examples of Faerie *jinn* with details of some of the Virtues, Flaws and powers mentioned above include the Bottles of Suleiman, Faerie *ghula*, Hesaan the racehorse and the *janni* Mythic Companion level character, Jumayl, detailed in the Bestiary XREF. These sidebars contain further details of the Virtues, Flaws and powers mentioned above.

Faerie *jinni* counterparts to many European faeries exist within the Mythic Middle East and can be adapted for use in a saga set in the Mythic Middle East, see *Realms of Power: Faeries*, "Faerie Bestiary", pages 70-83 for further details.

Pre-Islamic Jinn

Long ago during *al-Jahiliyya*, the pre-Islamic times of the past, Faerie *jinn* claiming Jewish and Christian beliefs were common. Even in the days before the Great Deluge, the *jinn* are purported to have followed the original monotheistic religion of Adam. Such *jinn* would be also considered Faerie rather than Magic in alignment, but are seemingly rare in the thirteenth century.

Many *jinn* are said to have been imprisoned in ancient times by the Prophet Suleiman. These *jinn* either declare their faith in the older forms of religion when encountered or else claim to have converted to have converted to Islam somehow during their captivity. Such ancient Faerie *jinn* can be difficult to distinguish from the elemental *jinn* noted below even for experienced sahir and play roles in stories about discoveries of the past and the fleeting nature of mortal achievements.

Variants on the Genie of the Lamp Motif

The creature 'Abd al-Quinnina in the Bestiary (XREF) reflects a reasonably powerful version of this motif – an *'afrit* able to drastically change the fortunes of the poor man who releases it. In contrast, the simplest and least powerful of this class may possess only the Eidolon power, have much diminished characteristics and merely dissipate upon release with a great show of imagery and an exclamation in praise of Allah and Suleiman. These lesser *jinn* feed off the vitality shed by the simple wonder of the common fisherman before dissolving their cucurbite or projecting an illusion of it washing back out to sea in the confusion caused.

Although bottles are the commonest form for the cucurbite prop, similar Faerie *jinni* prisons have been described that manifest as brass rings, bowls, or most famously as a battered lamp. The creature portrayed in the Aladdin story would be more powerful than the one described here, perhaps with a Might of 50 or more and extra magical powers. An intermediate example with a Faerie Might of only 20 would simulate the "Slave of the Ring" in the Tale of Aladdin or one of the lesser *jinni* initially called upon by Suleiman to fetch the throne of Balqis, Queen of Sheba.

Three Wishes?

Many captive Faerie *jinn* are compelled by their story to bargain or create a contract with their rescuer. Typically, such *jinn* offer "three wishes" within its power using their Binding Oath Ritual Power. The price of the compact is usually the promise of release from further imprisonment once service has been rendered. Breaking the contract inflicts a Major Flaw. Depending on how carefully the releaser has couched the terms of the contract this Flaw may either allow the *'afrit* to angrily depart, cursing its arrogant rescuer with a poor reputation (Faerie Antipathy, Major) or to remain and torment the foolish knave until driven off (Plagued by Supernatural Entity).

Those experienced in the bargains of *jinn*, possessing a Faerie Lore (*jinn*) score of 6 or greater or one of the applicable summoning Arts or Accelerated Abilities at 11 or more know to include the appropriate caveats to prevent the latter occurrence. These individuals are also aware of the correct formulae to command the released Faerie back into its "prison", successfully ending the story safely. Of course, the knowledge of what to use the third and final wish for does not protect against the temptation of greed...


Pagan Jinn

Jinn that show little interest in the affairs of mankind or the message of the Prophet are typically aligned to the Magic Realm. Referred to as pagan or heathen (*kaffir*, "unbeliever") *jinn*, these elemental spirits are tied to specific landscape features in the wilderness that lies between the major settlements of Arab civilization across Persia, the Holy Land, North Africa and southern Iberia. This natural feature may be an oasis pool, a mountain or a stretch of desert. These spirits are true *genii loci*, only able to leave their feature through transferring their locus to an individual or object through a form of magical bargain and may reflect the most ancient and original manifestation of *jinn* – spirits defined by their geographic identity rather than their reflection and interaction with Islamic culture.

Some of these pagan *jinn* claim to represent pre-Islamic divinities worshipped by the Arabs in ancient times or ancient powers of long lost races and cultures but are not dependent on human vitality like their Faerie counterparts. As Islam spread, other initially non-Arab Magic spirits were forced to adapt, accepting

additional Inferiorities in return for retaining their places of power or else evolving into Faerie or Infernal versions of their former manifestations like the Forest Spirits of ancient Germany (see *Guardians of the Forest*, Chapter Three: The Forest for further ideas).

As primal Magic creatures, many have strong elemental ties and instead being aligned to Vim, can characterize one of the classical elemental Forms of Auram, Aquam, Ignem and Terram and can be affected by the appropriate Elemental Summoning Art, although they have true intelligence and are not considered simple elementals. Other *jinn* even embody the living Herbam aspects of nature. Such Magical *jinn*, being Magical Spirits, need not eat or drink and do not age unless they suffer from the optional Age Quickly Flaw.

These elemental creatures are the type of *jinn* most commonly summoned by both non-Hermetic and Hermetic sahir and are generally the most easy to identify as *jinn* using either Magic Lore or an appropriate Area Lore (see Chapter 4: The Order of Suleiman for further details). Each possesses the appropriate Ways of the (Land) Virtue, the Magical Air Flaw and shares the following Powers: Guide, Manifestation and Presence. Crafter of (Form) and/or Ruler of (Form) and Donning the Corporeal Veil (at least once for humanoid form, although additional animal forms are common) are optional for lesser *jinn*. The most powerful examples of these pagan *jinn* are true Daimons (see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 110). The *jinni* Wahhab is an example of a Pagan *jinn* (see Houses of Hermes: )

Unlike their Faerie and Infernal cousins, Magic *jinn* are not automatically susceptible to the Bismallah Invocation, although many of the less powerful entities may possess a Minor Flaw mechanically equivalent to the Traditional Ward (Bismallah Invocation) of their Faerie cousins. Some of the more powerful entities with greater familiarity with the teachings of Islam, as represented by a Theology: Islam score of 3 or more, may even feign submissiveness to catch an unsuspecting sahir off guard.

An example of a powerful elemental *jinni* is Ighraq al-Siq, detailed in the Bestiary XREF. A further example of a lesser Magic *jinni* is the Zawba'a, detailed in the Bestiary XREF. The great Daimon of the Empty Quarter. Al-Khalil, mentioned in Chapter 6: Arabia, the *jinni* at the base of the Whirlpool of Uballa mentioned in Chapter 7: the Near East or the feared ruler of the Taklimakan in Chapter 9: Transoxiana and Beyond, would both all be appropriate to design as powerful Magic *jinn*.

Learning from *Jinn*

As creatures of embodied magical power, all *jinn*, regardless of Realm alignment, can act as sources of study, akin to the observation of magically occurring phenomena referred to by Hermetic magi as significatos (*Covenants*, page 101). Each individual *jinni* act as the equivalent of a tractatus on a single appropriate Hermetic Form (typically an elemental Form for Magic *jinn*, Imaginem for Faerie *jinn* and Vim for Infernal *jinn*), the Accelerated Ability Sihr and their aligned (Realm) Lore. The *jinni* does not teach the summoner, nor does it need to possess a score in the relevant Art or Ability, as it is the summoner's observation of the Essential Nature of the *jinni* than the *jinni*'s knowledge that is the key. The summoner may only gain the benefit of one Ability or Art per season.

To gain the benefits of study, a sahir or other summoner must coerce a *jinni* or *jinniyya* into service for a whole season. Such coercion may be in the form of a non-magical bargain, Sihr, Hermetic Rego magic with an appropriate duration, the non-Hermetic Goetic Art of Commanding, or the Hedge Art of Elemental Controlling (for Magic *jinn* associated with an elemental Form). Mundane threats able to be enforced by effective Rego or Perdo magic may be used to force an appropriate non-magical bargain, although the *jinni* will try and seek revenge on its enslaver.

A *jinni* can only instruct its master once for each Ability or Art.

Source Quality of a *Jinni*: 3 x magnitude of Might

Corrupt *Jinn*

In Ars Magica terms, corrupt *jinn* include those terrestrial demons strongly aligned to Arab folklore and

medieval Islamic culture found in Islamic lands. Many demonic appearing *jinn* are actually dark Faerie creatures, may choose to accept or reject the Islamic faith as part of their role within stories involving humans. Making the correct distinction between *jinn* of different Realm alignment can be difficult for even experienced sahir but once a *jinni* aligns with the Infernal, it has irrevocably transformed into a true demon.

All Infernal *jinn* share the following Vulnerabilities in addition to the Virtues and Flaws noted above for all *jinn* above: Bismallah Invocation and Iron. Most Infernal *jinn* similarly suffer from the Minor Flaw Vulnerable to Folk Tradition and the Major Flaw: Vulnerable to Iron. Dark Faerie *jinn* have Virtues, Flaws and Powers similar to their pious *jinn* cousins detailed above.

Infernal *jinni* counterparts to the following demons found in Realms of Power: the Infernal can be encountered throughout the Mythic Middle East: *mazzikim*, succubi and lesser evil spirits would be classed as *shaitan*, whereas many *afrit* with close elemental ties are best represented by Aerial Powers or perhaps powerful False Gods with additional powers related to elemental Control. The *Buran* of Yenghissar, Infernal *ghul* and Kharrat the Braggart are example Infernal *jinn* detailed in the Bestiary XREF.

Aside from their appearance and the modifications noted above, these *jinn* can be represented by the same statistics as their European cousins but may have slightly varied powers and vulnerabilities as noted above. Further details on demons are given in *Realms of Power: the Infernal*.

Story Seed: the Corruption of the West

European demons of Christian origin are becoming increasingly common in the Levant since the advent of the Crusades, but have yet to penetrate past the borders of Outremer. Apart from a handful of Jewish demons and Infernal entities from ancient Persian mythology, the vast majority of Infernal creatures in the Mythic Middle East are in fact Infernal *jinn* and thus susceptible to Sihr, as commonly practiced by the Order of Suleiman.

All this will change as merchants, missionaries and Hermetic magi penetrate further east, bringing with them their own legacies of sin and corruption that may change the balance of mystical power in the Mythic Middle East. The Unholy Trinity (see Chapter 1: Saga and Introduction) are a group of demons drawing on western conceptions of Islam that may have a large role to play in increasing the number of non-*jinn* Infernal spirits of the Mythic Middle East.

The Dangers of Distinction: Dark Faerie or Infernal?

The distinction between dark Faerie *jinn* and truly Infernal *jinn* can be difficult, as both types of creatures are commonly referred to as *shaitan* ("demon") by the common folk of medieval Islam and are depicted as such in the various stories. Many Infernal *jinn*, including perhaps Iblis himself, were once dark Faeries and many Infernal *jinn* have dark Faerie counterparts that draw vitality from stories arising out of the activities usually ascribed to demons.

In general, the actions of dark Faerie *jinn* are impersonal and instinctive, such entities act in a way that may encourage humans unintentionally to sin because it suits their role in their chosen story and they feed of the vitality created by such emotions as guilt, greed, cruelty and lust. As such, most dark Faerie *jinn* are Incognizant or only Narrowly Cognizant — they are unable to change their roles, advance or evolve into other forms (see *Realms of Power: Faerie* for additional details). Infernal *jinn*, on the other hand, are those creatures who intentionally inspire humans to sin, manipulating them to make them fall.

The distinction between a Highly Cognizant dark Faerie *jinni* and Infernal *jinni* is a difficult one — many such Faerie creatures quickly lose themselves to the forces of Iblis. The term *shaitan* confusingly refers to both types of creature and the ambiguity and danger this creates for sahir characters is intentional. The Sihr of a sahir will work on both types of creature, although the actual Realm Lore required for the ritual may be mistaken by the character, producing unexpected outcomes when the summoner fails their control attempt because a creature assumed to be a dark Faerie turns out to be Infernal...

Story Seed: The Varied Guises of Iblis

At the Troupe's option, different versions of Iblis may exist simultaneously in a saga. In the guise of lesser faeries claiming his name, the character Iblis appears in a number of minor roles in the folklore of the Islamic lands. In some stories he may be the Islamic Devil or embody a great duke of the Deluders, while in other tales he is a powerful dark Faerie Monarch or a faerie opponent posing as a lesser demon.

One such tale is that of "The Old Woman and the Devil", where a very fallible Iblis is challenged by an old woman to show who is the craftier. The old woman tricks a merchant and his wife, but later undoes the harm she has caused, thus proving that "The devil is no match for an old woman". This lesser Faerie Iblis can only destroy or create strife in the stories, but never undo evil or perform good deeds.

Story Seed: the Dark Sufis

You may wish to introduce into your saga a misguided Sufi tradition, made up of individuals who respect Iblis for his refusal to bow down to Adam, assuming that it was his love for Allah that motivated his decision not to bow to anyone but his God. Such heretical mystics could comprise a Misguided Infernal Tradition of unwitting diabolists similar to the Luciferans. The mystical powers of such Infernal Sufis could be reflected by the Favoured Abilities: Incantation, Effusion, Phantasm and Ceremony. (See *Realms of Power: the Infernal*, pages 127-131).

Qareen

The Messenger of Allah said, 'There is not one of you who does not have a jinni appointed to be his constant companion.' They said, 'And you too, O Messenger of Allah?' He said, 'Me too, but Allah has helped me and he has submitted, so that he only helps me to do good.'

— Ibn Mas'ood

And whosoever turns away blindly from the remembrance of the Most Gracious (Allah) (i.e. this Qur'an and adoration of Allah), We appoint for him a Shaitan ("Satan – devil – unruly – defiant") to be a Qareen (a companion) to him.

— The Qur'an, Sura Az-Zukhruf (43:36)

Qareen is the Arabic name for a spirit believed to be assigned to an individual Muslim as a "constant companion" — a personal tempter, intent on enticing them to sin. According to the hadith, every human has a *jinni* appointed to accompany him through life and test him, tempting him away from the path of God. Considered part of the tribe of Shaitan, such *qareen* are dark Faerie creatures akin to the *shedim* demons of Judaism (*Realms of Power: Infernal*, page 57). Most characters are unaware of their *qareen*, but some with more irksome companions and are reflected by possession of the *jinni* Friend variant of the Faerie Friend Minor Supernatural Flaw. Most of these jinn are playful and mischievous rather than corrupting and provoke stories of temptation, reflection and forbearance. Nearly all *qareen* belong to the Faerie Realm, but some have become corrupted and have become aligned to the Infernal, transforming into true demons. There are no Divine or Magic Realm aligned *qareen*.

Each of these companion spirits has slightly different powers but share the typical Weaknesses of *jinn* (detailed above). Examples of the powers of an Infernal *qareen* are given below — Faerie *qareen* have almost identical base powers, only a differing Realm alignment and motivation for testing their chosen victim. Unlike many other *jinn*, a *qareen* cannot assume physical form as they either lack the Coagulation power of true demons or the Donning the Corporeal Veil power common to many faeries.

Some *qareen* have additional powers — the *qareen* that accompanied the ancient Arabian *kahin* (pre-Islamic "seers") are believed to possess the following powers or their Faerie equivalents: *The Serpent's Oracle*, *Trust of the Innocent* and *Forked Tongue of the Serpent* — powers normally attributed to the Spirits of Deceit (See *Realms of Power: the Infernal*, pages 38).

A *qareen* is left powerless if its victim makes a concerted positive effort to throw off the malevolent jinni's influence. This requires the spending of either a point of Faith (perhaps a point of Faith acquired by repenting of the sins committed while influenced by the *qareen*). Confidence alone is not enough to shake off the

influence of the companion *shaitan*, unlike the Jewish *shedim*. In effect a *qareen* is a special form of Infernal or Faerie genii loci with a locus linked to its assigned human companion allowing it to travel the world.

Story Seed: A Pious Companion?

Rarely, an exceptionally pious character may be able to convince their dark Faerie *qareen* to accept the error of their ways and appear to submit to Islam. As all Faerie aligned *jinn*, even Faerie members of the predominantly corrupt *jinn* tribes such as *Shaitan*, have been granted free choice, this is a potential long-term story option. Such benevolent *qareen* become the equivalent of highly cognizant Faerie guardians. Being pious *jinn* rather than true Divine spirits, their power is aligned to the Faerie and not the Divine Realm although they may be mistaken for guardian angels by the unwise. Infernal *qareen*, as true demons, do not have free choice and cannot be redeemed.

Submitted Qareen

Major Supernatural Virtue

Your Faerie *qareen* or accompanying *jinni* has submitted to Islam. It therefore protects you rather than attempts to lead you away from the right path. Like a variant Ghostly Warder (ArM5, page 94) it can guide and assist you with its powers, but cannot provide general Magic Resistance, as it is not a creature of the Divine or Infernal realms. Such *qareen* can easily be designed using the Ghostly Warder detailed in the ArM5 core book, page 193 or else created as Companion level characters using the rules for creating Faerie Characters (*Realms of Power: Faerie*, p43-63), typically possessing the following Virtues & Flaws: Faerie Speech, Highly Cognizant, Lesser Power x2 (Eidolon, Guide); Intangible Flesh, Negative Reaction.

A Typical Demonic Qareen

Order: Tempters (*Shaitan / Qareen*)

Most people are not aware of their *qareen*; the following creature is appropriate for those who have the Major Story Flaw Plagued by a Supernatural Entity (*Qareen*). These characters have *qareen* that they are consciously aware of, that they can see, and that actively try to cause them to stray from the path of good. Less obtrusive Infernal *qareen* may be reflected by either the Impious Friend or Manufactured Ignorance Flaw and have Might scores in the range of 5 to 10. An affected individual hears whispers from their *qareen*, using its Envisioning Power, and such comments appear to come from the victim's own head (and should be provided as advice from the storyguide with nary a mention of a demon).

Infernal Might: usually 15 (Vim)

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

Weakness: Protected Group (victims who willingly and totally rejects the *qareen*, fueling the rejection with a Faith Point), common *jinni* Weaknesses (see earlier).

Abilities: vary for individual *qareen* and may complement those of its companion. In general, a *qareen* may have up to 300 XP of Abilities that it may use to aid or hinder its chosen human.

Powers:

Apparition, 1 point, Init 0, Imaginem: *qareen* may assume an illusory form that only their companion can perceive. To victims, the form appears to be a real person in all respects.

Control Human, 2 points, Init +2, Mentem. If this power penetrates, the *qareen* exerts direct control over its companion. It can issue commands that the target carries out to the best of his abilities; however the target can attempt to break the control of the *jinni* every time he is asked to do something contrary to the tenets of his faith.

Envisioning, 1 or 5 points, Init +2, Mentem. This Power allows the *qareen* to appear in the dreams of its sleeping companion (in which case it costs 1 point), or make the target experience a waking dream or vision (in which case it costs 5 points). The *qareen* cannot instantly make substantial

changes to a dream, but instead gradually twists it to take on darker and more frightening tone, and can speak through any figure from the victim's subconscious. A waking dream is more obvious; the victim suffers an immediate and powerful hallucination of whatever the demon desires. This may be so frightening that the victim is stunned for a round, and must make a Brave Personality roll against an ease Factor of 9 or have an extreme reaction, such as retching, convulsions, or abject terror. This is the preferred way a *qareen* communicates with its chosen companion.

Protection of the Appointed Companion, 0 points, Init +2, Mentem: The companion of a *qareen* cannot act directly against it without extreme provocation; it would be akin to attacking one's own mother. The victim may be as angry as they like with the jinni, but actually physically opposing it requires a huge effort of will, must be repeated every time the victim wants to renew his attacks.

Appearance: a *qareen* is an incorporeal spirit, appearing to those with Second Sight or means to see the invisible as a pallid reflection of its chosen companion. To its victim, a *qareen* uses its powers to appear either pleasing or terrifying depending on its motivations and schemes. Unlike many demons, it lacks the *Coagulation* power and cannot form a physical body.

Wizards and Qareen

Islamic sahir are keenly aware of *qareen* and many have the ability to perceive the true form of their accompanying tempter, either through Second Sight or their other magic. Most *qareen* accompanying wizards are malevolent, reflected by the appropriate Flaws detailed above. As *jinn*, they can be coerced with magic, bargained with and even imprisoned using the appropriate supernatural powers, but at the sahir's own risk. See Chapter 4: The Order of Suleiman, for further details on sahir and their potential to form magical *khadim* bonds with *qareen* that allow them to boost their Solomonian magic by drawing on the reluctant *jinni's* Might. *Qareen* do not make the greatest candidates for the *khadim* bond but many young sahir see the magical servitude as a means of making the most out of the pestering spirits.

Story Seed: An Unwanted Guest, and an Unexpected Invitation

Although Christian, Jewish or pagan summoners native to Islamic lands may also possess a *qareen*, at the Troupe's discretion, a Hermetic magi may discover upon arriving in the Mythic Middle East that a Faerie *qareen* has attached itself to him, despite his status as an unbeliever. Magi with the Spirit Familiar or the Theurgic Spirit Familiar Mystery Virtues (*The Mysteries: Revised Edition*, pages 66-69 and pages 81-82) can attempt to bind Infernal *qareen* as their spirit familiar but only magi with Faerie Magic can bind submitted *qareen* or dark Faerie *qareen*. Demonstration of power over a *qareen* is sufficient grounds for membership in the Order of Suleiman and the character may find himself the recipient of a cordial invitation to join a group of open-minded sahir...

Jinni Weaknesses

Bismi-llāhi ar-ra māni ar-ra īmi!

(In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful!)

— the opening invocation common to all but one sura of the Qur'an

Faerie aligned *jinn* possess a weakness to the Bismallah Invocation, reflected by their Traditional Ward Minor Flaw (Bismallah Invocation) and all Infernal *jinn* have an equivalent Vulnerability to this folk practice of "naming", the invocation of God's name that opens most chapters of the Qur'an.

Faerie and Infernal *jinn* cannot act against an individual who has uttered this phrase before encountering the spirit, similar to the Protected Group Weakness of demons — none of their Supernatural Powers work on these individuals, and they can only defend themselves in combat if attacked (*Realms of Power: the Infernal*,

page 34). This protection has a conditional duration of Until (leaves immediate locale of the *jinni* or completes a specific action) or until the time of the next daily prayer, whichever is the lesser.

To pronounce the Bismallah correctly requires a poetic grasp of the language of the Qur'an reflected by an Arabic score of 6 or more and a successful Com + Theology: Islam stress die roll against an Ease Factor of 6. The Bismallah can only be invoked prior to recognizing a *jinni* and is ineffective if the character is surprised by a *jinni*.

Devout Muslims are instructed to utter this phrase before entering locales where *jinn* are believed to live such as ruins, lavatories, cemeteries, deserts and caves but only those with the required fluency in Arabic and a decent grasp of Islamic theology can actually benefit from this magical protection.

Other Folk Traditions that Ward against *Jinn*

Arab folklore abounds with additional folk remedies for *jinni* curses and powers. Many lesser *jinn* are affected by the Minor Flaw Vulnerable to Folk Tradition (see below or *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 107) or suffer from the Vulnerable Magic (*mu'addhin's* call) Major Flaw, their magic expiring at sunrise with the crow of a cockerel or with the morning call to prayer from the minaret of the local mosque. Muslim characters may use either the appropriate Realm Lore or their Theology: Islam score to try and dispel the malign effects of such *jinni* enchantments. Magic *jinn* are not so severely affected but a properly worded invocation of the Qur'an can grant some protection against their powers.

The following 4 suras of the Qur'an, known as the "Four Quls" (each begins with "Say:") are effective wards against *jinn* and perhaps other spirits — each provides a +3 bonus if successfully recalled when invoking the Khawass al-Qur'an as a holy forebear for the baraka *Acknowledgement of Evil, Celestial Immunity, Expel Demons* or *Resist Temptation* (See *Realms of Power: the Divine*, pages 103-105 for details of *baraka*). The four specific suras are: *al-Mu'aumidhatayn* (the *al-Falaq* (113th sura) and *an-Nas* (114th / last sura) pairing), *al-Kafraa* (109th sura) and *al-Ik hlaas* (112th sura).

The *Ayat al-Qursi* or "Throne Verse" (255th verse) of *al-Baqarah* (2nd sura) and the last 2 verses of the same sura are similarly potent wards against *jinn*. A Muslim character that has memorized and correctly recites 50 ayat (verses) of the Qur'an receives the same benefit.

Each sura takes a considerable amount of time to recite and requires the individual to have memorized and the recall the specific verses using their Art of Memory or Theology: Islam score (see *The Mysteries: Revised Edition*, pages 25-26). Characters with an Arabic score of 6 or greater gain a +2 to their roll.

Jinn and other Expressions of the Divine

Due to their strong cultural allegiances, all Faerie and Infernal *jinn* are vulnerable to other strong expressions of the Islamic faith. No such *jinn* can use their powers to affect a *hajji* (a Muslim who has completed the pilgrimage to Mecca within the last year, see Chapter 1: Introduction and Saga).

A Muslim character who focuses his prayers through correct recital of a sura of the Qur'an and who successfully invokes God's aid to defeat a *jinni* (See *Realms of Power: the Divine*, page 41) gains twice the usual bonus.

Faerie *jinn* are strangely unaffected by other religious demonstrations – Christian, Jewish or Zoroastrian, whereas Infernal *jinn* as demons may be affected by such holy displays. Infernal *jinn* remain susceptible to the *Scourging the Infernal* power of relics but simple objects of faith have no special power over these creatures (*Realms of Power: the Infernal*, pages 33-34).

Unless otherwise noted, Magic *jinn* are not susceptible to these restrictions but may suffer other flaws reflecting a vulnerability to the power of the Divine. Whether these vulnerabilities stem from the power granted to Suleiman over their ancestors or the apparent conversion of large numbers within the *jinni* tribes in recent times is unclear.

Lands of the *Jinn*

Jinnistan

The *jinn* dwell in places just past the ken of humans – out of the corner of the eye, behind the doors impossibly squeezed between two seemingly normal houses, or just around the last corner of one of the alleys leading off the bazaar. They may visit the mundane realm often but their real homes may lie underground, amid the beauty of the wilderness, within dark ruins or even beyond the mundane realm in regios and the Supernatural Realms. All these locales are collectively referred to as Jinnistan.

From the nature of the tales, although once thought part of the Magic Realm, Jinnistan may now lie mainly in the Realm of Arcadia but seems to have branched into the Realm of Eudokia and perhaps even into parts of Hell. Its geography is as varied as the mundane Realm and its inhabitants pursue lives similar to their non-magical brethren of the Mythic Middle East, often passing freely between their magical homeland and their mundane neighborhood.

Whole cities of *jinn*, such as Amerabad, the City of Amber, are found within its fluid borders and parts of other lost and legendary cities such as Golden Baghdad (see Chapter 7, The Political Centre) and Khashgar, the nexus of the fabled Silk Route (see Chapter 9: Transoxiana and Beyond), form a background for many of the tales involving *jinn*. Some travelers claim that Jinnistan can be reached by traveling beyond the Great Rivers, the eastern mountains or sailing beyond the edge of the ocean.

These claims are all true, but false all the same. Where there are *jinn*, there is Jinnistan.

The Mountains of Qaf

Muslim folklore describes this chain of peaks encircling the known lands, forming a barrier between the lands of the humans and the supernatural homes of the *jinn*. Impassable, foreboding and purportedly emerald green in color, mundane geographers have attempted to place this mythical site variously in the Caucasus, the Pamir, the Paropamisadae and even the distant Urals or the Atlas Mountains of North Africa.

Classical scholars equate this range with the legendary Mount Imeon or the Caucasus Indicus of the Greeks – the great eastern barrier of the world of Alexander the Great (see Chapter 9: Transoxiana and Beyond).

Perhaps the Qaf are not one mountain chain but are the Essential mountain range, the embodiment of the concept of mountains within the Magic Realm, past which lie whole different worlds that may be reached by surpassing their mystical peaks and gazing beyond. Alternatively, they may be the Faerie Realm's distillation of all the tales of impassable mountains told since antiquity.

Al-Khadar

Outside the circle of the known world, past the pale blue waters that line the coast of Persian and beyond the trade waters of the Erythraean Sea lies the great ocean of Al-Khadar ("the Green"), a magical and metaphorical barrier breached only by *jinn*, adventurers, sorcerers and Islamic saints. Few claim to have traveled to its distant shores or floating islands laden human headed trees and intelligent apes. Those who claim to have returned report their ordeals in allegory and lies such as in the travels of Sinbad the Sailor.

Islamic cosmology speaks of whole worlds beyond which contains Mythic Europe and the Mythic Middle East – worlds inhabited by fearsome angels, strange humans, exotic *jinn* and even more alien beings. Hermetic scholars of the Keeper of Tales mystery cult suggest that these lands lie within the Faerie realm of Eudokia.

Criamon magi point to "the Tale of Buluqya" as a possible itinerary for magi wishing to travel into the

mysterious Magic Realm, claiming its metaphorical tone contains a pathway that leads outside the Circle of Time.

Mortal Scions of the *Jinn*

As an alternative to playing a true *jinni*, an exotic Merinitia maga, Arabian Ex-Miscellanea magus or hedge wizard hailing from the Mythic Middle East possessing a *jinni* variant of Faerie Blood or Strong Faerie Blood (see below) may make an interesting challenge to play as a regular in an Arabian saga. Designed with a suite of accompanying themed powers, such a character may also be played as an exotic outsider in a game set in western Europe. Such characters may possess only a *jinni* themed Faerie background or may have a whole collection of Beneficences and other powers ruled by Charms with a *jinni* flavor. All the Virtues and Flaws used in the descriptions of Faerie *jinn* above could be suitable for such a strongly themed character. Such characters would be susceptible to Faerie Calling through Warping, unless specifically created as a Hermetic magus. In this case, they suffer Wizard's Twilight instead. Further ideas and details on such *jinni* themed Faerie touched characters can be adapted from *Realms of Power: Faerie*, Chapter 6: Touches of Faerie.

The paragraphs below describe some optional *jinni* varieties of the Faerie Blood Virtue – adding new varieties to those found on page 42 of ArM5. The specific benefit of possessing Faerie Blood of each type is listed, along with the enhanced version for those characters that have the Faerie Legacy Virtue. Note that this enhanced effect replaces the normal benefit of Faerie Blood; it is not in addition to it. Each listing also has some typical Sympathies, and some suggestions for other Virtues and Flaws possessed by different faerie bloodlines. Finally, since characters with Strong Faerie Blood gain a distinctive appearance from that Virtue some common features are given; these could also be used for characters with regular Faerie Blood who also have the Disfigured Flaw.

Further information on Faerie Blood, Faerie Legacy and Faerie Sympathies can be found in *Realms of Power: Faerie*, Chapter 5: Touches of Faerie.

Jann Blood

The *jann* are lesser Faerie *jinn*, members of a tribe that closely mimics human culture and behavior to the extent of following Islam, herding camels and living the nomadic lifestyle of Bedouin. As such, they are the most likely type of *jinn* to produce offspring with Faerie Blood or adopt foundlings into their tribe. Many Faerie sorcerers of Mythic Arabia are believed to be scions of the *jann* and many beautiful women, including the legendary Balqis, Queen of Sheba, claim *jann* parentage.

Benefits: +1 to Presence, but not to more than +3

Legacy: +1 bonus to Presence, can go as high as +4

Sympathies: Deserts, Hospitality, Temperance (negative)

Other Virtues and Flaws: Supernatural Beauty, Ways of the Desert; Faerie Speech, Persona, Second Sight, Skinchanger (camel, eagle); Envied Beauty; Disfigured (one animal feature), Dutybound (Bedouin honor), Susceptible to the Divine, Vulnerable to Folk Tradition (Naming) or Vulnerable Magic: Mu'addhin's Call

Appearance: swarthy, deeply tanned, piercing blue eyes

'*Afrit* Blood

The '*afrit* are ranked amongst the more powerful of the *jinn* and many have monstrous oversized appearance and a cruel nature. Although not necessarily evil, they are often indifferent to humans or consider them inferior.

Benefits: +1 to Strength or Intelligence, but not to more than +3

Legacy: +1 bonus to Strength or Intelligence, can go as high as +4

Sympathies: Power, Cruelty, Patience (negative)

Other Virtues and Flaws: Greater Benediction: Flight, Greater Immunity: Weapons, Ways of the Desert; Frightful Presence, Huge, Large, Second Sight; Monstrous Appearance; Faerie Heritage, Susceptible to the Divine, Vulnerable to Folk Tradition (naming or Bismallah Invocation)

Appearance: tall or large in girth, often horned, reddish complexion

Ghula Blood

The *ghula* are rapacious wasteland faeries of the Arab world. Sexual encounters between human men and female Faerie *ghula* (see *Realms of Power: Faerie*, pages 74 or the Bestiary XREF) result in either another *ghula* (if the child is a girl) or *ghul*-blooded humans (if a boy is born). The sons of *ghula* can then go on to produce either girls or boys with *ghul* blood. This variety of faerie blood could also represent other violent faerie ancestors. Those with *ghul* blood are nearly always sinister-looking, born with teeth and unusually aware of their surroundings.

The template below reflects a character descended from a Faerie *ghula* rather than the offspring of an Infernal *ghul*. Characters born of Infernal *ghul* may best be presented as Devil Children (see below).

Benefits: Claws that can be retracted and extended at will, these have the following weapon statistics: Init – 1, Atk +2, Dfn +3, Dam +2.

Legacy: As above, except that the claws are extra large, and the Damage bonus is +4 rather than +2.

Sympathies: Wastelands, Stalking, Compassion (negative)

Other Virtues and Flaws: Ways of the Desert; Skinchanger (hyena or vulture); Nocturnal, Poor Presence

Appearance: dark skin, wrinkled, sharp teeth, green on the inside of the mouth, always have green eyes

Mythic Scions of the *Jinn*

Faerie *jinn* and characters descended from them are well suited to use as player characters in sagas involving the Mythic Middle East. Such characters could be created as a companion or magus level character using the balanced rules provided in *Realms of Power: Faerie*, pages 43-63 and incorporating the suggested inherent Pretenses and Required Virtues and Flaws noted in the sections above.

Players wishing to create a character with ties to an elemental *jinni* aligned to the Magic Realm are suggested to design a Mythic Companion using the Blood of Heroes Special Virtue from *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages* (or the Mythic Blood Virtue for Hermetic magi) or the Magic Blooded Virtue from *Realms of Power: Magic* and choose appropriately themed Virtues and Flaws. Some of the Elemental Virtues from *Hedge Magic: Revised* may be particularly appropriate for such characters. A Gifted Companion or Mythic Companion Character using the Spirit Votary Major Virtue from *Realms of Power: Magic* could similarly be used to represent a pagan priest devoted to an elemental *jinni* recognized as a pre-Islamic Arab divinity, perhaps even claiming descent from such ancient gods.

Mortal characters descended from Infernal *jinn* or truly demonic *jinn* are best represented by the rules for Devil Children given in *Realms of Power: the Infernal*, page 99-101 and begin with the Devil Child Special Virtue, Demonic Blood and the following starting Virtues and Flaws: Second Sight, Susceptible to the Divine and Greater Malediction (when he enters a bargain, he is bound to the agreed terms unless its partner reneges first) instead of the usual template listed. Examples of such characters include the whelps of Infernal *ghul*, children conceived by corrupt *shaitan* or the grandchildren of Iblis himself. Repellent is a commonly suffered Flaw and some of the more powerful of these individuals have learnt various Hedge Arts, including the Goetic Arts of Summoning and Commanding to enslave their pious *jinni* cousins.

Player character *jinn* created with a Might Score are susceptible to summoning, dispelling and controlling spells that affect Vim rather than Mentem, regardless of Realm although it should be noted that magi and

mundane companions without Might can be equally affected by Corpus and Mentem magic that penetrates their Magic Resistance, if any.

Virtues and Flaws

This section includes several Virtues and Flaws appropriate for Faerie *jinn* detailed in the Bestiary XREF and characters with strong *jinni* heritage first detailed in *Realms of Power: Faerie*.

New and Modified Virtues

External Vis

Minor or Major Virtue, Supernatural

The faerie's spiritual essence (anchor) resides in one of the props traditional for its role, and this can be carried far from the faerie's body without the faerie suffering ill effects. There is an Arcane Connection between the object containing the faerie's spiritual essence and the faerie's body. If this connection is broken, or the object is destroyed, the faerie's distant body disintegrates, but the essence can construct a new body, given sufficient time. If the vis in the prop is used, the faerie is permanently destroyed.

When selected as a Major Virtue, the prop provides its bearer with any one Minor Virtue, selected at creation. This provides the faerie with a little additional power, but its main advantage is that humans who discover the object are far more likely to treasure it, and keep it safe. This provides the faerie with time to form a new physical body and reclaim his object.

As an example, a faerie warrior with a Might of 20 uses his sword as his spiritual anchor. A character that defeats the warrior finds that the sword contains 4 pawns of vis, but also finds that the sword has no Encumbrance and grants a human wielder a +2 bonus on the Single Weapon Ability. The bonus comes from the Grant Puissance power, described below. If the human keeps the weapon, then eventually the faerie can generate a fresh body, and seek out the wielder and challenge him to a duel.

Faerie Sight

Minor Virtue, Supernatural

This Virtue, which works constantly at no cost to the faerie, is used in conjunction with the Awareness Pretense. It allows faeries to:

- tell mundane things from glamorous ones. (automatic success: no roll required)

- see the borders of glamour, so that they know which faerie props and territories belong to (automatic success: no roll required)

- see Arcane Connections, so that they know which objects belong to a human (automatic success) and which human (if human and object can be observed, automatic success.)

- read each other's glamour. Faerie Lore is a body of knowledge that humans learn through experience, so very few faeries have it. (Ease Factor = Might of other faerie/5). Faeries use the ability to read each other's glamour to guide their interactions, instead of using Faerie Lore.

- see mundane things hidden by glamour (Ease Factor = 3 + (Might of Faerie causing the glamour – Might of the faerie attempting to see through the glamour)/5)

Faerie Speech

Minor Virtue, Supernatural

Many faeries have a Pretense called Faerie Speech, that they use instead of acquiring human languages. Faeries seem to know the same languages as whomever they are talking to. If speaking to a group that has demonstrated mixed

linguistic skills, the faerie may select which language to speak in.

This effect occurs whenever the faerie speaks and costs no Might. It is not magically resisted, because the effect only alters the behavior of the faerie. If the faerie has not heard a person from its audience speak, it may only use whichever language it last used with humans. Once its audience speaks the faerie may then converse in the correct language for its audience.

In the bestiary chapter, Faerie Speech is frequently given to characters designed as NPCs. Characters designed for possible use by players have this Virtue more rarely, to free up a Virtue slot, but it is still appropriate for a wide variety of faeries.

Reputation as Confidence

Minor Virtue, Supernatural

Some faeries are forced, by their glamour, to live up to their Reputations. These faeries don't have true Confidence, but pretend to have it to such a skilled degree that the distinction does not matter. A faerie with this Virtue gains a number of false Confidence points equal to its highest reputation, and may spend them, one at a time, on rolls that support any Reputation. The faerie regains these points when a human would regain Confidence.

Highly Cognizant faeries may be aware of the link between their Reputation and their need to uphold that Reputation with Confidence; other faeries with this Virtue are not.

New and Modified Flaws

Intangible Flesh

Major Flaw, Supernatural

The character is immaterial, and cannot physically influence the world. Characters with this Flaw should consider the Eidolon and Loosely Material powers.

Traditional Ward

Minor Flaw, Supernatural

If a taboo is selected as a Minor Flaw then the faerie may not touch a thing protected by the ward with its glamour. The faerie is likely uncomfortable in the presence of the ward, but is not compelled to flee. The faerie cannot regenerate Might points in the presence of a traditional ward. If forced to touch the ward the glamour holding the faerie's body together begins to break down: their body begins to flake away. Prolonged contact with the ward destroys the body of the faerie by unpicking the glamour holding its body together.

This may appear to humans as if the ward is burning the faerie. The damage to the faerie's body can be simulated with the Heat and Corrosion rules found on page 181 of ArM5. Assume that the object acts as a source of damage with an intensity of +6.

If a faerie receives an Incapacitating wound from an item that is a Traditional Ward, then in addition to the usual effects of Incapacitating wounds (ArM5, page 178–179) the faerie cannot spend any further Might points. It can still activate powers with a zero cost. If the character has constant-effect powers with a non-zero cost they expire at the next sunrise or sunset and cannot be reactivated until the character is no longer Incapacitated. The character may heal at a human rate, or may remove the injury with an appropriate story event.

Monstrous Appearance

Major Flaw, General

Something about the character looks strange and frightening to others, giving the character a –6 penalty in all social situations where its appearance is a factor.

Vulnerable to Folk Tradition (Islamic)

Minor Flaw, Hermetic or Supernatural

The being's magic is susceptible to various folk-remedies for averting hostile spells. Any target that is aware that the creature has just used its magic may attempt a folk ritual such as making a sign against evil, spitting, and so forth. This grants the target or targets a Magic Resistance equal to (5 x the target's appropriate (Realm) Lore or Theology: Islam), or 0 if the target does not have either of these Abilities, against the being's magic only. Furthermore, someone with the appropriate (Realm) Lore or Theology: Islam may be able to devise a manner to break a lasting enchantment, such as plucking nine hairs from the tail of a cat and burning them in an enclosed room with a possessed victim; this typically requires an Intelligence + Ability roll against an Ease factor of (9 + the spell effect's magnitude) or greater.

The Order of Suleiman

Throughout the years since the founding of the Order of Hermes, magi have spoken of the danger that Arabian wizards present, calling them "The Order of Suleiman" and whispering how they seek to bring about their ruin. Some speculate that these stories were started by Flambeau the Founder or his followers, or perhaps by others opposed to the introduction of similar wizards in Iberia and elsewhere in Europe into House Ex Miscellanea. In any case, the idea that an organized group of Middle Eastern sorcerers exists and plots against them is very common among magi.

They are right.

Of course this "Order of Suleiman" is not exactly what magi fear they are, though they do pose a grave threat to those who they consider their enemies. They are composed of *sahirs*, usually unGifted Muslim summoners who wield magic spells and devices similar to their Hermetic counterparts, and who command *jinn* or other spirits in battle. Their animosity toward the Order of Hermes is fairly recent, as for most of their existence they have been a solitary group generally devoted to the growth of Islamic culture. Since the start of the Crusades, however, these powerful sorcerers have become more dangerous, and have turned their eyes upon Europe.

Sahirs are designed primarily as adversaries for magi exploring the Mythic Middle East, though it is also possible to play them as player characters in a saga with a Middle Eastern focus.

History

Thirteenth-century *sahirs* believe their powers originated in the marvels wielded by Suleiman, King of Israel, prophet, and builder of the first temple in Jerusalem. It is said he commanded hosts of *jinn* and other spirits, could speak with animals and the elements, and possessed magical devices that focused his power over the supernatural world. Among *sahirs*, tradition holds that the great king learned many of these secrets from a mysterious sage known as Al-Khidr ("The Green Man"), a legendary figure who according to the *Quran* taught Moses, traveled with Alexander the Great, and attained immortality by drinking from the Water of Life.

During the years after Suleiman many claimed to possess his powers, and some could indeed summon up spirits and speak with beasts as he was said to have done. The Art of Suleiman did not die out; as the years passed groups of sorcerers began to practice dark and corrupted versions of his power — some say this infernal version was initially spread by a pair of angels named Harut and Marut tasked with this as a test of mankind's faith — that allowed sorcerers to summon and enslave spirits to their will. Other traditions developed educated and more refined forms of summoning that allowed them to

command the elements, animals, and nature as Suleiman was said to have done. In Persia especially, this latter version of the Art flourished under the influence of Zoroastrian priests, who perceived its practice as learned and wise.

The birth of Islam changed the Mythic Middle East dramatically. Some *sahirs* believe that the great caliph Ali ibn Abi Talib, friend and son-in-law of Mohammed, also received guidance from Al-Khidr. He was said to be friendly to magicians and knowledgeable of the natural sciences associated with the Art of Suleiman. Some tales describe three wise men who served him, travelers from far-off lands whom he met on pilgrimage, and who joined his court when he became caliph, sworn to support his rule and devout in their adherence to the teachings of the Prophet. Many of the followers of Suleiman tell variations on this tale to justify their belief that there is nothing sinful or worldly about the practice of magic: as Ali trusted his advisors, so too may his holy successors trust the wise magicians that succeeded them.

The Umayyad Summoners

Some years later, during the Umayyad dynasty, another trio of summoners swore lifelong service to the caliph (many hold that the legend of Ali's magical advisors derives from this event instead). They were each given an official title, *wazir* ("vizier"), which at that time meant "bearer of magic in service to the caliph." At first they were trusted no more than any other men under his command, and possibly less so by those who fought beside them. As the caliphate began to expand its influence into Persia, Africa, and Europe, however, the warriors began to encounter other magicians — wizards who could rain fire upon the armies of Islam, or cause the seas to rise up and drown them, or cause the men to forget everything they were doing — and suddenly the *wazirs* became especially valuable, for the spirits they summoned could resist this magic. The foreign wizards served the armies that opposed the caliph, and so it became essential for the caliph's wizards to train others who could assist them in the same way.

Soon the three *wazirs* became thirty *wazirs*, as they sought out and trained promising students in their Art, and those thirty became more than a hundred. Their powers developed further as Islam spread, so that besides the spirits of the fallen they learned to summon and control other spirits such as *jinn* (see Chapter 3: The *Jinn*), and led waves of them into battle. With their help, the Umayyad caliphs were able to overcome the other wizards who opposed them and ensure the safety of their troops. Meanwhile, the Umayyad armies conquered their foes, and the caliphs came to rule an enormous empire, including all of the Middle East and Persia, Northern Africa, Iberia and even parts of France. It is most likely stories of these summoners from before the time of the Founding that magi and other European wizards equate with the members of the "Order of Suleiman."

The downfall of the *wazirs* was their callous dealings with the beings they summoned. Their powers essentially allowed them to enslave the *jinn* who served them, even though many of these beings also followed the teaching of the Prophet, which forbids such treatment. These practices tainted and ultimately undid their holy war, and turned many denizens of the supernatural realms against them. By about 720 AD the *wazirs* became desperately preoccupied defending against attacks from within their homelands, fighting a magical war waged upon them from other worlds. This prevented them from lending their support to the invading armies, and was one of the leading factors that slowed and eventually halted the expansion.

The caliphs were furious at this turn of events, but they did not blame their *wazirs*; instead, they blamed their people. Some of the Umayyads' opponents took these attacks as indications that the nation of Islam was not rightly guided, and that the Umayyads were not true caliphs. A few even began to declare

rival caliphs. To make matters worse, when wrathful spirits abused by the *wazirs* attacked, they focused upon the summoners themselves, not the common people, forcing the caliphate to defend them. For example, in 746, while Abbasid opponents of the Umayyads were mobilizing their forces in Khurasan, more than a hundred *jinn* laid siege to Damascus, demanding that the city turn over two *wazirs* who they knew hid within. After many such retributive acts, the population of summoners in the Mythic Middle East was dramatically reduced, and the term *wazir* ceased to be associated exclusively with wizards. Their ruthless tradition of summoning mostly died out everywhere but on the fringes of the empire.

The Formation of the *Suhhar*

As a result of these and other events, the Umayyad caliphate broke apart, and a new line was established in the Abbasids, with their new political center in Baghdad. One of the greatest Abbasid leaders was Harun al-Rashid, who came to power in 786. His mother was named Al-Khayzuran, originally from Yemen and skilled in the magic of enchanting music and stories. At her urging, the new caliph agreed to assemble a council of wizards to advise him on mystical matters and help him secure his rule. He was convinced that having magical viziers devoted to the empire was a necessary thing, though he preferred to recruit great thinkers over great warriors.

The head of this council was his grand vizier, Yahya ibn Khalid, also known as Yahya the Barmakid, an unGifted scholar who had dabbled in magical potions and elixirs in the court of the previous caliph, and who served as tutor to Harun al-Rashid from a young age. On the new caliph's behalf he wrote to invite the finest minds in Islam to join this "Solomonic" council, explaining Harun's vision of a magical brotherhood that would make his caliphate paramount in learning and culture. This dream was realized by five great men, who with Yahya and Al-Khayzuran formed the original "wise council" of Harun. These famous *sahirs* were:

Jabir ibn Hayyan, an alchemist, summoner, and scholar blessed with The Gentle Gift and a voracious thirst for knowledge. He was a master of the art called *Sihir*, originally learning at the feet of one of the few surviving Umayyad summoners, and after studying everything the others knew, he was responsible for the discovery that allowed the First Council to incorporate their different styles of magic into a single tradition.

Muhammad al-Fazari, philosopher and astrologer, collector and author of many magical tomes. He constructed the first armillary sphere to aid him in his seasonal calculations. His father Ibrahim is said to have transformed himself into a spirit to watch over and assist his son with his magic, and as his guardian spirit he first showed al-Fazari how to initiate himself and the other unGifted *sahirs* into their magical secrets.

Bakhtyshu, a Persian physician and Nestorian Christian. His father, Jurjis ibn Bakhtyshu, had served the previous caliph, but both being non-Muslim the son was invited to join the council only provisionally and at Yahya's insistence. He later proved his worth by exorcising a powerful *shaitan* ("demon") that plagued the caliph. It is said he knew the True Names of hundreds of spirits, and taught many of them to the First Council.

Al-Zill Habib, "the beloved shadow," a popular and inspirational highwayman who led revolts against the Umayyads and earned the unswerving respect of many followers, including a loyal band of *jinn* and several *yatus* (faerie wizards from Persia, see Chapter 8). He was believed to be a relative of Al-Khayzuran, and constantly remained cloaked and covered to hide his face, even when alone.

Al-Hajjaj (or Al-Majnun "the madman," as he was sometimes called), a poet and mathematician who wrote of his strange visions. He claimed to have studied from Al-Khidr, and to have traveled into the Magic Realm to drink from the Water of Life. He appeared perpetually as a young man of about 25, and no one could ever determine exactly when he was born.

Together, these seven wise people developed a common language between their different styles of summoning-based magic, and invented the five Solomonic arts (see Solomonic Magic). They answered directly to the caliph, and as part of their duties each of them spent time instructing the others or assisting with their magic to ensure that they all knew as much as possible about their different powers. Each of them excelled at a particular aspect of the Art of Suleiman, but they combined these specialties so well that their tradition became a unified system, rather than several different abilities.

Al-Khayzuran died suddenly in 789 under very mysterious circumstances. After complaining of a headache, she collapsed in her sitting room and was escorted apparently unconscious back to her chambers. There, under the watchful eyes of her son and many of his advisers, her body and possessions simply vanished. Her passing was mourned by the caliph and the entire council. Soon afterward, Yahya retired from court to devote himself more fully to his studies, and his Gifted son Ja'far became Harun's grand vizier and head of the council. Harun moved his palace further north, putting more distance between his court and the *sahirs*, and from then on Ja'far was the only point of contact between the wizard council and the caliph.

As Harun's reputation increased, the stories tell that he became more introverted and mistrustful of Ja'far and the *sahirs* he represented. He sought out the advice of other so-called wise men, including a young Hermetic magus sent (supposedly) by the court of Charlemagne called Christopher Coronus, a famous Sufi teacher and holy man named Fozail-e Iyaz, and a strange miracle-worker and representative from the far east who they called Dawud al-Kharita. Under their influence, it is said, Harun began to resent the independence and power wielded by the grand vizier and his family. He ceased consulting with Ja'far in private, but often did so with his new counselors.

Vicious rumors began to spread about Ja'far: that he was a wicked sorcerer who consorted with evil spirits, and that he craved the caliph's seat for himself. Ja'far begged Harun's sister, whom he loved, to speak with her brother on his behalf, in the hope that her voice would soften his heart — but when she did, the easterner Dawud accused Ja'far of beguiling the lady with his magic, and as punishment the caliph had Ja'far executed and the rest of his family imprisoned or killed.

Another version of these events is less sympathetic to Ja'far: as one of the first students of the new Art of Suleiman, Ja'far was incredibly skilled and powerful, but too ambitious to be worthy of the title of grand vizier. He was not happy merely advising the caliph, and tried to force Harun to adopt him as his heir. The caliph proved surprisingly resistant to Ja'far's enchantments, and so the crafty *sahir* took control of the caliph's sister instead, plotting to gain his seat by marriage. Yahya suspected his son, but did not realize how far he would go, and it was only because of the fortuitous intervention of Harun's other advisers that Ja'far's designs were foiled.

Because of this sudden turn of events, the five remaining leaders of Solomonic magic became very frightened, and unsure of what to do. It seemed their council ties to court and caliph had been severed, for months passed and there was no word of a new grand vizier appointed, and they worried that their alliance would fall apart, their great achievements lost. They decided to travel in secret to the prison where Yahya (who had been mercifully spared by the caliph) was held captive, and met with him to discuss how they could keep the wise council from collapsing.

Once they realized how dangerously vulnerable to court intrigue and political maneuvering they were as a group of wizards who served the caliph directly, they decided to divorce themselves from service to the worldly authority entirely, and form their own self-governing organization. They called this the

Suhhar Sulayman ("Summoners of Suleiman"), and over the course of several months they developed their plan for how they would function and ultimately prosper. (See Organization, later in this chapter.)

Rather than proceed in secret, the former viziers humbly presented their wishes to Harun. The caliph gave this independent council his blessing, provided that the *sahirs* continued to serve him as loyal subjects. Many of them also retained positions at court; perhaps this is why they continued to call themselves "viziers," and their leader "grand vizier," at their meetings.

Legends of the First Council

Many *sahirs* have attempted to learn what became of the members of the First Council, for completeness or inspiration. Most of what survives them is stories and legends.

Al-Khayzuran died, but her memory haunted the building that had once been Harun's palace. A strong feminine presence is often recognized by *sahirs* sensitive to spirits in her chamber, and many claim to have been visited by her in dreams. Some speculate that the many tales about her brought a powerful faerie to live in her place, a queen who visits sleeping travelers and grants them power in exchange for stories.

Yahya the Barmakid was forever disgraced by his son's actions at court, though he lived long enough to see the foundation of the *Suhhar*. It is said he had a collection of permanent Arcane Connections to the other members of the First Council, though no one knows what became of it when he died. It may have been on his person and buried with him in Baghdad, or he may have hidden it in his house or even his cell. The prison still stands in the city, though it has long since been abandoned and has an evil reputation.

Jabir went to Kufa, where he wrote many books on the Solomonic arts. He was said to have become friends with Christopher Coronus, magus and ambassador from the Order of Hermes and the court of Charlemagne, though few details about him survive; he corresponded extensively with Tremere the Founder, he was especially interested in using magic to produce visual art, and he once threatened to slay Jabir in a duel but later said this had been a misunderstanding. It is probably from their conversations that early magi and *sahirs* heard the first accounts of each others' organization. Legends say that Jabir had a crisis of faith later in life, and that he sacrificed all of his magic just before he died for the right to walk in paradise. This story is controversial, as it suggests that Jabir believed he could not both be a faithful Muslim and practice magic, an idea that has been hotly debated among *sahirs* ever since.

Muhammad al-Fazari stayed on as the court astrologer for the rest of his life, and also wrote several exceptional books concerning his fields of expertise. He is said to have drawn a series of prophetic pictures before he died that predicted many future events, including the separation of the Iberian *sahirs* and Mongols invading Baghdad. He had no children, though he taught many followers, including the great Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi, who is generally regarded as one of the most talented astrologers that the *Suhhar* has ever produced. While many believe that al-Fazari did not die and instead transformed himself into a spirit like his father, no one has yet demonstrated publically that they are able to summon him.

Bakhtyshu was the caliph's personal physician, and also helped his son Jabril ibn Bakhtyshu establish himself with the court, setting him up as Ja'far's assistant. Jabril weathered the fall of the Barmakids from the caliph's grace (some say by betraying his master's plans to his enemies), but the stories also tell that Jabril ensured the other members of the First Council were praised and admired by the caliph, perhaps saving them from intrigues that would otherwise have doomed the *Suhhar*. Jabril had a large family and many children, and his descendants carried the magic of Suleiman to the famous House of Healing in Gundeshapur. Some have even suggested that one of Jabril's sons returned with Dawud al-Kharita to the far east, and there established a line of Christian magician-kings who would eventually produce the legendary figure known as Prester John.

Both Al-Zill and Al-Hajjaj remained in Baghdad for many years of teaching, but sometime in the mid-800s they suddenly left without warning, instructing others not to come after them. This came just after a visit from one of the caliph's advisers, the Sufi mystic Fozail-e Iyaz, and their followers often wondered what

passed between them, if their departure was due to his interference. It was said the two *sahirs* traveled the length of the entire world together, from the Pillars of Hercules to the mountains of the Far East, and there are many stories of those who came upon them and shared a meal with them, always a young man dressed all in white and his companion hooded and wrapped in black. It is even said that the two of them still live, and that they appear no different in the year 1220 than they must have looked four hundred years ago.

A Golden Age

In the years that followed, the *Suhhar Sulayman* flourished, teaching many students the secrets of Solomonic magic and welcoming other summoners into their fold. The house in Baghdad where the former council had studied and taught magic grew into a grand academy of Solomonic learning, called *Bayt al-Hikma* (BATE al-HICK-mah, "The House of Wisdom"), and old and new *sahirs* joined them there and began to share their knowledge. A golden age of magic was born, and *sahirs* trained in the Art of Suleiman began to spread across Muslim lands, bringing their magic to every corner of the empire. The *Suhhar's* separation from the caliph's court ensured that when the caliphate began to fracture, the *Suhhar* itself remained strong. Large communities of *sahirs* were organized around houses for teaching and studying magic in Damascus, Gundeshapur, Cairo, and Cordoba, and every year the viziers from those communities would travel to a grand gathering to represent their people.

So many *sahirs* lived in these great cities that one vizier could not adequately represent them; Cairo, for example, sent twelve viziers to the gathering of 868, one for each house where more than two *sahirs* lived. In an important decision of 889, the grand vizier declared that the viziers elected by each community also represented the *sahirs* who lived alone or in pairs closest to them, and that it was the responsibility of the viziers to seek out their more solitary brethren and speak with them before every gathering as part of their service to the *Suhhar*. Before then, most viziers had simply avoided those members of the *Suhhar* who chose to live far from civilization, many of whom had The Gift and were thus especially unpleasant to visit.

Cities were primarily the centers of magical growth and learning for *sahirs*, as the lands of Africa and central Arabia and the borders of Islam remained very dangerous for summoners. Groups of supernatural beings still angry at the treatment they received from the Umayyads prowled the edges of their settlements and vindictively struck at any victims they could catch. Those *sahirs* willing to live in magical auras outside of the Dominion had to be prepared to summon powerful guardians to protect themselves, or create great magical wards against such spirits that would keep them safe, and so generally did not set up in such places permanently.

Perhaps they were fearful of the long journey across hostile lands, but the Iberian *sahirs* began hosting their own gatherings in Cordoba in 912. The Baghdad *sahirs* tried to reconcile with them for several years, sending emissaries to dissuade them, but by 919 they abandoned these attempts and expelled them from the *Suhhar Sulayman*. Their Iberian council continued to meet on its own until 925 when the majority decided to join the Order of Hermes. There has been little contact between the two groups since then.

Also during the mid-900s, the rise of the Fatimid caliphate drove many *sahirs* out of Northern Africa and east into Egypt, as rumor spread that the caliphs fought with the aid of strange Berber wizards that the *sahirs'* spirits could not defeat. The *sahirs* who had preferred to live on the frontier either fled back to more populated lands or disappeared and were never heard from again. Combined with the defection of the Iberian *sahirs*, this reduced the lands occupied and represented by the *Suhhar Sulayman* to just Egypt, Arabia, and Persia.

The *Suhhar* during this period was powerful, though introspective, and continued to develop so that by

the middle of the eleventh century it had become the advanced magical tradition it is in 1220. For the most part, expansionist ideals had been subdued and deprecated among the members of the *Suhhar*, and most *sahirs* simply wanted to study their magic in peace. This was interrupted when a prominent *sahir* named Hasan-i Sabbah murdered the grand vizier, their leader. This assassin belonged to a ruthless religious sect called the Nizari Isma'ili, and managed to escape punishment for his crime by fleeing to a Persian mountain stronghold. There, Hasan proceeded to teach others of his faith the secrets of Suleiman's Art and essentially created a rival organization of *sahirs* that has continued to harass and trouble the *Suhhar* ever since (see The Nizari Isma'ili State, Chapter 7 for more about their history and practices).

There was some occasional contact with other magical traditions during this time; since the First Council, *sahirs* had been aware of the European organization of wizards who called themselves the Order of Hermes, and after the Cordoba *sahirs* joined this organization there were many who sought to know even more about them, particularly how their magic differed from their own. They also knew about a few Zoroastrian priests still living in Persia, a few of whom had joined the *Suhhar*, though relations between them were always strained. After driving most of the *sahirs* out of Northern Africa, the Berber wizards did not encroach further into the Middle East.

By the end of the eleventh century, the *sahirs* had turned completely upon themselves, their focus entirely inward, and the magical Middle East had become like a city in a bottle.

The Crusading *Suhhar*

The situation changed entirely with the Crusades.

When knights laid siege to Antioch and Jerusalem, the Muslim *sahirs* were surprised, shocked, and enraged. A few acted to help prevent Tyre's fall, but for the most part the *Suhhar* was wildly unprepared for the attack. They then overreacted by electing to take a firmer hand over the supernatural politics of the region. They sent representatives to meet with and spy on the European wizards that had come over, and were surprised to learn that most of them were immune to their Solomonic magic, much in the same way that spirits, caliphs, and holy men had the ability to resist them. Others attacked the invaders, fighting with the Muslims armies against the magi, but those *sahirs* who met magi directly in battle were quickly defeated, and many of them were slain.

The reluctant verdict among the majority of surviving *sahirs* was that the invaders fought with the Divine on their side, that Jerusalem was rightfully theirs, and that there was nothing they could do. However, the leader of one of the five great Solomonic families, the *Asala al-Sakhr*, asserted that the invaders had been aided by Infernal powers. A strong anti-crusader presence developed under his direction, especially among Syrian viziers and those who studied Solomonic Alchemy. The *Suhhar* remained uninvolved, but many *sahirs* began acting against the European invaders, signing onto armies to fight them directly or teaching other soldiers to summon and wield Solomonic magic against their foes, much like the Umayyad *wazirs*.

The *Suhhar* also relaxed most of their laws concerning fair treatment of non-Muslim supernatural beings, and agreed that crusading magi of the Order of Hermes were enemies of the Muslim people, authorizing *sahirs* to retaliate however they felt was just. In the aftermath of the First Crusade, *sahirs* acted mostly in secret, uncertain what would happen if they were to confront the Hermetic wizards directly. They taught magic to important leaders, helping them understand how the Art of Suleiman could assist their cause; they manipulated real-world events by taking advantage of the geography of the Magic Realm, circumventing the enemy to ambush them from behind or ransack their camps; they interpreted

astrological indicators to predict unfavorable circumstances for their enemies, so that they knew precisely when to strike; and generally they confused and harried the opposing armies and leaders wherever possible, their soldiers and weapons augmented with magic. Their involvement ensured the recapture of Edessa, and also the downfall of the Second Crusade against the Muslim states.

There is a tradition among the *Suhhar* whereby an appointed vizier adopts the guise of a nameless old wise man, much like Al-Khidr is described as doing in the Qu'ran, and approaches promising Muslim leaders or scholars with an offer to teach them magic or assist their causes in other ways. This is seen as an honorable way for *sahirs* to involve themselves directly in the politics of the region without committing the *Suhhar* to their cause, and is often called "sending a guide." When two men rose to prominence in the late 1100s, Nur ad-Din and Saladin, both were sent a guide with an offer of magical aid. Nur ad-Din had no wish to join the *Suhhar*, revealing to the ambassador that he had already been taught magic by Al-Khidr himself. (There was a brief exchange of wisdom between the two men, documented in a famous text now kept safely in Baghdad.) Saladin refused the guide, no explanation given, and the *sahirs* of the region were forced to try to aid him without his consent.

In 1220, the *Suhhar Sulayman* is still at war with the crusaders occupying the Holy Land, including members of the Order of Hermes. They still observe the yearly gathering at Baghdad, but the conflict is rarely discussed. Plans are in motion for a retaliatory attack against the Levant, what might be considered a Solomonic counter-crusade, and *sahirs* have been gathering intelligence about the Order of Hermes so they may strike at them where they are weakest and — they hope — drive the invading magi from their lands entirely.

To this end, the *sahirs* have made clear that all Hermetic magi are welcome in their lands, where they can be watched more easily without their knowledge, and where they can be found more quickly when the time comes to attack. They now study their enemy in earnest, for they are still at war and do not intend to lose.

Culture

Most of what defines a *sahir* of the *Suhhar Sulayman* was decided by the members of the First Council, codified at the meeting in 805 when they first became an independent organization, and this has been reinforced at the gathering every year since (see Organization, below, for details of how these gatherings function). As they envisioned it, to join a person must simply appear before the assembly accompanied by a sponsor, and demonstrate to the assembled *sahirs* that he can summon a spirit. No other criteria or restrictions were considered necessary, since all of their magic depended on this power more than anything else.

In deference to Al-Khayzuran and Bakhtyshu, no restrictions against women or non-Muslims were written into the founding documents. They required that after the pious practice of *zakat*, every *sahir* must share one quarter of his wealth with the *Suhhar*, who apply these resources to spreading knowledge in their communities. Also, because of the many *jinn* uprisings from the century before, they established rules governing how *sahirs* could summon and interact with them. No *jinni* would be bound in thrall to a *sahir*, they wrote, or held captive by a *sahir* who himself remained free: those who did this would no longer belong to the *Suhhar*. These were the only laws they envisioned the *sahirs* needing to enforce; all other matters would be decided by Islamic law, to which they were all clearly subject.

In 1220 there are approximately 5,000 members of the *Suhhar* living in the lands of the Mythic Middle East. They are most numerous in Iraq and Jazira, and least in Transoxania, and while a small community

might support only five or six *sahirs* at most, large cities like Al-Mada'in or Basra can easily support fifty, often divided up among different districts. Beyond the boundaries of this book's focus, in Syria or Egypt for example, might be found another two or three thousand *sahirs* who also belong to the *Suhhar* and who send representation each year. Of this total, about two-thirds are men, three-quarters are Muslims, and only about 500 have The Gift. In total, *sahirs* outnumber Hermetic magi by about five to one.

The Families of Suleiman's Seal

The five great families of Solomonic *sahirs* descend from the five members of the First Council who formed the *Suhhar Sulayman*, some by blood but most by association. Each has become specialized in one type of magic, and tends to come from a particular region.

Ashab al-Sakhr (ass-HAWB us-SAKHR, "Followers of the Stone"): These specialists in Solomonic Alchemy descend from Jabir ibn Hayyan, the only Gifted member of the First Council. They are affiliated with the city of Damascus and its rich history with the *Suhhar Sulayman*, and the capital city of the Umayyad *wazirs*. Alchemist *sahirs* tend to be the most anti-European and most in favor of the counter-crusade against the Order of Hermes. It is also common for Followers of the Stone to be especially pious, and non-Muslims are almost unheard of among them. It is perhaps the most "noble" *sahir* family; its members value personal honor very highly and especially favor arms and armor. Many of them choose to fight with steel instead of magic — or with steel augmented with magic.

Ashab al-Najm (ass-HAWB un-NAJM, "Followers of the Star"): In the early days of the *Suhhar*, Solomonic Astrology was especially favored by a small group of Zoroastrians who converted to Islam and came to Baghdad to study magic from Al-Khwarizmi. They later established a small academy in Nasibin in the north, and other houses entirely devoted to their art in many Persian cities as well. The Followers of the Star are perhaps the most widespread family of *sahirs*, and also the most arcane; they tend to dress and look like wizards, or at the very least wise scholars. A common belief in the family is that it is important for them to encourage the majestic reputation of magicians, even while using magic to serve others, lest the people cease to value it.

Ashab al-Yad (ass-HAWB ul-YAD, "Followers of the Hand"): The initial *sahirs* who specialized in Solomonic Physic were all members of the Bakhtyshu family, and took their magic with them to Gundeshapur, in Persia. There they established a famous academy there known as the House of Healing. Most of the first physician *sahirs* were Nestorian Christians, though Muslims, Jews, and pagans have also joined their family, and their reputation has always been somewhat poor because of their ready acceptance of outsiders. This means they are seen to have something of a sinister aspect within the *Suhhar* — they are perceived as *sahirs* who heal but who also harm — and so no one is ever quite sure exactly how a Follower of the Hand will respond to a given situation.

Ashab al-Qalb (ass-HAWB ul-QALB, "Followers of the Heart"): Though the family was technically established by Al-Zill Habib, his followers generally regard Al-Khayzuran as the family's matriarch and role model, especially since so little is known about the "beloved shadow" who taught them. Since Al-Zill disappeared, the civic focus of Solomonic Storytelling has remained in Baghdad, still known as the city of a thousand tales, and the grand vizier elected to lead the *Suhhar* has most often been a Follower of the Heart. They are usually very political *sahirs*, interacting with supernatural creatures like faeries and magical beings more often than other *sahirs*, and only rarely have The Gift. Women are much more common in this family; the *sahir-to-sahira* ratio is almost 1:1.

Ashab al-Nahr (ass-HAWB un-NAHR, "Followers of the River"): Solomonic Travel was often marginalized as a lesser art by early *sahirs*, as few of them understood the power of other realms and worlds: not just Faerie and the Magic Realm, the Divine and the Infernal, and even dreams and death. Two generations after Al-Hajjaj, a Nabatean traveler from the academy in Cairo named Ibn Wahshiyya deciphered many secrets about these places from the writings of ancient Egyptians and single-handedly revitalized the Art. Ibn Wahshiyya and Al-Hajjaj both had reputations for intense passion and, ultimately, madness, and their followers are usually eccentric as well.

There are also many *sahirs* who consider themselves specialized in no particular art, or who focus on their summoning art rather than the Solomonic arts. Before they left the *Suhhar*, many of the *sahirs* of Cordoba called

themselves *Ashab al-Halqa* (ass-HAWB ul-HAL-qa, "Followers of the Circle"), referring to the outside edge of the pentacle that forms the Seal of Suleiman. This term is still used to describe unaligned *sahirs*, or those who claim to belong to none of the great families. Most Gifted *sahirs* and self-taught summoners meet these criteria, preferring to remain apart from the yearly gatherings, where they must be represented by viziers from the other families.

Organization

The *Suhhar Sulayman* is essentially governed by a consultative council, the *Majlis al-Sulayman* (MAJ-liss al-SUE-lem-un, "Solomonic Council," plural *Majalis*). Every community with three or more *sahirs* living within the borders of Islam chooses one of their number to represent them as a vizier at the *Majlis*, and this representative travels to Baghdad every summer to speak on behalf of their community. All these assembled viziers then elect one of their own to lead them as grand vizier. Each vizier has one vote in this decision, no matter how many *sahirs* he represents, but the matter is often easily settled by the volume of cheers as each candidate comes forward, or by a show of hands. A strict count of votes is rarely necessary.

Once elected, the grand vizier addresses all issues that are brought to him, though these are typically issues that are purely internal to the *Suhhar*, leaving matters such as crimes against *sahirs* and conflicts between *sahirs* to the Islamic courts to address. All the *Majlis* ultimately oversees is membership in the *Suhhar*, and thus the worst sentence that the grand vizier can pronounce at *Majlis* is expulsion. In this the grand vizier has absolute authority for the whole year, though he is also expected to follow precedent and heed the will and advice of his fellow viziers. Most issues that come up between gatherings are deferred until *Majlis*, since the first thing the new grand vizier must do is ratify any judgments that were made since the previous year.

The *Suhhar* has five distinct "families" of *sahirs*, magical lineages that trace back to five of the members of the First Council. Each family represents one particular branch of the Solomonic art, and the five heads of these families are collectively referred to as the *Asalat* ("a-sa-LEHT"), singular *Asala* ("a-sa-LAH"), which means "points" and refers to the five points on the Seal of Suleiman. Each family has its own method of choosing their *Asala*, but they are usually the most powerful followers of their art. All five must be present for the *Majlis* to be valid; if any of them are missing the family must agree upon another *Asala* before the grand vizier is chosen.

The five *Asalat* have the authority to remove the grand vizier, and any of them may call for a private vote at any time if they believe he is unable to guide the *Suhhar* with wisdom. They can also choose another grand vizier between gatherings, if the previous grand vizier is removed or something happens to him, and this appointment is valid until the next time the *Majlis* meets. This is a rare event, not least because it requires all five of them to gather and discuss it. For this reason, none of the *Asalat* may be elected grand vizier, though they each have a vote.

Only viziers are supposed to attend *Majlis*, though there are three exceptions. *Sahirs* applying to join the *Suhhar* may attend in the company of a vizier, servants of a vizier may attend to see to his needs, and spirits that have been summoned by the vizier may enter with him but may not be summoned while inside. All three sorts of guest are expected to be unobtrusive, and do not vote. Any attention they attract reflects positively or negatively upon the vizier who they accompany, and if they disturb the proceedings the grand vizier typically orders that vizier to leave.

Issues commonly brought to the *Majlis* include: disputes over rights to contested resources such as vis or spirits, accusations that a *sahir* is not devoting himself to the spread of knowledge as he has promised to do (or is abusing his position as vizier), initiating new members into the *Suhhar*, declaring former

members officially removed from the *Suhhar*, and matters of policy or complaints regarding *sahirs'* dealings with other wizards or supernatural beings. There are often discussions, such as what should be done in hypothetical situations, or the sharing of knowledge or intelligence regarding what is happening within the borders of Islam.

Established practice at *Majlis* is for the grand vizier to hear all who wish to speak to each issue, and these speeches usually address how similar matters have been decided previously, or else they are pleas for mercy or special consideration due to unusual circumstances. The standard punishment for every crime is expulsion from the *Suhhar*, though the grand vizier can always declare a less severe punishment if he feels it is merited — for example, he can lessen a sentence by requiring the offender pay a fine of *vis* (due by the next *Majlis*) or perform a service for the *Suhhar* in lieu of expulsion. Of course, the grand vizier risks upsetting the rule of law and being removed from his position if he demonstrates obvious favoritism.

It is not uncommon for two aggrieved parties to duel rather than rely on the judgment of the grand vizier. There are many kinds of trials acceptable to the *Majlis*, from boasting contests and competitive storytelling to spirit champions wrestling each other for dominance, even duels to the death using magic, steel, or both. For this to serve justice both parties must agree to abide by the results of the duel (although if a *sahir* is obviously more powerful than his challenger, it is considered cowardly not to accept), and the terms must be acceptable to both parties and the grand vizier. Generally seconds decide the specifics, based on what they know of the competitors, and these events are often seen as a form of entertainment for the assembled viziers.

Since the days of the First Council, most of the decisions of the *Majlis* have been justice between individuals, and only rarely those that would affect the entire *Suhhar*. Those few decisions of precedence have mostly governed how representatives speak for the *sahirs* they represent, and what constitutes a community ("three or more who live together" is the general rule). Other verdicts established the many ways that *sahirs* may dedicate themselves to spreading knowledge, as they promise when they join. *Sahirs* must not trouble the *Majlis* with matters than can be addressed by the mundane court unless there are supernatural factors that only *sahirs* would recognize, and then it is usually better that other *sahirs* speak with the court on their behalf.

One important issue settled by the *Majlis* concerned *sahirs* who become supernatural beings (who, in mechanical terms, gain a Might Score). In the tenth century, a *sahir* complained that another had learned to summon him with his magic, and had shared this formula with several of his cohorts, who would all constantly interrupt his studies by summoning him and proposing absurd bargains. The second *sahir* argued that there was no law forbidding him from practicing the Art on any spirit he could summon. After much discussion, the grand vizier ruled that since the first *sahir* could be summoned by the second, he was no longer a *sahir*. As a supernatural being, the (former) *sahir* was no longer subject to their laws, and could do whatever he wished to the other as recompense for being annoyed by him and his friends. Since then, the *Suhhar* has treated *sahirs* who become spirits as ineligible for membership.

Another question that has since been answered is who may participate in the vote for grand vizier, and who settles disputes regarding the outcome. In order to attend the *Majlis*, every *sahir* must be vouched for by an *Asalat*, who introduces him to the assembly and names the community he represents. If no *Asala* will speak for him, he may not enter. If there is a dispute regarding the outcome of the vote, the *Asalat* settle the matter. Once when there was a tie for grand vizier, the *Asalat* voted to determine the winner. Another time when the former grand vizier was delayed until past dusk and the viziers proceeded to choose another grand vizier without him, the *Asalat* voted not to change the decision and did not call for another vote.

For nearly the last thirty years the *Majlis* has chosen a *sahir* named Kha'trazh al-Wazir al-Dall Ariq al-

Qalb to lead them, a calm and quiet man from Basra who always chooses his words carefully. He is not considered especially clever or powerful — he does not have The Gift — and he is said to have chosen his *laqab* name al-Wazir al-Dall ("the dignified vizier") to suggest that he would not abuse his position or give himself airs. His chief virtues are generally thought to be that he is easily guided by the voices of his assembled viziers, that he listens to everyone who wishes to speak, and that he is on relatively good terms with all five *Asalat*.

The *Majlis* has always been a festive occasion, but in the years since the start of the Crusades, the tone of the gathering has become more solemn. *Sahirs* know that a powerful enemy has invaded, one that can probably infiltrate their gatherings and divine their movements. Thus, they are careful not to wage war overtly, and their plans are not discussed in public. The official word is that the *Majlis* has no authority over non-Solomonic wizards, and so matters dealing with them are off the table. Those *sahirs* who have encountered the enemy are usually invited to meet privately with the grand vizier after the *Majlis*, in a magical fortress on an island hidden deep within the Magic Realm, where such matters can be discussed more openly.

Majlis Story Seeds

There are many stories centered around the *Majlis al-Sulayman*, for sagas focused on *sahirs* or magi.

Kha'trazh appears to be in his fifties, though he has lived almost a hundred years. Many think he is likely to die soon, which will cause great deliberation at the next *Majlis* as the assembled *sahirs* try to choose an appropriate replacement. When this happens between gatherings, the *Asalat* usually choose the vizier who represents the original *bayt al-hikma* (now called the *Dar al-Hikma*, see Baghdad, Chapter 7), but the *sahir* who currently holds that position is very controversial and unlikely to retain the position after the vote. Campaigning for the position will proceed in earnest as soon as Kha'trazh dies.

The Followers of the Stone typically decide their *Asala* with a test of arms, and a vengeful *sahir* who opposes Kha'trazh might challenge his family's leader to try to stop him.

A group of *sahirs* who do not belong to the five families insist they receive representation among the *Asalat*, and demand a sixth *Asala*. *Sahirs* who belong to this movement might use a six-pointed star as their symbol.

A magus who can summon spirits could gain membership in the *Suhhar Sulayman*, and perhaps speak on behalf of his sodales. This might make Kha'trazh's policy of waiting for an opportunity to strike unfeasible, and to resolve the situation he might quietly encourage other *sahirs* to challenge this *sahir*-magus to a duel.

An Iberian *sahir* comes to *Majlis*, representing a community of *sahirs* that do not belong to the Order of Hermes. He reminds them that another Crusade threatens the followers of Islam, the Reconquista, and begs them to consider restoring their alliance.

Kha'trazh expels a popular *sahir* accused of betraying the *Suhhar*. This is a rallying point for the leader of the grand vizier's opposition, who promises to restore the disgraced *sahir* if his supporters will vote for him.

How *Sahirs* Live

Sahirs are typically organized around institutions called *buyut al-hikma* (boy-UT al-HICK-mah, "houses of wisdom," singular *bayt al-hikma*), which are run by the viziers of the *Suhhar*. Their primary purpose is teaching the Art of Suleiman to other *sahirs* and initiating promising students into their secrets. Their secondary purpose is educating their community and providing a center for higher learning

and culture. Most cities in the Middle East have a *bayt al-hikma* located somewhere within their walls, and some (like Baghdad or Najaf) have several.

Buyut al-hikma typically have a library (made up of books donated in exchange for access), Solomonic laboratories, and vis stores. They are similar to Hermetic covenants, and can be designed in much the same way. Unlike Hermetic covenants, however, *buyut* do not typically have an income that can support more than the *sahirs* who live and work there, since they must also provide service to their community. *Buyut* are generally welcoming to strangers, since *sahirs* are at least in theory obligated to share their knowledge with anyone who has an interest. Teachers at *buyut* occasionally find themselves instructing young students alongside master *sahirs*.

Many *sahirs* may live within *buyut al-hikma*, while others merely live nearby and visit them regularly. A few *sahirs*, especially those with The Gift, live on their own far from large groups of people, and communicate with other *sahirs* through written messages or other means. Every *sahir* must maintain ties with his *bayt*, because it is his only connection to the *Suhhar* as a whole. If a vizier has been unable to make contact with a *sahir* for five years, he is considered lost. Others may be sent to try to find him, or may not, depending on the opinion his vizier has of him, but if a lost *sahir* returns, he may always go to *Majlis* and ask to rejoin.

Like most scholars in the Mythic Middle East, *sahirs* must support themselves, typically by working two seasons out of every year. If a *sahir* lives at a *bayt al-hikma*, these two seasons include the season of service required by the *Suhhar*. Many *sahirs* teach, instructing other *sahirs* or students in the Solomonic arts or other subjects as directed by the community's vizier. Others are scribes, apothecaries, or physicians, though other professions are possible too.

For those *sahirs* who are uncomfortable working among others or unable to do so, the donation of one quarter of their wealth is considered an acceptable substitute for service. Each *sahir* gives his contribution to his vizier, who subsidizes the *bayt* or funds special projects requested by the grand vizier.

Most new *sahirs* learn magic from other *sahirs*, though a few are discovered with summoning powers and invited to initiate the Solomonic arts from their mentors. When brought before the *Majlis* and recognized as a new member, a *sahir* typically takes a new name by which he will be known from then on. This is often a unique collection of sounds that the *sahir* likes, or perhaps a name taken to honor someone he admires, similar to the Muslim *ism*. He typically adds a *nisba* to the end of his name as well, to represent his Solomonic family: al-Sakhr, al-Najm, al-Yad, al-Qalb, al-Nahr, or very rarely al-Halqa (see The Families of Suleiman's Seal). If a *sahir* is chosen by his community to speak for them, he typically takes another name, a *laqab* that describes how he intends to represent them. This nickname is only used as long as he fulfills this role; if he steps down or his community appoints another, the *laqab* is dropped.

Majlis in Baghdad

Every summer, many of the streets and much of the open land on the south side of the Round City in Baghdad (see Chapter 7) fills with stalls and tents in an enormous fair. This is attended by merchants from all over the Mythic Middle East, and lasts most of the season. All manner of goods and services may be found at this event, including unique items and entertainments brought by strange men from fantastic lands. Visitors are cautioned to maintain a clear idea of what they seek before they explore, for there are many vendors who appear only when their wares are especially desired, or who lure unwary travelers into their tents where they disappear forever.

The *Suhhar Sulayman* meets here every year in a great six-sided hall located at the center of the bazaar and hidden from outsiders with powerful magic, so that it appears as a collection of brightly-colored tents always in the distance.

It is usually guarded by several powerful spirits summoned by the *Asalat* to keep outsiders from intruding. Inside the hall is a series of luxurious tiers several levels deep, all outfitted with sumptuous pillows, lamps, fans, and magically-conjured servants that bring food and drink, and all of this beneath a transparent ceiling that shows the sky and the heavens beyond. The six descending steps of comfort where the viziers assemble by family surround a central stage with a gold-inlaid pentacle, where the grand vizier sits on a jeweled throne.

The official dates of the *Majlis al-Sulayman* are always carefully calculated by the astrologers of the *Suhhar* to match the dates of the First Council. It is supposed to begin at dusk on the day when the sun passes from the constellation of Leo into the sign of Virgo, and it continues through the following night, typically breaking up before dusk on the third day. (In 1220 AD, this is August 15-August 17.) In unusual circumstances the *Majlis* can continue beyond these dates, but the majority of the viziers will likely depart, their obligation having been fulfilled.

If re-elected, the current grand vizier Kha'trazh holds formal council the first evening and late into the night, and all the next day as well, though he does not expect the other viziers to endure his strict regimen, and does not appear to notice if anyone naps through the proceedings. He usually reserves more controversial matters for the second evening after dinner. Viziers are encouraged to mingle, for once the grand vizier has been elected their official role is done, though Kha'trazh listens patiently to any vizier who wishes to speak. The contemporary *Majlis* is usually a quiet buzz of many different voices speaking together, surrounding the louder and more formal speeches in the central circle. Another grand vizier might organize the event differently, as others have in the past.

Once the *Majlis* is over and summer has turned to autumn, the south side of the old city of Baghdad empties and the collection of paths, lots and stalls soon look like a collection of ruins again. The local *sahirs* maintain this illusion of dilapidated abandonment, to prevent passersby from stumbling upon their buildings or other evidence of the yearly gathering. A few of the vendors do remain, though they tend to be "in the know" since the district does not have a good reputation with the rest of Baghdad and most of its people look to other markets for their needs.

Characters

This section includes rules for designing *sahir* characters to play in a saga, either as an unusual character in a Hermetic magi saga, or as a standard character in a saga set in the Mythic Middle East.

Sahir Virtues and Flaws

Some of these Virtues refer to Accelerated Supernatural Abilities. These are like other Supernatural Abilities, but they increase on the same accelerated scale as Hermetic Arts, and are described in more detail under The Solomonic Arts, below.

There are many Hermetic Virtues and Flaws that might be appropriate for *sahirs* to take as Supernatural Virtues or Flaws, as long as they improve or limit Solomonic magic to the same degree. Storyguides are encouraged to adapt these as they see fit.

New or Modified Virtues

Invocation of Names of Power

Supernatural, Major

The *sahir* is capable of casting a unique type of spell called a Name of Power, which is invented like a summoning spell (see Seasonal Summoning, later in this chapter) but grants a bonus to a subsequent

spell, similar in scope to those found on the Shape and Material Bonus table. The spell level is equal to five times the bonus; some example Names of Power are given in the nearby insert. If the *sahir* knows a Name of Power that governs the area of another spell he wishes to cast, he may "utter" (cast) the Name of Power first, and the subsequent spell's Casting Total receives a bonus equal to that of the Name of Power. Thus, a Name of Power: Shamash can give a bonus to any formula involving light or justice. A *sahir* may utter any number of applicable Names of Power before casting a spell, but the total bonus cannot exceed his Finesse score. Names of Power can also be used in conjunction with summoning; the Names invoked must match the type of spirit being summoned.

For example, Jamsin knows the Name of Power: Ishtar at Level 20, granting her +4 to healing effects. She utters this formula in the round before a Solomonian Physic formula designed to speed recovery, and receives a +4 bonus to her Casting Total. Jamsin also knows a Level 15 Name of Power: Ninhursag that gives +3 to earth-related effects, and a Level 15 Name of Power: Nergal that gives +3 to destruction-related effects. She wants to summon an earthquake spirit, so takes two rounds to utter both; however, since her Finesse is 5, she receives only +5 to her roll to summon the spirit, rather than +6.

Botching a Name of Power roll, or a spell affected by a Name of Power, usually attracts the negative attention of the Named being. This Virtue is similar to (and possibly the ancestor of) the Invocation Magic Virtue (*The Mysteries Revised Edition*, page 78).

The *yatus* (see Persia, Chapter 8) introduced this Virtue into the *Suhhar Sulayman*, and they usually call upon the names of the ancient Mesopotamian gods (see Iraq, Chapter 7).

Example Names of Power

Adad storms, divination

Dumuzi livestock, crops

Ishtar healing, love

Nergal destruction, disease

Ninhursag earth

Shamash light, justice

Sahir

Free, Social Status

By demonstrating to the *Majlis* that he can summon a spirit, the character has been accepted into the *Suhhar* and is affiliated with a magical academy known as a *bayt al-hikma*, or "house of wisdom." He is obligated to further the *Suhhar's* causes for one season every year, but is supported by them and benefits from increased access to its teachers and vis sources. During character creation, the character may take appropriate Academic or Arcane Abilities.

If the character does not actually possess the power to summon a spirit, he should take the Dark Secret Story Flaw, as he will be immediately expelled from the *Suhhar* when this fact is discovered.

This Virtue should be taken along with another Social Status Virtue or Flaw, to describe the character's status among non-*sahirs*.

Sihir

Major, Supernatural

This Virtue gives the character an initial score of 0 in the Accelerated Supernatural Ability of (Solomonic) *Sih*r.

Solomonic Alchemy

Major, Supernatural

The character gains an Accelerated Supernatural Ability, Solomonic Alchemy, with an initial score of 0.

Solomonic Astrology

Major, Supernatural

Taking this Virtue opens the character to the Accelerated Supernatural Ability of Solomonic Astrology with an initial score of 0.

Solomonic Physic

Major, Supernatural

Taking this Virtue gives the character the Accelerated Supernatural Ability of Solomonic Physic with an initial score of 0.

Solomonic Storytelling

Major, Supernatural

Taking this Virtue opens the character to the Accelerated Supernatural Ability Solomonic Storytelling with an initial score of 0.

Solomonic Travel

Major, Supernatural

The character gains an initial score of 0 in the Accelerated Supernatural Ability of Solomonic Travel.

Yatu Magic

Supernatural, Minor

The *sahir's* heritage comes from the *yatus* of Persia (see Mazandaran, Chapter 8). He is attuned to both Magic and Faerie auras, and his magical effects can be treated as either Magic or Faerie powers, depending upon which gives him the most favorable (or least unfavorable) aura bonus. He does not gain Warping Points from living in either aura.

New or Modified Flaws

Magic Spirit Companion

Minor, Story

The character is accompanied by an intelligent magical spirit companion, one that is smart enough to follow orders and also to disobey them. The greater the character's Might Score, the more independent the spirit will be. A grog-level spirit (Might Score less than 10) is almost an extension of the character's will, while a companion-level spirit (Might Score of about 10) will follow instructions but often do what it thinks is best, and a magus-level character (Might Score greater than 10) is condescending or wild, and rarely acts except on its own initiative.

(The spirit does not have to be magical; any realm might be appropriate. If it is infernal, this is a Major Story Flaw instead, as it will regularly attempt to corrupt the *sahir*. An infernal Spirit Companion in the Mythic Middle East is not as bad as it would be in Mythic Europe, as other *sahirs* assume that the *sahir* has it under control, though they might be more wary in its presence.)

Sahir Character Creation

Designing *sahirs* is slightly different from making magi, as the majority of *sahirs* do not have The Gift and are more like companions in terms of power. *Sahirs* do not have an established apprenticeship period, so their seasonal experience gained during character creation is streamlined, and since *sahirs* manage their own incomes rather than depending on a covenant, the Wealthy Virtue and Poor Flaw have a much greater impact.

Gifted *sahirs* should occupy the same status as magi. With the troupe's approval, UnGifted *sahirs* may be Mythic Companions, with twice as many points of Virtues as Flaws and a free Minor Virtue, also taking the place of a magus character. UnGifted *sahirs* can also be played as regular companions.

Virtues and Flaws

Every *sahir* accepted into the *Suhhar Sulayman* must take the Free *Sahir* Social Status Virtue. Unless he takes a Dark Secret Flaw, he should have the *Sihir* Virtue or other Virtues that allow him to summon spirits. For example, a Kurdish group of sorcerers called the Mulhidun in northern Persia (see *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, pages 136-137) have (Spirit) Summoning, and two societies of elementalists called the Brethren of Purity and the Students of Avicenna (*Hedge Magic*, pages 28-32) are common in the region and require both a special summoning Elementalist Art and one or more Elementalist Abilities.

A *sahir* with The Gift and a summoning power may begin play after having been initiated into the tradition by another Gifted *sahir*, with all five of his Solomonic arts opened at 0. He also receives a Minor Virtue at no cost to represent his teacher's influence: usually Puissant (Ability) in the Solomonic art associated with the master's family.

Many *sahirs* are Educated (Islamic) (see Chapter 1) or have Arcane Lore or the Student of Magic Virtue to represent their studies with their mentors. A few *sahirs* learn their magic from spirits directly, and the Ghostly Warder Virtue is one way to represent this advantage for them.

Like other characters unaffiliated with a Hermetic covenant, *sahirs* must spend time every year working to support themselves (including their yearly obligation to the *Suhhar*). For most *sahirs*, this takes two seasons every year. Characters with the Wealthy Virtue lose only one season a year, and those with the Poor Flaw are free only one season each year. The difference between these two extremes is especially noticeable during character creation; a rich *sahir* will be many magnitudes more powerful than a poor *sahir* — nearly all of the greatest *sahirs* in the history of the *Suhhar Sulayman* have been wealthy and privileged.

Some *sahirs* have a long-term mutually beneficial arrangement with a minor spirit, which is best represented by the Magical Spirit Companion Flaw. It is not uncommon for young *sahirs* to have abused or angered spirits before they joined the *Suhhar*, giving them the Plagued by Spirit or Supernatural Nuisance Flaws.

Other Summoning Arts

There are four summoning powers published in other *Ars Magica* supplements that may be used with Solomonian magic, since all can target spirits and originate from the Art of Suleiman. These are listed in order of rarity in the Middle East, from most to least, with their variations are summarized below. To help distinguish them, different versions of Summoning often have a parenthetical in front of the name, suggesting their particular focus.

(Spirit) Summoning: This Art summons any incorporeal spirit, generally one associated with the same realm as this Art, though infernal spirits are also common. If the summoning is successful, the spirit is bound until released by the summoner. (Spirit) Summoning is always tainted with the Infernal, and thus infernal versions are common, but there are also Faerie and Magic versions. (*Realms of Power: The Infernal*, pages 114-115.)

(Theurgical) Summoning or (Elemental) Summoning: Some of this magical tradition's followers summon spirits associated with the elemental forms (Aquam, Auram, Ignem, or Terram). The spirit can come from any realm, and is typically held within a container until released. The power is most commonly Magic, though other realms are possible. It is relatively common in Persia and Asia Minor. (*Hedge Magic*, pages 23-24.)

(Exotic) *Sih*r, or (*Jinni*) Summoning: Like Solomonian *Sih*r, this Iberian version of the Art can summon and bind a *jinni*, if the *sahir* can overpower it with his Summoning Total. It is not as common in the Mythic Middle East, since its Solomonian counterpart is so widespread. (*Houses of Hermes: Societates*, pages 135-136.)

(Realm) Summoning, or (Faerie) Summoning: This is a rare Summoning variant targeting creatures from a single realm, and so can potentially summon divine, faerie, magic, or infernal spirits. Currently the only known version summons faeries (*Realms of Power: Faerie*, pages 131-132), found among the *yatus* of Persia and occasional travelers from Europe, though there are also rumors of a far eastern version aligned to the Divine.

Experience

Sahirs receive starting experience like normal companions. They begin character creation with Native Language at 5 and 45 experience points to spend on their first five years. Then, in later life, most *sahirs* receive 15 experience points per year of their starting age (those with the Wealthy Virtue receive 20 and those with the Poor Flaw receive 10).

Once the *sahir* has joined the *Suhhar*, he receives 25 experience points per year (30 if he is Wealthy, 15 if he is Poor). This represents his improved access to study sources.

Players should consider spending the character's experience on the following Abilities:

To cast spells, a *sahir* must have a score of 4 in one of the languages *sahirs* use (**Arabic**, **Parsi**, or **Greek**), and a score of 5 and **Artes Liberales** 1 to read and write.

Sahirs can locate new spirits with **Area Lore**.

Bargain is useful when *sahirs* try to convince spirits to aid them.

Many magical effects require **Concentration** to cast and maintain.

Finesse is often used to manipulate active magic.

Leadership allows *sahirs* to lead groups of spirits, or other *sahirs* in a laboratory.

A *sahir* is less able to effectively summon spirits without **Penetration**.

To make his living, a *sahir* often has **Profession: Scribe** or **Profession: Apothecary**, as both trades are especially useful to other *sahirs*. His total in the related Characteristic + Ability for his livelihood should equal 6.

Knowledge of the *Suhhar* is governed by **Suhhar Sulayman Lore**, a type of Organization Lore. Their legal code and belief systems are covered by **Islamic Law** and **Theology: Islam**; the latter can also help protect *sahirs* against *jinn*.

Realm Lore describes spirits and supernatural places, useful for finding them.

Sahirs who teach others should develop their **Teaching** score.

Also, *Sahirs* should not neglect the Abilities associated with their Solomonic arts (**Area Lore**, **Artes Liberales**, **Medicine**, **Philosophiae**, and **Realm Lore**), as these scores boost their lab totals and add to their casting totals when they cast spells without magical words or gestures.

Sahirs will likely spend experience on other Abilities appropriate to the character, and the Solomonic arts and Supernatural Abilities that they have available to them from character creation (because of Virtues or because they have had The Gift opened by a teacher). A starting *sahir* should be able to summon a spirit with a Might Score of at least 10 using his summoning art, and should have a score of at least 5 in one of the five Solomonic arts.

Sahirs can also purchase Solomonic spells during character creation, recorded like Hermetic spells and with a maximum level of (Intelligence + summoning art + Solomonic art + related Ability). Assuming that every *sahir* studies appropriate lab texts, each spell costs a number of starting experience points equal to its level. For example, a Level 15 spell costs 15 experience points. *Sahirs* can start with any spells they would like to design.

Spells are extremely valuable to *sahirs*, and a starting character should always have a minimum of 120 spell levels, or his magic will be severely limited.

Spirits

Spirits are essential for a *sahir* — without them he cannot cast any spells — and so a good *sahir* will collect arcane connections to appropriate spirits, or learn summoning spells he can use for the same purpose. Also, since the *sahir's* magic is basically channeled through the spirit he summons, the spirit's nature and personality alters the *sahir's* magic in subtle ways (in much the same way that spells cast by a Hermetic magus show evidence of his casting sigil). Thus, the unique qualities of the spirit a *sahir* calls have significant influence.

A starting *sahir* should choose one spirit that he can summon to be the focus of most of his magic, and assume that he has an Arcane Connection to it. He should also note something about its personality and powers in order to describe a cosmetic effect that accompanies his magic whenever he involves that spirit. If he has spent any of his experience points on summoning spells, he may choose a spirit for each one. Unless he has a Virtue like Ghostly Warder or a Flaw like Magical Spirit Companion, he cannot assume that any of these spirits will do him any favors without being paid for their services or being compelled by his magic.

Laboratory Activities

Players can trade 10 experience points during character creation to have their *sahirs* spend a season in the laboratory instead of studying, but only as many times per year as a character has free seasons. In exchange, the character performs any seasonal summoning activities described under Solomonic Magic. Assume that the character has access to half the maximum amount of vis as he can spend on the activity, and that he is working in an aura with no bonus or penalty. For activities that affect a spirit, such as the

khadim bond or a greater binding, the *sahir* must have a Virtue or Flaw that gives him a willing spirit companion.

Aging and Warping

Characters 35 years or older need to make an Aging roll for each year. Note that knowledge of Solomonic Alchemy and Solomonic Physic can influence the character's Aging rolls (see The Solomonic Art, Magical Defenses, later in this chapter).

A typical *sahir* gains 2 Warping Points each year after he starts studying and practicing Solomonic magic.

Sample *Sahir*: 'Arkhaman Laqy al-Hayz al-Nahr

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

Size: 0

Age: 25 (25)

Warping Score: 2 (2)

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: The Gift; *Sahir*; Wise One; Gentle Gift, *Sihr* (Magic); Arcane Lore, Puissant Solomonic Travel (free); Magic Addiction, Infernal Spirit Companion; Reckless, Sheltered Upbringing

Personality Traits: Optimistic +3, Reckless +3, Friendly +2, Brave -1

Combat:

Dodge: Init 0, Attack n/a, Defense 0, Damage -1

Soak: +0

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

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

Abilities: Arabic 5 (Solomonic usage), Artes Liberales 2 (lab work), Awareness 2 (alertness), Bargain 3 (Kharrat), Concentration 2 (regaining control), Finesse 2 (casting multiple effects), Infernal Lore 5 (spirits), Magic Lore 2 (spirits), Penetration 2 (Infernal spirits), Profession: Scribe 5 (copying lab texts), Stealth 2 (sneaking), Sana'a Lore 3 (people)

***Sihr*:** 10, **Alchemy:** 0, **Astrology:** 5, **Physic:** 0, **Storytelling:** 5, **Travel:** 10+2

Spells Known:

Kharrat, the braggart (+12)

What are the words that surround [Target]? (Astrology 15/+7, Ritual)

[Spirit], his arms wide (Storytelling 10/+7)

Make their eyelids heavy and their heads to fall (Storytelling 15/+7)

Lead us through the gray haze of other worlds (Travel 20/+14)

[Spirit] brings the curse of Bayna (Travel 25/+14)

We will meet again as the seasons turn (Travel 25/+14, Ritual)

Appearance: 'Arkhaman is a pale man with black hair, thin eyebrows and a curled moustache. He typically has a naive twinkle in his eye and a confident curl to his smile. He wears a hooded robe that has seen very little travel, baggy clothes, and is likely sitting down.

The boy Laqy was born at the *bayt al-hikma* of Sana'a to a woman who desperately wished to keep him secret from the imam, her uncle. His father was a spirit of flame she said, a beautiful *jinni* with black eyes. Delivered in secret, the child was raised at the academy and desired only to serve the *sahirs*, but as he grew older, his resemblance to the important family became more pronounced. They decided to bring him into the *Suhhar*, and initiated him into *Sihhr*. The first spirit he summoned was the being he believes to be his father: an infernal *jinni* named Kharrat.

Kharrat is a pompous and arrogant spirit who believes that 'Arkhaman's desire to please his father will lead him to evil, and thinks he has him completely tamed. 'Arkhaman is naive, but has been warned by the older *sahirs* not to let Kharrat take advantage of him. So far, he has been able to control the *jinni* with *vis*, but as soon as possible Kharrat will get him to accept a task and agree to seek out his mother. The shame that his presence will bring to her delights the wicked spirit.

'Arkhaman only recently manifested The Gift, and the power he now wields has made him a bit wild. When he casts a spell, he often cannot resist casting another. His masters believe he needs to meet other *sahirs* or he will go mad; thus they have elected him their vizier and are sending him to Baghdad this summer.

Solomonic Magic

The *sahirs'* magic comes from their ability to summon spirits and direct them in limited ways. Over the many years they have been practicing this, *sahirs* have developed ways to modify their summoning powers so that instead of causing a spirit to manifest within a circle or other mystic container, they can draw upon its power to create other magical effects. These supernatural means for affecting a target with Solomonic magic are collectively called "the Solomonic Art," but each power is also called a "Solomonic art." These arts (not technically Arts but rather Accelerated Supernatural Abilities) are described in more detail later in this chapter.

The Solomonic Art can be used in two ways: to quickly cast memorized spells, or for long-term magical projects over a season or more. The former is called **formulaic summoning**, and the latter is called **seasonal summoning**. Every *sahir* has (or should have) a summoning power, such as *Sihhr*, that is used to summon a spirit or other sort of being and negotiate with it. *Sahirs* refer to this power as their **summoning art**, but *Sihhr* is sometimes considered a Solomonic art in its own right, and part of the Solomonic art as a whole (see The Solomonic Arts, *Sihhr*).

Solomonic Spells

A *sahir's* spells are a recipe for drawing upon a summoned spirit's power in a way that creates a magical effect. This formula is called a *naranj*, or "spell." *Sahirs* generally know many *naranjs*, which they cast much Hermetic magi cast spells, by concentrating for a moment and speaking an incantation while gesturing at the target. Learning to cast a spell takes a season of work in a special laboratory (described under Seasonal Summoning, in the next part of this section).

Summoning Spells

The most basic form of *naranj* available to *sahirs* uses their summoning art, and summons a spirit to a prepared place within a few paces of the caster. This is called a **summoning spell**. Unlike using their summoning art, this *naranj* only takes a moment and does not cost any fatigue or vis. The *sahir* is still warded against the spirit, and as usual the spirit will likely want something in return for whatever service the *sahir* asks. To cast a summoning spell, the player rolls a stress die and adds Presence plus his score in his summoning art, as well as his modifier for the aura.

Summoning Total: stress die + Presence + summoning art + aura

Ease Factor: spirit's Might Score

To succeed, the *sahir* must penetrate the summoned spirit's Magic Resistance. Just as magi often do, *sahirs* can use Arcane Connections and sympathetic magic to boost their penetration. In addition, since Solomonic summoning spells are designed to affect specific spirits, each incorporates a spirit's True Name. This allows the player to add 5 to the *sahir's* Penetration score multiplier when casting that particular summoning spell or using other Supernatural Abilities that must penetrate that spirit's Magic Resistance to have an effect. This usually means that the *sahir* multiplies his Penetration score by 6, since his multiplier starts at 1.

Penetration Total: Summoning Total + *sahir's* Penetration bonus – spirit's Might Score

Formulaic and Ritual Spells

The most common type of *naranj* that *sahirs* learn are **formulaic spells**, which require that the *sahir* has already summoned a spirit and convinced it to serve him. They use the *sahir's* knowledge of the Solomonic Art to direct that spirit's power into a magical effect. For this sort of *naranj*, the *sahir* must have summoned the spirit that powers the effect himself, he must be close enough to the spirit that it can see him and hear his voice, and he must either speak in a firm voice with bold gestures or perform a mundane activity associated with the effect. For example, when casting a formulaic spell associated with Solomonic Physic, the *sahir* may choose to administer to the patient as a physician rather than obviously performing sorcery.

Using an Ability in this way generally adds about fifteen minutes per magnitude of the spell to the casting time, but becomes more difficult to recognize as a magical effect. For example, to see through the cover activity, a suspicious character might roll his Perception + the Ability vs. the *sahir's* Presence + the Ability. Success would suggest to the suspicious character that the *sahir* is doing something unusual, though he still might not know what that is.

Whenever a *sahir* summons a spirit, either using a summoning spell or his summoning art, note the difference between his Summoning Total and the spirit's Might Score. This is called the *sahir's* **Summoning Strength**. It describes the amount of extra supernatural power that the *sahir* has drawn from the spirit during the summoning, and applies to every *naranj* cast through that particular spirit (and typically improves his position when bargaining with it as well).

Some summoning arts allow the *sahir* to summon a spirit even if his total does not exceed the target's Might Score; a negative Summoning Strength means the *sahir* is less able to direct that particular spirit.

Summoning Strength: Summoning Total – spirit's Might Score

Casting a formulaic spell requires that the *sahir's* player make a stress roll, to which is added his Presence, his score in the Solomonic art associated with the effect, his Summoning Strength, and his aura modifier. If the *sahir* performs the effect with an Ability, add his score to the total.

Formulaic Spell Casting Total: stress die + Presence + Solomoniac art + Summoning Strength + aura (+ appropriate Ability, if used)

Ritual spells are more powerful formulaic spells. They cost vis — one pawn for each magnitude — and have ongoing durations that are maintained by the spirit and can last indefinitely. Any formulaic spell can be cast as a ritual spell, allowing the *sahir* greater control over the effect. There are also many special guidelines for effects that are only ritual spells.

To maintain a ritual spell, the spirit must concentrate. If it is distracted, make a Stamina + Concentration stress roll, with the Ease Factor varying on the distraction. Failure means the spell ends.

Whenever a *sahir* casts a spell through a spirit that is already maintaining one or more ritual spells, the *sahir's* player makes a Perception + Finesse roll with Ease Factor equal to (6 x the number of already active spells). If he fails, he cannot complete the spell and it has no effect. Most ritual spells allow the *sahir* to cancel them at will, and he may choose to do this before he rolls.

Ritual spells cannot be disguised with an Ability, although the *sahir* may still draw upon this knowledge to increase his Casting Total. This adds fifteen minutes per magnitude to the casting time.

Ritual Spell Casting Total: spend vis, stress die + Presence + Solomoniac art + Summoning Strength + aura (+ appropriate Ability, if used)

With both types of formulaic spell, if the *sahir's* Casting Total is less than the spell level, his Summoning Strength for that spirit is reduced by the difference and he loses one Fatigue level for every 5 levels by which he missed. If this fatigue causes him to fall unconscious, the spell fails; otherwise, the effect manifests.

If the target is protected by Magic Resistance, the effect must penetrate. To determine success, players should use the spirit's Penetration Total instead of the *sahir's*, applying its realm interaction modifiers to determine if the target is affected. (This often means that it is advantageous for the *sahir* to summon an infernal spirit when casting in an infernal aura, for example.)

Because the *sahir* is using the spirit's power to penetrate, he cannot use Arcane Connections or sympathetic magic to boost the Penetration Total, and the calculation uses the spirit's Penetration score.

Formulaic or Ritual Spell Penetration Total: spirit's Might Score + spirit's Penetration bonus + spirit's aura modifier – spell level

Finally, unless the *sahir* has The Gift, the highest level of formulaic or ritual spell he can cast is limited by the spirit's Might Score. For example, to cast a Level 35 formulaic spell, an unGifted *sahir* must summon a spirit with 35 Might or more — The Gift allows a *sahir* to make up the difference between his spirit's Might and the effect level with his own inherent power.

Spell Level Limit (unGifted): Might Score of summoned spirit

When *sahirs* botch their casting rolls, they receive one Warping Point for each 0 on the botch dice. If this gives them two or more Warping Points, they must check for additional bad effects (see Warping and Corruption).

Vis

A *sahir* can spend vis of any type when casting a formulaic or ritual spell, increasing his Casting Total, or when casting a summoning spell, increasing his Summoning Total (this affects penetration and Summoning Strength, which also affects Bargaining rolls). Each pawn gives a +2 bonus, but he cannot spend more pawns on a single spell than his score in the associated art.

Vis Limit: score in summoning art (Summoning Total) or Solomonian art (Casting Total)

When casting ritual spells, the vis required for the effect counts toward this limit. To cast a ritual spell, the *sahir's* score in the associated art must always at least equal the magnitude of the spell.

Sahirs use a great deal of vis, and they tend to describe each pawn in unique terms, such as "the claw from the black beast Ashmael" or "magic incense made by Istvaan al-Makki." The general term they use is *taqa* (TAW-qa), and while they do not distinguish different types based on form or purpose like magi, they do record the realm alignment of their vis when possible.

(If a *sahir's* vis store is taken by magi or other wizards, the storyguide can assign each pawn an appropriate Art, or simply rule that it is all Vim vis.)

Seasonal Summoning

The other sort of Solomonian magic is called seasonal summoning, because it takes place over the course of a season. At the beginning of the process the *sahir* summons a spirit to him, and draws upon that spirit's supernatural power over the course of the season to enable more intensive magical activities. It is essentially the *sahir's* equivalent to Hermetic laboratory magic.

The *sahir* performing a seasonal activity must have summoned a spirit at the beginning of the project, which must remain present for the entire season or the effort is wasted. It must maintain the effects as it does for ritual spells, essentially concentrating on what the *sahir* is doing, and so it cannot activate its powers or perform any other activities that require its attention that season.

Most seasonal activities use a standardized total — called a "lab total" for convenience — this is the *sahir's* Intelligence, his score in the Solomonian art associated with the effect, his score in the mundane Ability associated with the lab activity, and his Summoning Strength with the spirit that is assisting him that season. He also receives his aura modifier for performing magic.

Lab Total: Intelligence + appropriate Solomonian art + appropriate Ability + Summoning Strength + aura

This is shortened below as a "(Solomonian art) + (Ability) Lab Total," specifying the art and Ability for each activity.

As with spells, unless the *sahir* has The Gift, all of his effects are limited by the spirit's Might Score — for example, a *sahir* who has summoned a spirit with 15 Might cannot invent spells greater than Level 15.

Effect Level Limit (unGifted): spirit's Might Score

A Solomonian Laboratory

Like Hermetic labs, a *sahir's* work space must be a room protected from the elements with at least 500 cubic paces of space. It requires equipment appropriate to the *sahir's* fields of expertise and proper organization of materials; this takes a person with an academic and arcane background a single season to set up, after which it may be used with a –3 penalty to all activities.

If a Solomonian laboratory is established or reorganized by a person with a score of 3 in at least one of the five Abilities associated with the Art (Area Lore, Artes Liberales, Medicine, Philosophiae, or Realm Lore), then the penalty to those activities is eliminated. For example, a *sahir* with Artes Liberales 3 and

Philosophiae 3 could establish a laboratory with no penalty for alchemical (Philosophiae) or astrological activities (Artes Liberales), but would still have a -3 penalty to other lab activities.

Literate *sahirs* working in laboratories take notes, usually in Arabic, which can produce lab texts that other *sahirs* may study. These work just like Hermetic lab texts (ArM5, pages 101-102).

Sahirs can also assist each other in the laboratory, and this practice is much more common in the *Suhhar* than in the Order of Hermes — so much so that their process is more efficient and even more effective than the Hermetic version. All participants must have the required Solomonic arts, and one of the *sahirs* working on the project must have a Leadership score equal to (the number of participants - 1). Each *sahir* who participates in the project adds his Intelligence to the lab total, plus his score in the Ability related to the effect, and the final result uses the highest value among the participants in the appropriate Solomonic art + Summoning Strength. Only this *sahir* must summon a spirit to assist them that season. This means that it is common to involve a competent manager in a Solomonic lab activity, even one with a negative Intelligence, because it increases the number of *sahirs* who can work together.

Not counting time spent away from the lab for sleep and weekly religious observances, *sahirs* may miss up to ten days of a seasonal activity with no penalty. Beyond this, the *sahir's* lab total receives a -10 penalty, plus -2 for each day missed. If multiple *sahirs* are working together, the number of days missed with no penalty is multiplied by the number of participants, and any penalty is divided by this same number, rounding up. For example, three *sahirs* may miss up to 10 days each, or one of them may miss up to 30 days, without penalty. If together they miss a total of 34 days (perhaps because two were absent 10 days and the third was gone 14 days), their lab total would receive a -6 penalty (-10 for more than 30 days, -2 for each of four days over 30, yielding a penalty of -18, divided by 3 for -6). Players should not include the scores for any *sahirs* that fail to participate at least 10 days, and if any individual *sahir's* penalty before dividing exceeds the overall lab total, the project fails.

Sahirs can perform more than one lab activity in a season. Add together the effect levels required for all of the activities, and use the lowest lab total among them. As long as this is great enough to equal or exceed the sum of all effect levels, any number of activities may be performed at once. For those activities where progress is measured by how much the *sahir's* lab total exceeds the effect level, divide the excess among all activities, rounding down any fractions.

Vis Manipulation

A *sahir* with Solomonic Alchemy can extract vis from a supernatural aura as a seasonal activity, concentrating the power of the realm into a specific object. This produces a number of pawns equal to one tenth his Solomonic Alchemy + Philosophiae Lab Total.

Vis Extraction: pawns equal to (Solomonic Alchemy + Philosophiae Lab Total) / 10

Sahirs can also forcefully remove vis from supernatural beings or enchanted objects. This is an excruciating process for creatures that feel pain, which must be restrained for the season, and is considered an offense by the *Suhhar* when practiced on unwilling *jinn* or other intelligent spirits.

A maximum number of pawns equal to one fifth of the *sahir's* Solomonic Alchemy + Philosophiae Lab Total can be removed in one season. For each pawn of vis removed, either a supernatural being's Might Score is reduced by 1, or one invested effect is removed from an enchanted device, or one pawn's worth of space is cleared from an invested object with no invested effects. If the *sahir's* (lab total / 5) is greater than the pawns this would yield, no additional vis is produced. Removed vis is affiliated with the realm of the being or the power that created the enchanted object.

Vis Removal: pawns equal to (Solomonic Alchemy + Philosophiae Lab Total) / 5

A *sahir* can also transfer raw vis from one object into another, a number of pawns equal to half his Solomonic Alchemy + Philosophiae Lab Total. This is commonly used to separate large chunks of vis into more manageable units, and does not work on vis that is part of a living creature or has been invested into an enchanted device. The process usually destroys the original vessel, and if an object contains more vis than the *sahir* can transfer, the excess is lost.

Vis Transfer: pawns equal to (Solomonic Alchemy + Philosophiae Lab Total) / 2

Sahirs have a limit on the amount of vis they can use on any seasonal activity, equal to their score in the associated Solomonic art. For example, a *sahir* with Solomonic Alchemy 10 can extract up to 10 pawns of vis from an aura in a single season.

Vis Limit: score in associated Solomonic art

Arcane Connections

Like Hermetic magi, *sahirs* can fix Arcane Connections, making them permanent. This costs a pawn of vis, and requires a score of at least 1 in Solomonic Astrology (because of the vis limit). When performing multiple activities in one season, this activity is considered a Level 5 effect.

Fix Arcane Connections: Solomonic Astrology + Artes Liberales Lab Total

Sahirs can also transfer an Arcane Connection from one object to another. This requires a pawn of vis and an appropriate object to become the new connection. It does not affect the original connection. When performing multiple activities in one season, this is considered a Level 5 effect.

Transfer Arcane Connections: Solomonic Astrology + Artes Liberales Lab Total

Spells

Sahirs invent spells using the same mechanics as magi. They can invent a number of formulaic or ritual spells with total level equal their teacher's highest applicable lab total, substituting the teacher's score in Teaching for the associated Ability; or by the *sahir* collecting enough points over the spell level in the associated art + Ability lab total over one or more seasons to equal it. *Sahirs* often make use of laboratory texts to speed up this process.

Learning Spells: spell levels equal to teacher's highest applicable Teaching Lab Total

Inventing Formulaic or Ritual Spells: (appropriate art + appropriate Ability Lab Total – effect level) points towards spell level

Summoning spells use the teacher's Solomonic Astrology + Teaching Lab Total or the *sahir's* Solomonic Astrology + Artes Liberales Lab Total, though the *sahir* does not need to know Solomonic Astrology to do this. The spell level is the spirit's Might Score, and unless the *sahir* has a Laboratory Text, he must possess an Arcane Connection to the spirit or it must be present for part of the season.

If a *sahir* already knows the True Name of a spirit (see *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, pages 34-35), he can reinvent it as a summoning spell in one season as a Level 5 effect.

Inventing Summoning Spells: (Solomonic Astrology + Artes Liberales Lab Total – effect level) points towards spell level

Bindings

Sahirs can attach their summoned spirits to inanimate objects, essentially creating magical devices that, when activated, produce a magical effect designed especially for the object. These are called **bindings**. They can be given to others to use, even others who do not understand Solomonic magic. It is said the Umayyad *wazirs* and other early summoners who knew this secret process created many such devices, some of which still exist in hidden caches in the desert or within musty dwellings used by ancient sorcerers. Jabir, one of the members of the First Council, is said to have possessed a binding created by Suleiman himself.

The first type of binding is known as a **lesser binding**. This superficially ties the spirit to an object, creating a mystical connection between the two, and includes a trigger activity that releases the effect in a momentary burst of power. Lesser bindings take a season to make, and can hold any effect the *sahir* can invent, with level of up to half the *sahir's* Philosophiae Lab Total. When binding ritual spell effects, the *sahir* must spend the necessary vis as part of making the enchantment, and once activated the effect lasts for as long as the spirit maintains it.

Lesser Bindings: effect level equal to (appropriate art + Philosophiae Lab Total) / 2

Sahirs can also create a **greater binding**. This is where the spirit is held captive by an object to power an effect. The effects invested into this object continue indefinitely, and may activate repeatedly: each time someone performs a trigger action associated with the effect, that effect ends and is immediately cast again on another target chosen by the wielder. If the object is damaged or destroyed, all active effects cease and the spirit is freed. While bound, the spirit may be summoned, but it cannot use any of its powers, move from where it is summoned, communicate more than short sentences, or maintain other ritual spells. The *Suhhar* forbids *sahirs* from binding an intelligent spirit in this way, but there are many types of unintelligent spirits that are ideal for this sort of application (elemental spirits, for example).

To make a greater binding, the *sahir* must first enchant the object by which the spirit will be held captive. This enchantment binds the spirit and any invested effects with vis, which must be transferred into the object over the course of a season, "opening" it for binding. Every object has a maximum number of pawns it can hold, found by calculating the number of Base Points for the object's size and material on the Material and Size Table (ArM5, page 97). There is no benefit to *sahirs* for using an object of any particular shape or material except one: a literal container (a bowl, jar, bottle, lamp, or even skull) can hold twice as many pawns of vis, and the *sahir* receives a +5 bonus to his Lab Total whenever he binds an effect to it.

The maximum number of pawns the *sahir* can transfer into an enchantment in one season is equal to his Solomonic Alchemy score, but he may add vis to an enchantment in subsequent seasons as long as the maximum has not been reached. Enchanting an object for a greater binding is a Solomonic Alchemy + Philosophiae activity with level equal to the number of pawns invested. It is possible to open an object for enchantment and bind a spirit and effect to it in one season, as long as the character's Lab Total is great enough to accommodate both activities.

Binding Enchantments: (Solomonic Alchemy + Philosophiae Lab Total) pawns invested

To bind a spirit and effect to an enchanted device, design the effect as a spell using the *sahir's* Philosophiae Lab Total with the associated art. Each magnitude of the spirit's Might Score and each magnitude of the effect takes up "space" in the object equal to one pawn from the initial enchantment. As long as there is enough vis in the enchantment to accommodate both the effect level and the Might of the spirit, the *sahir* can perform the binding. The *sahir* can even bind the spirit and effect in one season if his Philosophiae Lab Total is at least double the effect's level, otherwise it takes multiple seasons to

accumulate enough points to complete it.

Greater Bindings: (appropriate art + Philosophiae Lab Total – effect level) points towards effect level

A *sahir* without Solomonic Alchemy may still bind spirits and effects to an object that has been opened by another.

The *sahir* can place additional effects into the object in later seasons, as long as there is still space available, either by binding more spirits to the object or by binding the effect to a spirit that is already imprisoned in it. A bound spirit can only maintain one effect at a time, however; the benefit to binding multiple spirits into a device is that they can maintain multiple effects.

When the wielder activates a greater binding with a ritual effect, the bound spirit must spend a Might Point for each magnitude of the effect, and the spirit does not recover these Might Points for as long as it is held. If the spirit runs out of Might Points, it replenishes its Might Pool by permanently reducing its Might Score by 1. Once its Might Score is reduced to 0, it can do nothing but maintain the last effect it triggered. If released, the spirit will eventually regain its lost Might, though this takes a very long time.

A binding is an Arcane Connection to the bound spirit, and the spirit knows the triggering actions to activate the device. For *sahirs*, investigating enchantments is often as simple as summoning the spirit and asking what it can do.

Seeking and Scouring

A *sahir* can locate new spirits to summon as a seasonal lab activity. This requires knowledge of Solomonic Storytelling and an applicable Area Lore Ability. The *sahir* casts a magical net over an area that finds and holds an appropriate spirit. Then, he may either invite the spirit to visit him in his laboratory, which is called seeking, or force the spirit to come to him, which is called scouring. The maximum value of the spirit's Might Score is equal to the *sahir's* Solomonic Storytelling + Area Lore Lab Total when seeking, or half the that total when scouring.

Maximum Might Score (Seeking): Solomonic Storytelling + appropriate Area Lore Lab Total

Maximum Might Score (Scouring): (Solomonic Storytelling + appropriate Area Lore Lab Total) / 2

Either activity brings a spirit applicable to the *sahir's* summoning art by the end of the season, causing it to appear within a magic summoning circle that prevents it from affecting anyone or anything outside the ring for as long as it remains unbroken. When summoned by seeking, the spirit may return to where it came from at any time; when summoned by scouring the spirit is held captive. In either case, the *sahir* can return it by simply looking at it and concentrating.

The spirit summoned by this activity is essentially up to the storyguide to describe. See the various *Realms of Power* books for powers a summoned spirit might have, and what spirits with different Might Scores look like. In the Mythic Middle East, *jinn* are common, as are elemental spirits. Infernal spirits are also likely, Divine spirits are generally unlikely. Ultimately, the storyguide should choose a spirit for the *sahir* that will enhance the story he is telling.

Warding

A *Sahir* can enchant an area or object with the power to repel spirits appropriate to his summoning art.

The *sahir* devotes a season to preparing the effect, and then draws a mystic circle on the ground or on an object and ceremonially imbues it with the magic. (The formula for the ward may be taken from the laboratory and used once to enchant a circle drawn in an outside location, as long as both the *sahir* and the spirit through which he casts it participated in the lab activity.)

Any spirits normally targeted by the summoning art used to perform this activity cannot touch the person carrying the object or affect him with their powers, or cannot cross the circle or affect the other side of it. They also cannot affect the enchanted circle or object itself. These effects last until the circle is broken, either deliberately or by the deteriorating forces of age or climate.

Creating a ward is a Solomonic Travel + (Realm) Lore activity, of the realm affiliated with the *sahir's* summoning art, and his lab total determines the maximum Might Score the ward can affect.

Maximum Might Score warded: Solomonic Travel + (Realm) Lore Lab Total

Solomonic wards must penetrate the Magic Resistance of any spirits affected by them. Calculate the *sahir's* Penetration Total based on the Might of the spirit summoned in the lab, minus the level of the ward. As with spells, the *sahir* cannot improve the spirit's Penetration bonus, though a supernatural aura at the site of the ward can modify the effect's Penetration Total.

Khuddam ("Servant Spirits")

An intelligent spirit that agrees to serve a *sahir* and assist him with his magic may be enchanted with special properties that help the *sahir* whenever he casts spells through that spirit. This spirit is called a *khadim* (or *khadimma* if female), meaning "servant," and the enchantment is called "the *khadim* bond." These terms are thought to derive from the name Al-Khidr, the spirit who served Al-Hajjaj of the First Council among others, and thus "servant" does not have a derogatory connotation in this context.

To establish the *khadim* bond, the *sahir* generates a Realm Lore Lab Total no less than the spirit's Might Score, using the Realm Lore associated with the spirit and his highest Solomonic art. He must also spend a number of pawns of vis equal to the magnitude of the spirit's Might Score. This gives the *sahir* the same number of Bond Points to spend on the following benefits:

Safety: Subtract 1 botch die from the *sahir's* summoning, spell casting, and *Fatra Bayna* Avoidance rolls (see Warping and Corruption, later in this section)

Potency: Add 2 to the *sahir's* Casting Total

Skill: Add 3 to the *sahir's* Finesse rolls

Focus: Add 2 to the spirit's and the *sahir's* Concentration rolls

Penetration: Add 5 to the spirit's Penetration Total

From then on, whenever the *sahir* summons and casts spells through that spirit, he receives the benefits of all Bond Points he has invested into it. These benefits are purchased on a pyramid scale, so that 3 Bond Points spent on Safety subtracts two botch dice, and 10 Bond Points spent on Penetration yields a +20 bonus. A *sahir* may perform the lab activity more than once with the same spirit, but this only allows him to reallocate his Bond Points; the benefits are not cumulative. A *sahir* can create bonds with multiple spirits, though the same spirit cannot have a bond with more than one *sahir*.

Enchanting a *Khadim*: highest Solomonic art + (Realm) Lore Lab Total, equal to spirit's Might Score

Al-Iksir (The Elixir of Life)

The secret of *Al-Iksir* was said to have been brought to the original council by Al-Hajjaj, who received it from Al-Khidr. The *sahir* summons a spirit into a liquid concocted from vis and other materials and then consumes it, taking properties of the spirit into himself. This frees the spirit and purifies the *sahir*, giving him a taste of immortality in exchange for experiencing Warping and other effects. The process is intensely personal, and while a *sahir* can invent his own formula based on another *sahir's* laboratory text, he cannot make one for anyone but himself.

Al-Iksir is a Medicine activity, using any of the traditional Solomonic arts: Solomonic Alchemy purifies the body, Solomonic Astrology aligns the *sahir* with beneficial influences, Solomonic Physic promotes overall health, Solomonic Storytelling nourishes the soul, and Solomonic Travel exposes the *sahir* to favorable otherworldly environments.

***Al-Iksir*: highest Solomonic art + Medicine Lab Total**

The process takes a season of effort, and costs a number of pawns of vis equal to the *sahir's* (Lab Total / 5). This gives him the same number of ***Al-Iksir* Points** to spend on the following beneficial effects:

Remove an Aging Point (1 *Al-Iksir* Point).

Reduce Age and Apparent Age by 2 (1 *Al-Iksir* Point).

Reduce Apparent Age by 10 (1 *Al-Iksir* Point).

Increase a Characteristic by 1, though not above +5 (*Al-Iksir* Points equal to the absolute value of the increased Characteristic).

After the potion is consumed, the *sahir* must also spend the same number of *Al-Iksir* Points on the following negative effects:

Gain two Warping Points and check for *Fatra Bayna* (see Warping and Corruption, later in this section) (1 *Al-Iksir* Point).

Lose memories and associated knowledge, removing a simple die's worth of experience points, usually starting with childhood (1 *Al-Iksir* Point).

Gain an eccentric Personality Trait at +3, or increase this Trait by 1, which becomes an obsession at +6 and madness at +10 (2 *Al-Iksir* Points).

Gain a Minor Flaw appropriate to the spirit's influence (3 *Al-Iksir* Points).

The spirit's Might Score is also temporarily reduced by the number of *Al-Iksir* Points spent; this lost Might generally returns at the rate of one point per year.

Most *sahirs* wait until old age before making *Al-Iksir*, preferring to experience its dramatic changes later in life.

Initiating the Arts

It is a relatively simple process for a Gifted teacher to pass on the Solomonic arts to another student with The Gift. The teacher, a spirit summoned by the teacher, and the student spend a season together in a Solomonic lab, and the teacher performs a powerful ritual that opens all five Solomonic arts. This is a Magic Lore activity that is also associated with Solomonic Travel, but since it has been fully integrated into Solomonic magic, it does not require the teacher to possess that art.

Any art in which the teacher does not have at least a score of 5 gives the student the Deficient Technique Flaw. If the student has any non-Solomonic Supernatural Abilities or Arts, add their scores together and double the result, adding 10 if The Gift has already been opened. Compare this to the teacher's Opening Total, which is half his Solomonic Travel + Magic Lore Lab Total; if this Opening Total is less than the sum of the character's scores in his powers, the teacher cannot initiate the student.

Opening Total: (Solomonic Travel + Magic Lore Lab Total) / 2

In order to pass on the magical secrets associated with the Art of Suleiman to those who did not have The Gift, Muhammad al-Fazari — one of the six unGifted members of the First Council — discovered how to use his guardian spirit to initiate them through the power of the Magic Realm. Many of his line believe that this discovery, more than any other, led to the golden age of *sahirs* and the formation of the *Suhhar Sulayman*. This process also works on Gifted students who have already been opened to another tradition, and for *sahirs* without a summoning art or who come to the tradition from another one, this is typically their best method of entry.

The process involves the teacher summoning a willing spirit to carry the student, in spirit form, into the Magic Realm. During the season, the student undergoes a sort of dream journey appropriate to the spirit, while his physical body remains in the lab in a deep sleep. The experience is very similar to what happens to Hermetic magi when they experience Twilight — he might find himself in the physical world, but in a ghostly form that is unable to affect his surroundings; or in a surreal environment surrounded by other spirits interrogating him, urging him to prove his worth; or reliving events of his past as if they were happening to him again.

While the student is in this state, his teacher performs the opening ritual and calculates his Opening Total. If this is 30 or more, the student gains a Major Virtue associated with the Art of Suleiman that is also possessed by the teacher, usually a Solomonic or a summoning art. With a total of 25, he gains the Major Virtue but also receives a Minor Flaw. With only 15, he gains the Major Virtue and a Major Flaw. These Flaws should be tied to the student's travels.

Before the process is complete, the teacher spends vis equal to half the necessary Opening Total (7, 12, or 15 pawns), and the spirit's Might Score is reduced by the same amount. This reduction is not permanent, but it takes at least a year to recover each point. The student also gains two Warping Points, though no check for *Fatra Bayna* (see Warping and Corruption, later in this section) is required.

To initiate an unGifted student in a summoning art and all five Solomonic arts using this method is time-consuming, vis-consuming, and Might-consuming, and tends to produce *sahirs* with a weak grasp on reality due to Warping and many Flaws. This is why unGifted *sahirs* tend to group in families, and generally teach their summoning art and Solomonic specialty only.

Experimentation

While it is nothing so grand as Hermetic arcane experimentation, *sahirs* have a means of producing unexpected results in their laboratories, and by sharing these discoveries they can improve their tradition's magic in slow and incremental steps. Because it requires that the *sahir* have more than one Solomonic art or power, Gifted *sahirs* tend to be the most inventive.

When designing a new effect, either inventing a formula or binding a spirit, the *sahir* may declare that he is experimenting by incorporating a second art or another power into the effect. His lab total then uses the lower of these two Abilities or Arts. The player should give the storyguide some idea of what he is hoping to achieve, based on the two powers. The player also adds a simple die to the *sahir's* lab total.

When the project is completed, the *sahir* makes a stress roll for each power used. On a 0, check for botches to see if there is a disaster, otherwise the result is a story event. If neither roll is 0, and one roll is 12 or more, the *sahir* makes a unique discovery related to the power with the highest value, instead of his original effect. For all other results, the results include a side effect related to the secondary power. For example, a Storytelling/Astrology spell to put people to sleep might also tell the *sahir* their names.

Sahirs with Solomonic Astrology may apply one fifth of their Solomonic Astrology score to these rolls (see The Solomonic Art, Magical Defense Bonuses, later in this chapter). This does not prevent them from botching if they roll a 0, but makes a discovery more likely. *Sahirs* with the Inventive Genius Virtue may similarly add 3 to these rolls.

Unique discoveries from an experiment can be used to improve Solomonic magic in much the same way that magi improve Hermetic theory. If the *sahir* achieves a discovery and spends a subsequent season duplicating his efforts, and does not get a 0 on either experimentation roll, he stabilizes it and generates a number of Breakthrough Points equal to the effect's magnitude. (He also gains this many Warping Points minus a simple die.) These Breakthrough Points accumulate to produce Minor, Major, or Solomonic Breakthroughs that can change how *sahirs* practice magic. (See *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, pages 26-30, for more on Original Research.)

Warping and Corruption

When a *sahir* receives two or more Warping Points as a result of a magical botch, there is the chance that he will lose control. Instead of channeling the spirit's power as he desires, the spirit's power overtakes him. He typically blacks out and awakens in another place: lost in an otherworldly desert with nine moons and sand of every color; or perhaps held as a prisoner in the castle of his enemy, locked in a dark dungeon; or perhaps even bound in the position of his summoned spirit, watching as the spirit performs magic while drawing upon the *sahir's* own life energy. *Sahirs* call this place (which many believe is separate from the Magic Realm) *bayna* (BEY-na, "between"), and the experience *Fatra Bayna* (FA-tra BEY-na, "Time Between").

Upon gaining the Warping Points, the *sahir's* player may make a Stamina + Concentration roll (Solomonic Travel gives him a bonus, as described later). The Ease Factor is a stress die (no botch possible), plus the *sahir's* Warping Score, plus the number of Warping Points he received, plus his aura modifier. If he botches, roll a botch die for each Warping Point gained. Success means there is no other effect. If he fails, he experiences *Fatra Bayna*.

***Fatra Bayna* Avoidance: stress die + Stamina + Concentration + Solomonic Travel bonus vs. stress die (no botch) + Warping Score + Warping Points received + aura**

During *Fatra Bayna*, all of the *sahir's* summoned spirits are released from his control, dispelled whether they want to depart or not, and all his active ritual effects end. What happens to his body varies; for some it remains in stasis or transforms into a spirit form, while for others it continues to react and respond as if controlled by one of his summoned spirits. Some *sahirs* describe the experience as similar to what they imagine it is like for intelligent spirits, like *jinn*, when they are bound to an object or person against their will. The character continues to age while he is away, though he does not starve, asphyxiate, or suffer from exposure in the meantime.

Fatra Bayna lasts approximately two minutes at minimum, to approximately one year maximum. This duration is determined by a secret simple die roll according to the following chart. The *sahir's* player does have some influence over the results, even though he does not see the roll; he may add or subtract 3 from the die roll by spending a Confidence Point, and if the *sahir* possesses Solomonic Travel the

player may also choose to add or subtract his Magical Defense Bonus. (Players should add to the roll if they want a better chance of positive effects, or subtract from it if they want to ensure they spend less time away from the physical world.)

Fatra Bayna Results

Die roll	<i>Fatra Bayna</i> Duration	Effects
1 or less	Diameter	Gain 3 Corruption Points
2–4	Sun	Gain 2 Corruption Points
5–7	Moon	Gain 1 Corruption Point
8–9	Season	Gain 1 Spirit Point
10 or more	Year	Gain 3 Spirit Points

When he returns, the *sahir* receives a number of Warping Points equal to the modified roll, and a number of Spirit or Corruption Points, as indicated on the chart. These are similar to experience points in that they must be spent immediately; Spirit Points provide beneficial effects and Corruption Points negative effects. *Sahirs* are more likely to gain Corruption Points than Spirit Points, and for this reason *Fatra Bayna* is generally regarded as a phenomenon that punishes careless *sahirs*. Those who benefit are admired for their wisdom and endurance.

Also, whenever a *sahir's* Warping Score increases by 1, he automatically receives an additional Corruption Point, which must be spent the next time he experiences *Fatra Banyu*.

The storyguide spends Spirit Points like so:

1 Spirit Point: Gain (Warping Score x 5) experience points in a summoning or Solomonian art.

1 Spirit Point: The *sahir* invents a new spell with level no greater than the *sahir's* (Warping Score x 5).

1 Spirit Point: The *sahir* returns with (Warping Score x 5) pawns of vis that only he can use, collected within his person or his belongings.

1 Spirit Point: Gain 3 Confidence Points.

3 Spirit Points: Increase the *sahir's* Confidence Score by 1.

3 Spirit Points: Gain a +1 cumulative bonus to all social interactions (leading, teaching and bargaining, but not summoning or casting), which helps to mitigate the effects of The Gift and similar Flaws.

3 Spirit Points: Gain a Minor Virtue appropriate to the experience, or remove a Minor Flaw.

Corruption Points have the following effects, also chosen by the storyguide:

1 Corruption Point: Make an immediate Aging roll, adding the *sahir's* Warping Score to the total.

2 Corruption Points: Gain a bad Reputation among spirits from the appropriate realm at 2, or increase this Reputation by 1.

3 Corruption Points: Gain a –1 penalty to all social interactions, which is cumulative with the effects of The Gift and similar Flaws.

3 Corruption Points: Gain a Minor Flaw appropriate to the experience, or lose a Minor Virtue.

Other *sahirs* and spirits who are familiar with the *sahir* can usually tell upon the character's return whether the experience was positive or negative, though this otherworldly aspect fades quickly.

Integration

There is always the possibility that peaceful voices will prevail, and that magi and *sahirs* will work together to combine their magic into a unified tradition. Or perhaps one of them will learn enough about the other to steal their magical secrets and gain the upper hand. Here are some examples of discoveries that might be achieved in either case.

Hermetic True Names

Minor Breakthrough

The magus learns to incorporate True Names into his magic, allowing him to invent spells that include an Arcane Connection to a supernatural being. This will enable magi to effectively memorize and share such Arcane Connections, making them less reliant upon physical connections for their spirit magic.

Scientates Suleimanis

Major Breakthrough

By studying the Solomonic arts and the five Abilities associated with them, the magus gains Insight into the way Solomonic magic allows *sahirs* to duplicate natural effects associated with science, emotions, and the supernatural realms. The magus then invents experimental Rego spells that produce similar effects. Once the breakthrough is achieved and the associated Virtue distributed, magi will be able to duplicate any Solomonic formulaic spell, including those overcoming the Limit of Energy.

Hermetic Realm Initiation

Hermetic Breakthrough

After undergoing the initiation himself, instead of gaining a Solomonic art, the magus gains Insight into the Solomonic initiation process. This might produce a spell to warp another person with magic, or a Ritual to open him to a Virtue possessed by the caster. This research eventually leads to a breakthrough with which the magus may initiate others into new Supernatural or Hermetic Virtues without the secrecy and lore of a Mystery Cult. Soon powerful magi may even learn to teach Hermetic magic to the unGifted, by initiating them into each Art.

New Hermetic Virtues

Scientates Suleimanis

Major, Hermetic (Major Breakthrough)

This breakthrough Virtue allows a magus to invent and cast spells that use any of the non-Ritual Solomonic guidelines, using Rego with a Form appropriate to the target. This is similar to craft magic, where magi produce goods through magic labor. For example, a magus with this Virtue could use ReTe to duplicate the alchemical process by which steel's sharpness or hardness is enhanced, or ReCo to encourage the body to recover fatigue more quickly.

Hermetic Realm Initiation

Major, Hermetic (Hermetic Breakthrough)

The magus may initiate students into Virtues in the same way *sahirs* do, by convincing a spirit to accompany the student into the Magic Realm. This uses the character's Rego Vim Lab Total instead of Solomonic Travel, and substitutes Magic Lore for Magic Theory, but otherwise works the same way: costing vis, reducing the spirit's Might Score, and Warping the student.

Solomonic Devices

Minor Breakthrough

The *sahir* must study enchanted items made with Hermetic magic, which gives him Insight towards bindings made with similar effects. Through experimentation, he learns to build devices that do not require a spirit, but maintain concentration on their own. This discovery would likely lead to a great wealth of invested items throughout the Mythic Middle East and beyond, as *sahirs* would be free to create items with lasting effects without binding spirits to them.

Spontaneous Solomonic Spells

Major Breakthrough

Sahirs would greatly benefit from the ability to cast spells they have not memorized. Studying Magic Theory provides Insight into this practice, perhaps yielding formulaic spells where the *sahir* can change the parameters as he casts them. The Major Virtue this project produces would allow *sahirs* to cast spontaneous spells in the same way as magi, dividing their Casting Total by 2 or by 5. Because *sahirs* would need less time in their laboratories inventing new spells, this discovery could lessen the importance of *buyut al-hikma* throughout the *Suhhar*, as more *sahirs* prefer adventuring during their free seasons to learning new spells.

Independent Solomonic Magic

Solomonic Breakthrough

By studying Hermetic magic, a *sahir* could remove his need to channel a spirit's power. This requires him to initiate at least one Hermetic Technique and Form and study Magic Theory, but the Insights produced from these sources lead to spells that could be cast independently of a summoned spirit, with the *sahir* maintaining the effects and using the *sahir's* Penetration Total. This would be especially valuable for unGifted *sahirs*, as their spirits' Might Scores would no longer limit their magic.

New Solomonic Virtues

Spontaneous Solomonic Spells

Major, Supernatural (Major Breakthrough)

The *sahir* possessing this Breakthrough Virtue can cast formulaic spells spontaneously, the same way as magi do. To do this he must either lose a Fatigue level and divide his Casting Total by 2, or not roll the stress die and divide his Casting Total by 5.

Independent Solomonic Magic

Major, Supernatural (Solomonic Breakthrough)

The *sahir* can cast and maintain Solomonic spells without channeling them through a spirit. This does not add his Summoning Strength to his Casting Total, and uses his Penetration Total instead of the spirit's. If he is unGifted, his independent spells and effects have no maximum level.

The Solomonic Arts

The Art of Suleiman, through its component arts, has a wide range of effects described by the guidelines in this section, with sample spells to demonstrate how these effects might be used. Players may safely assume that every listed guideline has been developed into a spell at one time or another.

Most of the guidelines use magic to duplicate the natural results of practicing medieval science. However, some effects require ritual spells because their effects cannot be reproduced with mundane abilities.

The sample spells sometimes reference a spirit by name (written as "[Spirit]"), but this is generally not exclusive. Unless the *sahir* has an appropriate Flaw, any spirit he summons may power any spell he casts.

Magical Defenses

Like magi receive supernatural bonuses from their Form scores, *sahirs* have an innate form of "magical defense" from their Solomonic arts. Divide the *sahir's* score in each art by 5 to determine his Magical Defense Bonus, and see below for the applications.

Solomonic Alchemy: From regular exposure to magic, the *sahir's* body is rarefied, becoming stronger and more resistant to physical dangers. Add his bonus to Soak and subtract it from Aging rolls, and add it to Strength when calculating what he can carry without penalty.

Solomonic Astrology: Because of his heightened understanding of heavenly signs and what they predict about the future, the *sahir* is more aware of events before they happen, and thus is less likely to be surprised. Add his bonus to all of his Concentration and Initiative rolls, and to Perception rolls associated with alertness or intuition.

Solomonic Physic: The *sahir* with knowledge of Solomonic Physic is generally healthier. Add his bonus to his Recovery rolls and subtract it from Aging rolls (this is cumulative with Solomonic Alchemy). In addition, he becomes less noticeable: add his bonus to rolls that involve being stealthy or unobtrusive, including his Defense score when he is not attacking.

Solomonic Storytelling: The *sahir's* presence is enhanced, giving him the bonus to rolls for non-magical social activities (cumulative with the bonus from *Fatra Bayna*) and increasing his Leadership score when commanding spirits or managing a laboratory. Also, he is more resistant to powers that target emotions; add his bonus to any rolls involving his Personality Traits.

Solomonic Travel: Exposure to the supernatural allows the *sahir* to add his bonus to otherworldly navigation rolls, and add or subtract it from his *Bayna* Avoidance rolls. He may also add this bonus to Stamina rolls to avoid fatigue, and to his Finesse rolls when controlling his magic.

Sihr

Strictly speaking, *Sihr* is not a Solomonic art, but is so common among *sahirs* that many *Ashab al-Halqa* (Followers of the Circle, the sixth *sahir* "family") consider it the special power of their lineage. In some texts the Seal of Suleiman is drawn with six points — this is seen as an attempt by these *sahirs* to spread the idea that *Sihr* is just as integral to the Art as the other families' powers.

Sahirs use *Sihr* to summon *jinn*, and to provide mystic force behind the bargain that places a *jinni* into their service. It is said to originate from the powers of Suleiman, and is sometimes referred to as Solomonic *Sihr*, or (Solomonic) Summoning. It is very similar to the *Sihr* that is still practiced in Iberia, though the two traditions split almost two hundred years ago. Solomonic *Sihr* is slightly more compatible with Solomonic magic, though *sahirs* can use either version.

Discerning *jinn*: Before a *jinni* is summoned, the *sahir* should study it to determine its strength. If the *sahir* can see spirits (with Second Sight, for example), then he can directly observe the *jinni* in its native habitat, and it takes him just a single round to make the necessary assessment. Without magical help, the *sahir* must use his knowledge of the local area to gather sufficient information about the spirit who dwells there; the player should make an Intelligence + (Area) Lore roll against an Ease Factor of 6 to discover the Form that the *jinni* takes and its likely powers. It takes about an hour for the *sahir* to make this assessment.

Once this preliminary research has been performed, the *sahir* can attempt to discern the *jinni*'s approximate Might, based on its appearance (if seen), its abode, and the *sahir*'s own knowledge. He must decide whether the *jinn* is faerie, magic or infernal (based on its behavior and attitude), and make an Intelligence roll modified by the appropriate (Realm) Lore. Success reveals the magnitude of the *jinni*'s Might. Failure indicates the *sahir* is unable to guess, making summoning it more dangerous. The decision as to which (Realm) Lore to use is vital; if the player guesses wrongly, then this is a straight Intelligence roll. Since the player has no experience with *jinn*, the storyguide should make the distinction between them clear.

Discern Might: Intelligence + (Realm) Lore + stress die against Ease Factor of 9

Summoning *jinn*: Once discerned, the *sahir* may summon the *jinni* and attempt to bind it into service. This summons requires the *jinni* to be within range of the *sahir*'s voice, or else he needs an Arcane Connection. The summons makes the spirit assume its material form, and takes at least fifteen minutes to perform while the *sahir* chants words of command, makes prescribed gestures, and draws symbols on the ground.

The summons generally includes an offering of vis, one pawn for every magnitude of the *jinni*'s Might Score, but the *sahir* can offer more (a maximum equal to the character's *Sihr* score) or less (none, even). The *sahir* only has his own rough estimate of the *jinni*'s Might, so he may unwittingly offer more or less than the standard amount. This vis does not affect the summoning, but it plays an important role in the bargaining which follows.

The *sahir* then generates a Summoning Total based on his *Sihr* score. A successful summons that also penetrates the *jinni*'s Magic Resistance forces it to take physical form before the *sahir*. Calculate the Summoning Strength, which is the amount by which the *sahir*'s Casting Total exceeds the Ease Factor.

A botched roll results in an infuriated *jinni*, or a spirit different from the one intended.

Summoning Total: Presence + *Sihr* + aura + stress die

Ease Factor: *jinni*'s Might

Summoning Penetration: Summoning Total + *sahir*'s Penetration Bonus – *jinni*'s Might Score

Summoning Strength: Summoning Total – Ease Factor

A failed summons has no effect, though the *sahir* can try again at the cost of a Fatigue level.

The *sahir* can spend extra time on a summons; each additional fifteen minutes causes him to lose a long-term Fatigue level after the ceremony, and adds another botch die to the Summoning roll, but provides a +5 bonus to Penetration. He can also spend vis, each pawn giving a +2 bonus to his Penetration Total.

Bargaining with the *jinni*: After the *jinni* arrives, the *sahir* must bargain with it to gain its services. The power of *Sihr* ensures that the *jinni* cannot depart or attack until a bargain is struck or they have agreed no bargain can be achieved. A *sahir* who refuses to bargain releases the *jinni* from making a pact. "Bargain" may be misleading; a skilled *sahir* can obtain the services of a weak *jinni* without offering anything in return. The arrangement is magically enforced: the *jinni* cannot break the terms unless the *sahir* reneges first, and most *jinn* will obey the spirit of the agreement if treated well. A *sahir* can attempt to strike a bargain with any *jinni*, not just those he has summoned — for example, re-negotiation following the lapsing of a previous bargain — and Summoning Strength can give him an oft-needed advantage.

Bargain Total: Communication + Bargain + Summoning Strength + stress die

Ease Factor: 18 + bargain modifiers

Bargain Modifiers

Terms are general in scope	+3	<i>e.g. "Follow me around and do as I say."</i>
Terms are specific in scope	+0	<i>e.g. "Help me locate the lost city of Babel."</i>
Terms constitute a single task	-3	<i>e.g. "Escort me safely to Damascus."</i>
Terms reduce Might Score	+3 per Point	
Service to last one day	-3	
Service to last one week	0	
Service to last one month	+3	
Service to last one season	+6	
Service to last one year	+9	
<i>Sahir</i> accepts a small duty	-3 per duty	
<i>Sahir</i> accepts a heavy duty	-6 per duty	
<i>Sahir</i> offers less vis than standard	+2 per pawn under the standard	
<i>Sahir</i> offers more vis than standard	-2 per pawn over the standard	

The Ease Factor has a bargain modifier, which depends on what the *sahir* is asking from the *jinni* and what he offers. Aiding the *sahir* with his magic for a day is a single task, which reduces the Ease Factor by 6 (-3 for "Service to last one day" and -3 for "Terms constitute a single task").

Note that *sahirs* with The Gift typically suffer a penalty to all social interactions, which affects this total.

A failed bargain roll results in a failure to make a bargain, and the *jinni* is not compelled to remain. A botch results in the *sahir* offending the *jinni* and temporarily acquiring either Supernatural Nuisance Flaw (for a weak *jinni*) or Plagued by *Jinni* (for a moderate or powerful *jinni*), which lasts for at least a month.

A successful bargain binds the *jinni* to the *sahir* for the duration. He can ask it to perform any task within its power, though the *jinni* cannot renege on any solemn oaths it has sworn prior to the summons, and for *jinn* who have adopted a religion this includes disobeying the tenets of their faith. The *jinni* cannot make any new oaths while bound in service without the *sahir's* permission.

A *sahir* can only bind a limited number of *jinn* in service to him at a time, equal to his Leadership score plus one — even a *sahir* with no Leadership score can command at least one *jinni*.

Maximum Number of Bound *Jinn*: Leadership + 1

Solomonic *Sihr* is the most common summoning art in the Mythic Middle East. It is usually aligned with the Magic realm, though there are Divine, Faerie, and Infernal versions as well, each with slight functional differences (see the Non-Magic *Sihr* sidebar).

Typical Duties for *Sahirs*

The supernatural realm to which the *jinni* is aligned can greatly influence the duty that it sets the *sahir*. Infernal *jinn* typically demand sinful duties, while faerie *jinn* want human attention, and magic *jinn* desire power and wealth. (See Chapter 3: *Jinn*, for more details.)

Small duties: cleansing or protecting the *jinni's* home, guarding a human family to which the *jinni* has become attached, retrieving stolen wealth, writing a poem in praise of the *jinn*, providing rare commodities such as frankincense or rubies, obtaining vis from a particular source.

Heavy duties: fighting wizards who seek to enslave *jinn*, freeing slaves from captivity, playing a jest on an important local figure, delivering the heart of an enemy, traveling to a supernatural realm where the *jinni* cannot go, procuring a unique item such as a book written in Suleiman's own hand.

Non-Magic *Sihr*

The description of Solomonic *Sihr* assumes that the power is aligned to the Magic realm, which is its most common form. However, versions of *Sihr* aligned to other realms have the following mechanical changes.

Divine *Sihr*: Though the *sahir* has no foreign aura penalties, he cannot offer vis, which increases the Bargaining Ease Factor by twice the magnitude of the *jinni's* Might Score.

Faerie *Sihr*: The *sahir* adds the value of his highest positive Reputation to his Bargaining Total, and subtracts his highest negative Reputation. The storyguide rules whether a particular Reputation is positive or negative. (Sympathy Traits and Faerie Rank can also apply to this roll, if you are using the rules for these from *Realms of Power: Faerie*.)

Infernal *Sihr*: Failure on the Bargaining roll does not automatically permit the *jinni* to depart, and as long as the *sahir* likes he can hold it prisoner and continue to try and coerce it, though each subsequent attempt costs him a Fatigue level. The storyguide should lower the Bargaining roll Ease Factor the longer the *jinni* is held captive: -1 after a day, -2 after a season, -3 after a year.

Solomonic Alchemy

Solomonic Alchemy affects nonliving matter, simple (water, air, fire, earth) or complex (e.g. metal, smoke, bone, wood). The *sahir* must touch the target, and can affect up to one cubic pace of simple matter or fifty cubic inches of complex matter. Each additional magnitude added to the spell level multiplies the amount of matter he can target by ten.

These effects have one parameter, Alteration, which determines the magnitude of natural change that the *sahir* can impose upon the matter. Thus, making dirt as sticky as clay is less difficult than making it as sticky as mercury.

Slight: The matter undergoes a subtle change in appearance or property, within the common range of examples for that matter. For example, give water the scent of the sea, or change the color of a standard gemstone. (+0 magnitudes)

Minor: The matter undergoes a noticeable change in appearance or property. The change must be commonly found in nature, and of a general sort. For example, brighten light to that of a torch, or condense air into a cloud. A Minor change can modify the Damage naturally caused by matter by up to +5 or -5. (+1 magnitude)

Substantial: The matter undergoes a significant change in appearance or property, uncommon in nature. For example, make water as caustic as acid, or iron as flexible as copper. A Substantial change can affect the natural Damage caused by the matter by up to +10 or -10. (+2 magnitudes)

Major: The matter undergoes a total change in appearance or property, but no more than the extremes found in nature. For example, call lightning from a clear sky, or make stone as hard as diamond. A Major change can alter the Damage naturally caused by the matter by up to +15 or -15. (+3 magnitudes)

When performing Solomonic Alchemy as a mundane activity using Philosophiae, the *sahir* must apply various reagents, powders, tinctures or other ingredients to the target. These are typically provided by an apothecary, and many *sahirs* make their living providing such materials.

See *Art and Academe* for more examples of alchemical effects.

Solomonic Alchemy Guidelines

These guidelines distinguish between changes to principle qualities (hot, cold, dry, or moist) and secondary qualities (things like acidity, density, weight, and color) of matter.

Ritual alchemy effects can be held dormant until the *sahir* or the spirit triggers them by concentrating upon them, for as long as the spirit maintains the effect. Animate objects will move under the *sahir's* control if he concentrates.

Unlike non-ritual spells, these ritual guidelines produce a magical thing that cannot directly affect anyone with Magic Resistance unless the spell penetrates.

Level 3: Enhance or diminish a secondary quality of simple matter.

Level 4: Enhance or diminish a principle quality of simple matter.

Level 5: Enhance or diminish a secondary quality of complex matter.

Transform simple matter into another kind of simple matter for the duration of the effect. (Ritual)

Level 10: Enhance or diminish a principle quality of complex matter.

Animate simple matter for the duration of the effect. (Ritual)

Transform simple or complex matter into another kind of complex or simple matter for the duration of the

effect. (Ritual)

Level 15: Animate complex matter for the duration of the effect. (Ritual)

Transform matter for the duration of the effect, adding or removing properties such as weight or temperature with the Alteration parameter. (Ritual)

Solomonic Alchemy Spell Formulas

[Spirit]'s Oasis

Solomonic Alchemy Level 5

Alteration: Slight, Ritual

The *sahir* mixes a pawn of vis and a cubic pace of sand, and changes it into a pool of clear spring water, enough to fill several large barrels. This transformation only lasts as long as the spirit maintains the effect, though the ritual nature of the spell ensures that the water will still quench thirst if drunk before it changes back. Note, however, that characters with Magic Resistance cannot swallow this water unless the effect penetrates.

(Base 5)

Summon forth the purest fire, to set alight those who oppose us

Solomonic Alchemy Level 15

Alteration: Major

The *sahir* takes a barely inflammable object like a damp cloth or a piece of wood coated with pitch, and lights the end of it with a bright blue flame that naturally burns hotter than a blacksmith's forge. This flame burns until it runs out of fuel, can ignite things like flesh or wet thatch that are otherwise resistant to fire, and causes +20 Damage to anyone that comes into contact with it.

When Magos al-Laquis al-Abyad al-Sakhr casts his version of this spell through his guardian angel, the flame is almost silvery in color. His version includes a side effect (gained through arcane experimentation) that causes infernal beasts to howl with pain when struck by its light.

(Base 4, +3 Major)

Bear me upon breath of stone

Solomonic Alchemy Level 20

Alteration: Minor, Ritual

The *sahir* lights a bonfire that produces a great deal of smoke, and after he sacrifices the necessary vis the wisps of smoke become as solid as stone, able to support the weight of a man. The *sahir* may then step onto this unnatural cloud and rise into the air, or perhaps climb down it if he moves quickly, as long as the spirit maintains the spell and the fire continues to produce smoke.

(This is a "noticeable" transformation, altering the substantive quality of the smoke to correspond to that of stone).

(Base 15, +1 Minor)

Let us fortify the steel that strikes our foes

Solomonic Alchemy Level 25

Alteration: Substantial

The *sahir* touches the affected object (and spends more than an hour treating and soaking it with alchemical mixtures, if *Philosophiae* is added), and the metal is permanently purified by the process. This gives the steel object a +5 bonus to its Damage score, or a +2 bonus to its Protection or Defense score.

The spell enhances the solidity of plain steel, that secondary property that makes it especially sharp and strong. It can affect a single object up to 500 cubic inches in volume, approximately the size of a great sword, a heater shield or a suit of mail.

(Base 10, +1 Minor, +2 size)

The vigilant guardian

Solomonic Alchemy Level 35

Alteration: Major, Ritual

With this spell, the *sahir* animates a stone statue up to 20 paces by 10 paces in size, which follows his directions whenever he concentrates, for as long as the spirit maintains the effect. The statue can slowly move and bend its limbs as if they were made of clay, though they remain hard and impenetrable. It can even change its shape, flowing like mud or sand to spread out across a surface, though it will naturally attempt to return to its original form whenever the *sahir* releases control.

(Base 10, +3 Major, +2 size)

Solomonic Astrology

Astrological effects impart information directly to the *sahir* through his recognition of signs and portents, and can thus target any individual the *sahir* can see or to which he has an Arcane Connection. These effects have a single parameter, Detail, which describes the quality of information gleaned from the spell, though questions about the past or the distant future add an additional magnitude, and those about the near future (within a month) add two magnitudes.

Some ritual spell effects give the *sahir* the ability to sense danger, similar to the Premonitions Supernatural Ability. When this effect is active, the storyguide should apply a Premonition bonus to any roll where the outcome would prove the prediction false. The base value of this bonus is noted next to the corresponding guideline, and increases with the Detail parameter, as indicated below.

Binary: A one-word answer between two choices. (+0 magnitudes)

Basic: The equivalent of a three-word answer. This gives a +1 bonus to premonition effects. (+1 magnitude)

Brief: A single sentence of information. This gives a +2 bonus to premonition effects. (+2 magnitudes)

Thorough: All relevant information associated with the target. This gives a +3 bonus to premonition effects. (+3 magnitudes)

Answers provided by Solomonic Astrology are not absolute, especially when they involve the future, though they do provide indicators that *sahirs* can interpret to receive clear answers to specific questions. For more guidance on the sorts of results that astrological calculations tend to provide, see *Art & Academe*, page 74.

When used with *Artes Liberales* to disguise or augment his casting, the *sahir* must make up an

astrological chart for the target. This requires knowledge of the date and place of its birth, and an Intelligence + Artes Liberales roll against an Ease Factor of 9.

Art & Academe has more examples of astrological effects that *sahirs* can duplicate.

Solomonic Astrology Guidelines

All Solomonic Astrology ritual spells increase the Penetration of the *sahir's* magic by the effect level when casting subsequent spells against that same target. This bonus only lasts while the spirit maintains the effect, and still requires the *sahir* to make a Finesse roll for casting multiple spells.

Level 2: Perceive one obvious property of a person or object (e.g. hair color, current activity).

Level 3: Perceive one property of a person or object that can be determined from close examination (e.g. state of consciousness, age).

Level 4: Perceive a specific piece of information about a person or object that cannot normally be determined without an appropriate Ability (e.g. emotional state, maker of an object).

Perceive one obvious property of a person's or object's surroundings (e.g. time of day, terrain). (Ritual)

Level 5: Sense complex information about a person or object that would normally require extended use of an Ability (e.g. the truth of a statement, all mundane properties of an object).

Perceive one property of a person's or object's surroundings that can be determined from close examination (climate, prosperity level). (Ritual)

Receive a premonition regarding mortal peril to a person or object (+2 bonus). (Ritual)

Level 10: Perceive a specific piece of information about a person's or object's surroundings that cannot normally be determined without an appropriate Ability (a companion's health, a supernatural aura). (Ritual)

Receive a premonition regarding danger to a person or object (+1 bonus). (Ritual)

Level 15: Perceive complex information about a person's or object's surroundings that would normally require extended use of an Ability (all nearby animals, what others think of that person) (Ritual)

Receive a premonition regarding an inconvenience to a person or object (+0 bonus). (Ritual)

Solomonic Astrology Spell Formulas

What is the state of [Target]'s health?

Solomonic Astrology Level 4

Detail: Basic

This spell tells the *sahir* whether the target inclines more towards life or death, and in what way. For example, "Alive, weak, sickly."

If the target has Magic Resistance, this effect must penetrate to provide an answer; many *sahirs* cast low-level Astrology spells as ritual spells for the bonus to their Penetration. For this spell, this costs a pawn of vis and gives +4 Penetration to subsequent spells.

(Base 3, +1 Basic)

Where is [Target] at this moment?

Solomonic Astrology Level 10

Detail: Brief

The *sahir* concentrates upon his question (and perhaps draws a horoscope for the target, adding half an hour to the casting time and his Artes Liberales to the Casting Total), and learns the target's current location, within a describable region and in relation to a particular feature, such as "South of the city of Baghdad, within an ancient stone structure."

(Base 4, +2 Brief)

What are the words that surround [Target]?

Solomonic Astrology Level 15

Detail: Thorough, Ritual

The *sahir* concentrates upon his target, and for as long as his spirit keeps the effect active, he can hear everything said in the target's presence. The *sahir* is not actually there, so he is not affected by magic that targets those in the area, which makes this effect ideal for intelligence gathering.

(Base 4, +3 Thorough)

When and where was [Target] born?

Solomonic Astrology Level 25

Detail: Thorough

When the *sahir* does not know the date or location of his target's birth, he may use this spell to divine it — though not, of course, while using Artes Liberales to boost the casting, since this is precisely the information he needs to draw the target's horoscope.

(Base 5, +3 Thorough, +1 past)

Will [Target] survive tomorrow's battle?

Solomonic Astrology Level 30

Detail: Thorough, Ritual

This spell gives the *sahir* a premonition concerning his target's chances against mortal peril in his near future. The storyguide considers the question, and then outlines the conditions for the *sahir's* player in general terms. For example, "He is not a skilled warrior but he wears good armor, so he is likely to prevail."

Mechanically, this translates to a +5 bonus (+3 for Thorough, +2 for "mortal peril") to all rolls that would gainsay this outcome (such as the target's Defense rolls).

(Base 5, +3 Thorough, +2 near future)

Solomonic Physic

To affect a target with Solomonic Physic, the *sahir* must touch it during the round he casts the spell, and he can affect animals as easily as humans. As long as the spell targets an individual, its size does not matter; a giant or dwarf can be affected as easily as a normal man.

Physic effects have one parameter, Potency, which determines the strength of the effect. Many of these effects can injure as easily as heal.

Weak: Affect pain or other symptoms of injury or disease, a minor aging crisis, or Winded Fatigue level. (+0 magnitudes)

Mild: Affect a Light Wound, Minor Disease, serious aging crisis, or Weary Fatigue level. (+1 magnitude)

Moderate: Affect a Medium Wound, Serious Disease, major aging crisis, or Tired Fatigue level. (+2 magnitudes)

Strong: Affect a Heavy Wound, Major Disease, critical aging crisis, or Dazed Fatigue level. (+3 magnitudes)

Mighty: Affect an Incapacitating Wound, Critical Disease, terminal aging crisis, or Unconscious Fatigue level. (+4 magnitudes)

For guidelines that grant either a bonus or a penalty, the choice is made during casting; the spell as designed can do both. Since many of these effects involve a bonus or penalty to the target's next Recovery roll, the target may never know which was selected.

When disguising or supplanting his magic with Medicine, the *sahir* must administer herbs and other ingredients typically supplied by an apothecary, much like *sahirs* performing Solomonic Alchemy. With no access to these materials, the *sahir* must use arcane gestures and words.

Additional examples of medicinal effects that *sahirs* can duplicate with magic may be found in *Art and Academe*.

Solomonic Physic Guidelines

All active Solomonic Physic ritual effects also either protect the patient against the penalties for that particular type of wound, disease, or level of fatigue; or they prevent that wound, disease or fatigue from healing, for as long as the spirit maintains the effect.

Also, for the duration, ritual effects may be delayed like with Solomonic Alchemy: held dormant until the *sahir* or the spirit triggers them by concentrating. Note that for the spirit to trigger an effect it is maintaining, it must make a Concentration roll.

General: Modify the target's next Wound Recovery roll by $(3 \times (\text{the effect's magnitude} + 2))$. Use this guideline for effects Level 5 or greater.

Modify the target's next Disease Recovery roll by $(3 \times (\text{the effect's magnitude} + 2))$ against diseases of a certain humor. Use this guideline for effects Level 5 or greater.

Cause a wound if the target fails a Stamina roll against an Ease Factor of $(3 \times (\text{the effect's magnitude} + 2))$. Use this guideline for effects Level 5 or greater.

Level 2: Modify the target's next Wound Recovery roll by 1.

Modify the target's next Disease Recovery roll against diseases of a certain humor by 1.

Cause a wound if the target fails a Stamina roll against an Ease Factor of 0.

Level 3: Modify the target's next Wound Recovery roll by 3.

Modify the target's next Disease Recovery roll against diseases of a certain humor by 3.

Cause a wound if the patient fails a Stamina roll against an Ease Factor of 3.

Reduce or increase the potency of poison by one step.

Level 4: Modify the target's next Wound Recovery roll by 6.

Modify the target's next Disease Recovery roll against diseases of a certain humor by 6.

Cause a wound if the patient fails a Stamina roll against an Ease Factor of 6.

Level 5: Cure a specific disease in the normal recovery interval.

Restore a fatigue level.

Cause the loss of a fatigue level.

Restore a long-term fatigue level. (Ritual)

Cause the loss of a long-term fatigue level. (Ritual)

Instantly cure a specific disease. (Ritual)

Infect the target with a specific disease. (Ritual)

Level 10: Heal a wound from a specific source (poison, crushing damage, piercing damage) over the course of the wound's normal recovery interval.

Force the target to make an Aging roll.

Instantly heal a wound from a specific source (piercing damage, crushing damage, poison). (Ritual)

Cause a wound. (Ritual)

Instantly cure any disease. (Ritual)

Level 15: Instantly heal a wound from any source. (Ritual)

Level 20: Resolve an aging crisis. (Ritual)

Cause an aging crisis. (Ritual)

Solomonic Physic Spell Formulas

[Spirit] sits on the fever's edge

Solomonic Physic General

Potency: Strong

This spell helps or hinders the target's recovery from a major disease or lesser severity that affects the blood. It modifies his Recovery roll by 1 for a Level 4 spell, 3 for a Level 5 spell, or (3 x (the magnitude of the spell – 1)) for a spell Level 10 or more. For example, a Level 15 spell would add or subtract 6.

Magos al-Laquis al-Abyad al-Sakhr causes his patient to briefly feel completely at peace whenever he casts this spell through his guardian angel.

(General, +3 Strong)

Rend his flesh and tear his organs

Solomonic Physic General

Potency: Moderate

The target is poisoned internally and suffers a medium wound unless he makes a Stamina roll of Ease Factor of 0 for a Level 4 spell, or three times the magnitude of the spell for Level 5 or more. For example, at Level 20, the Ease Factor is 12.

If cast as a ritual spell, the effect can be held dormant by the spirit and released at an ideal time, and unless the target resists it, he cannot heal this wound naturally for as long as the spirit maintains concentration.

(General, +2 Moderate)

[Spirit], let me lean upon you

Solomonic Physic Level 25

Potency: Mighty

The *sahir* restores a Fatigue Level to his target, even when Unconscious, and if cast as a ritual spell the target suffers no penalty for lost fatigue for as long as the spirit maintains the effect.

Many *sahirs* cast this on themselves as a ritual spell, holding the effect dormant until they need it.

(Base 5, +4 Mighty)

Close the red wounds of war

Solomonic Physic Level 30

Potency: Mighty, Ritual

This spell immediately heals any one Incapacitating, Heavy, Medium, or Light Wound caused by damage that cuts or pierces the body. The spell takes about an hour and a half to cast, and requires six pawns of vis. It also gives the target a Warping Point unless specifically designed for him.

Because it is a ritual spell, for as long as the spirit maintains the effect, the severity of penalty from any other wounds the patient sustains is reduced by 5, and he is not incapacitated by Incapacitating wounds.

(Base 10, +4 Mighty)

Jabril's blessing

Solomonic Physic Level 40

Potency: Mighty, Ritual

This spell immediately resolves any illness caused by an aging crisis. The patient will fully recover after about a month, though for as long as the spirit maintains the effect, the patient suffers no ill effects.

(Base 20, +4 Mighty)

Solomonic Storytelling

Solomonic Storytelling spells affect "an audience," which is essentially all living beings within range of the *sahir's* voice. As with Hermetic magic, the *sahir* must be able to perceive everyone targeted by the spell at the time of casting in order to affect them, though some ritual spells create illusions that can affect anyone who comes upon them after they have been cast.

Those who are targeted by Storytelling effects have a chance to see through them, and so they have an Allure parameter that determines how difficult they are to resist. Also, Solomonic Storytelling does not circumvent Magic Resistance, so when characters with supernatural protection are targeted, the storyguide should check for penetration first.

Simple: The target sees through the effect with a Perception + Awareness roll of 6 or more, made when the subject first encounters the effect. (+0 magnitudes)

Emotional: The target resists the effect with a Perception die roll plus or minus a Personality Trait that suggests whether he would question the effect, versus an Ease Factor of 6. For

example, Brave and Loyal would probably subtract from the die roll. (+1 magnitudes)

Unsuspecting: An intelligent target may see through the effect if his suspicions are raised. Once the target is skeptical, this is a Perception + Guile roll of 6 or more to resist. (+2 magnitudes)

Supernatural: Targets with supernatural perception, such as Second Sight or Solomonic Travel ritual spells, may see through the effect. The Perception + (Ability) roll has an Ease Factor of 6 to resist. (+3 magnitudes)

Storytelling effects are always susceptible to the parameters with higher magnitude as well as the value they are designed to use, so that a suspicious person with Second Sight would have three chances to see through an effect with Emotional Allure. While designing the spell, the *sahir* may also add a magnitude to the spell level to increase the Ease Factor for any of these Perception checks by 3. For example, three additional magnitudes increases all four Ease Factors from 6 to 15.

When disguising or augmenting a Storytelling spell using (Area) Lore, the *sahir* must hold his audience's attention, making a Communication + (Area) Lore roll. Here, (Area) Lore represents the *sahir's* ability to recall and relate an appropriate story. It also represents his ability to conjure images and emotions that match the local culture and his surroundings. The difficulty of this roll varies depending upon the audience and the circumstances; Ease Factor 3 might be appropriate for a group relaxing around a fire, 15 for a hostile group blocking his way.

Some Storytelling ritual spells produce what might be called "mental species." These affect the mind directly, creating illusions of perception that are solid and in all senses real for anyone who does not resist them. An illusion of flames is not actually hot, and an illusory ceiling does not actually keep out the weather, but the illusion masks outward signs so that those affected simply do not perceive them. A guest in an illusory house might become suspicious when he still has a chill after sitting by the fire, or when he feels rain falling despite the thick roof above him.

Solomonic Storytelling Guidelines

All active Solomonic Storytelling ritual spells allow the *sahir* to provide additional direction by concentrating on the target, and selectively suppress or restore the effects to anyone affected by them, for as long as the spirit maintains the spell.

Level 3: Change an audience's dominant emotion into a similar emotion.

Convince an audience to follow an innocuous course of action ("drink and carouse").

Level 4: Inspire a specific emotion in an audience.

Convey a short message to an audience, no matter what language they speak.

Change an audience's current mental state (sleepy, confused, or awake).

Convince an audience to follow a questionable course of action ("give me your money").

Level 5: Alter an audience's memories of an event.

Convince an audience to follow a dangerous course of action ("wander into the desert").

Conjure an illusion of an individual. (Ritual)

Change an individual's image. (Ritual)

Level 10: Place false memories of an event in an audience's minds.

Convince an audience to follow a heinous course of action ("attack each other").

Conjure an illusion of a small group of individuals. (Ritual)

Change the images of a small group of individuals. (Ritual)

Level 15: Convince an audience to follow a suicidal course of action ("fall upon your swords").

Conjure an illusion of a room and its contents, or another image up to about ten paces across. (Ritual)

Change the images in a room, or another location up to about ten paces across. (Ritual)

Level 20: Conjure an illusion of a structure and its contents, or another image up to about a hundred paces across. (Ritual)

Change the images in a structure, or another location up to about a hundred paces across. (Ritual)

Level 25: Conjure an illusion of a boundary and its contents, or another image up to about a thousand paces across. (Ritual)

Change the images in a boundary, or another location up to about a thousand paces across. (Ritual)

Solomonic Storytelling Spell Formulas

The tongue has no bone, yet it crushes

Solomonic Storytelling Level 5

Allure: Emotional

The *sahir* casts this spell at his audience, causing those affected to feel profound embarrassment, as if they had just done something terribly improper. A humble person has a greater chance of seeing through this illusion.

(Base 4, +1 Emotional)

[Spirit], his arms wide

Solomonic Storytelling Level 10

Allure: Simple

The *sahir* speaks, and those who listen understand a short message woven into his voice, even if they do not speak the same language. This message should be conveyed in a few words that describe a general concept, such as "a dragon is coming from the north" or "help, my daughter is lost" or "that man is an imposter". Anyone affected may make a Perception + Awareness roll of Ease Factor 12 to see through the effect, but success means they do not understand the underlying message.

If cast as a ritual spell, the *sahir* may continue to communicate short phrases in this way each subsequent round, for as long as the spirit maintains the spell, and may include newcomers by concentrating upon them for a round.

(Base 4, +2 Ease Factor)

Make their eyelids heavy and their heads to fall

Solomonic Storytelling Level 15

Allure: Supernatural

All those within range of the *sahir's* voice are lulled to sleep unless they have supernatural perception, in which case they may shake off the effect with a Perception + (Ability) roll of 6 or more. They may easily wake again if they are disturbed; they will sleep as long as they would if they had fallen asleep naturally.

To add his Area Lore to his total, the *sahir* usually tells a familiar story in a soothing voice.

(Base 4, +3 Supernatural)

Sow the seeds for a crop of betrayers

Solomonic Storytelling Level 25

Allure: Unsuspecting

The *sahir* convinces his audience to perform a heinous act, specified at the time of casting, such as attacking each other, assaulting their leader, or burning down a mosque. Those who suspect they have been enchanted may make a Perception + Guile roll of Ease Factor 6 to resist, otherwise they will act as if they had decided on the action themselves, and proceed to carry out the command to the best of their abilities.

If they are prevented from fulfilling their orders, the desire to comply will fade over time, more or less quickly depending upon the mental state of the targets. Generally, the targets will recover from the effect at about the same time they would wake if they fell asleep. If cast as a ritual spell and maintained by a spirit, however, the effects endure and the *sahir* can suppress, restore, or even change the command by concentrating on the target.

(Base 10, +2 Unsuspecting)

[Spirit]'s cave

Solomonic Storytelling Level 30

Allure: Unsuspecting, Ritual

This ritual spell creates the illusion of a tall, hollow hill or dune, large enough to contain about a hundred people, their animals, and tents. This takes approximately an hour and a half, and costs the *sahir* six pawns of vis. Once the spell is cast, the *sahir* and the people inside can see through the image if they make a Perception + Guile roll of 6 or better, or the *sahir* can selectively drop the illusion for any of them by concentrating on the effect. This allows the people inside to watch others who approach with ease, most of whom will have no reason to doubt the image and almost certainly will travel around it, creating a perfect ambush site or hiding place. The illusion lasts for as long as the spirit maintains the effect, or until the *sahir* cancels it.

(Base 20, +2 Unsuspecting)

Solomonic Travel

Solomonic Travel opens passage through an individual target larger than a person, which the *sahir* must mark in some way, or else through a circle that he draws upon the ground or a solid surface such as a wall or floor.

These effects have one parameter, Delay, which determines how long the *sahir* must wait for the effect to manifest. The markings or circle that he draws on the target must remain undisturbed until this time.

Season: The effect manifests at the next solstice or equinox. (+0 magnitudes)

Moon: The effect manifests during the next full or new moon. (+1 magnitude)

Sun: The effect manifests at the next dawn or dusk. (+2 magnitudes)

Immediate: The effect manifests immediately. (+3 magnitudes)

The *sahir* can perform a mystic ceremony to augment his Casting Total, or to disguise his casting. This requires him to have a (Realm) Lore score of at least 3 (of the realm appropriate to the effect), consume special materials appropriate to the realm (candles, incense, offerings, sacrifices, and so on), and he must describe the effect upon the target with pictures or words. For example, a divine ceremony might require the burning of white candles and sweet incense while the *sahir* chants appropriate passages of the *Quran* and inscribes them on the target.

Solomonic Travel Guidelines

Active Solomonic Travel ritual spells grant the *sahir* supernatural senses, allowing him to see through illusions and perceive things that are imbued with supernatural power. Treat this as scores in both Magic Sensitivity and Second Sight equal to the magnitude of the spell for as long as it endures. A ritual spell that has been cast but has not yet manifested does not grant this supernatural sense.

Any passage opened by the *sahir* will remain open for as long as the spirit maintains the effect, usually long enough for others to pass through, and passage for others can also be selectively granted or revoked as the *sahir* directs.

General: Open a passage through a supernatural regio boundary of level no greater than (the magnitude of this effect + 5).

Open a passage through the Twilight Void to a vestige or boundary in the Magic Realm of level no greater than the magnitude of this effect. (See *Realms of Power: Magic*, pages 21-26)

Open a passage into the Faerie Realm through a supernatural aura of level no less than (the magnitude of this effect). (See *Realms of Power: Faerie*, pages 20-23)

Close a window or passage opened with Solomonic Travel or a similar power if the level of the canceled effect is less than ((this spell's level + 5) x 2).

Give the target a Warping Point if it fails a Stamina roll against an Ease Factor of (3 x (the spell's magnitude + 1)). Additional magnitudes give additional Warping Points.

Open a passage from the Faerie Realm to a supernatural aura with an aura bonus or penalty no less than (10 – (the magnitude of this spell + 5)). (See *Realms of Power: Faerie*, pages 29-30) (Ritual)

Open a passage through a supernatural aura to another aura of the same realm, both auras of level no less than (10 – the magnitude of this spell). (Ritual)

Level 15: Open a passage into the Twilight Void. (See *Realms of Power: Magic*, pages 23-26) (Ritual)

Open a window through an Arcane Connection. (Ritual)

Open a window into the spirit realm, where ghosts and other insubstantial beings can be seen. (Ritual)

Open a window into a sleeping person's dreams. (See *The Mysteries Revised Edition*, pages 102-111) (Ritual)

Level 20: Open a window to or from the physical world through a Magic Realm vestige or boundary. (Ritual)

Level 25: Open a passage into the spirit realm, allowing the *sahir* and his companions to become spirits for the duration. (Ritual)

Open a passage into a sleeping person's dreams. (Ritual)

Open a passage to an object or person through an Arcane Connection. (Ritual)

Level 30: Open a direct passage to or from the Magic Realm through a vestige or boundary, bypassing the Twilight Void. (Ritual)

Open a direct passage to or from the Faerie Realm. (Ritual)

Solomonic Travel Spell Formulas

[Spirit] brings the curse of *Bayna*

Solomonic Travel General

Delay: Immediate

This effect causes an individual target that the *sahir* touches to immediately gain two Warping Points, unless the target makes a Stamina roll equal to three times (the magnitude of the spell – 3). For example, a Level 25 version has an Ease Factor of 6.

(General, +3 Immediate, +1 additional Warping Point)

Through the gray haze

Solomonic Travel General

Delay: Sun

At sunset or sunrise, the *sahir* opens passage through a regio boundary of level no greater than (the magnitude of this spell formula + 3). For example, a Level 10 spell would open passage through a boundary of 5 or less.

While this spell works on any realm, the *sahir* may only incorporate his (Realm) Lore score if he correctly identifies the type of aura for the regio. If he guesses wrong, there is no bonus.

(General, +2 Sun)

We will meet again as the seasons turn

Solomonic Travel General

Delay: Season, Ritual

From within a supernatural aura, the *sahir* draws the outline of a portal that will lead to an aura of the same realm that he has visited before. The levels of both auras can be no less than (10 – the magnitude of this spell), which means that a Level 45 spell is needed to enable travel to or from a Level 1 aura. If both auras are at least Level 5, a Level 25 spell is sufficient. Most commonly *sahirs* use this spell to enable travel to the yearly *Majlis*, and cast it at the very end of spring so that they can arrive during summer.

(General)

The magical minaret

Solomonic Travel Level 30

Delay: Immediate, Ritual

The *sahir* draws upon the surface of a pool, the face of a rock, or a circle of sand, and once the ritual is complete he and any others he designates can perceive what is happening in a place to which he has an Arcane Connection. This supernatural perception goes both ways, so that others near the target can also see and hear the *sahir* and his companions, though it is clear who is actually there and who is on the other side. Those on either side of the magical window can even cast spells through it. The window only remains open as long as the *sahir's* spirit maintains the spell, however.

As this is a ritual spell, the *sahir* can open and close the window by concentrating, even selectively allowing or denying access to several at once. In addition, after the window opens the *sahir* gains

supernatural senses equivalent to scores of Second Sight 6 and Magic Sensitivity 6 for as long as the spirit maintains the effect.

(Base 15, +3 Immediate)

By the light of the ominous moon

Solomonic Travel Level 30

Delay: Moon, Ritual

Like other Solomonic Travel spells, the *sahir* draws the doorway through which he will gain passage, and once the moon changes he and his companions step through this doorway into the spirit realm. They emerge exactly where they were on the other side, yet like a spirit they are now insubstantial and invisible to other mortals, and mostly unable to affect them. In this realm they are also tangible to other spirits: they are able to see and interact with each other as if they were corporeal. Spirits who travel through the doorway experience just the opposite; they become physical and unable to interact with the spirit world without appropriate powers. (See *Realms of Power: Magic* page XXX for more on how spirits interact with the physical world.)

Sahirs generally circumvent the delay by casting the spell during a full moon.

(Base 25, +1 Moon)

Mythic Zoroastrianism

The religion of Zoroaster is a venerable one and his priests gave their names to the practitioners of magic itself. The followers of Zoroaster, also known as Mazdeans, worship the almighty God Ohrmazd. Mazdeans practice the tenets of personal honesty and truthfulness.

The Mazdean priesthood, called **mobeds** (in Greek called "magoi"), were once masters of the supernatural arts, commanding angels, spirits and elementals, predicting the future, transmuting the nature of matter, and performing great miracles. They are custodians of millennia of arcane lore and mystic knowledge. The mobeds were once a powerful tradition – their magic at its peak may even have come close to rivaling Hermetic Magic – but they are now greatly diminished.

This chapter details Zoroastrianism in Mythic Europe, its faith, practices and current concerns. It also describes the mobeds and their powers.

A note on historical accuracy

Zoroastrianism is one of the least well-known world religions; translations of its ancient texts are contradictory and their interpretations open to debate. Textual and archaeological evidence is scant; there is little consensus amongst historians and theologians on many elements of their history or beliefs.

Zoroastrianism is also a living faith, undergoing internal debates about its own origins. The history of Zoroaster, the religion he founded and the nations that adopted that faith as their state religion is open to debate and interpretation. This chapter seeks to be respectful to this venerable living faith and its adherents. This is also a gaming resource, so the most "mythic" of the various legends, histories and interpretations are more often than not used as conclusive.

A Note on Names

Zoroastrian names have at least four differing versions: the old Avestan, Middle Persian and Farsi (the Persian spoken in the thirteenth century) and Latinized names. This chapter uses the Avestan names more often than not, but the Farsi names are given in brackets where appropriate. Some figures, such as Zoroaster, have their Latinized names only. "Zoroastrian" is used interchangeably with "Mazdean".

A Mythic History

Mazdeanism starts with the birth of its founder, the prophet Zoroaster (also known as Zarathustra), over six hundred years before the birth of Christ. Zoroaster was born to the virgin Dughdov and when he was born he laughed rather than cried. He was raised as a priest on the very edge of the Persian Empire.

After a period of meditating on the world in a sacred cave, Zoroaster was visited by God (called Ohrmazd), and from this came the Zoroastrian holy hymns, the Gathas. Zoroaster spent the next ten years preaching his new faith, travelling as far as the rising sun in the east, and throughout Persia. At age forty-two, Zoroaster converted the great Persian Emperor Vishtaspa after performing a great number of miracles. Zoroaster was murdered in the city of Balkh by warriors of the Turanian Tribe while he prayed at a fire temple.

Story Seed: The Accursed Turanians

The Turanians were a tribe originating from around the Ural Mountains north of the Oxus River. Once considered a holy tribe the Turanians were led astray by powerful diabolical forces and waged war against the pious Iranians. Zoroaster's murderer, a Turanian soldier called Bratarvakhsh, was granted untold infernal powers and using sorcery raised a massive fortress called the Fortress Arvandasp.

The Turanians were assimilated by the Turks during the seventh century; their diabolical elements were utterly destroyed. Infernal artifacts belonging to the Turanians, including the sword that killed Zoroaster may still lie hidden in the lands north of the Oxus River.

With imperial patronage the Mazdean faith, under the guidance of Zoroaster's disciple Osthanes, quickly grew to become the preeminent faith in Persia. The priests of Ohrmazd were known as mobeds ("magi" in Latin or "magoi" in Greek), and they held the secrets of Zoroaster: how to understand the movements of the heavens, control spirits and unlock the secrets of the natural world.

Under the Achaemenians and Parthians, the magoi expanded their religion and practices into the West, and many great philosophers from the Hellenic world traveled to learn the secrets of the Zoroastrians.

A downturn for the faith came with the invasion of Persia by Alexander the Great. Temples, sanctuaries and icons of the Mazdeans were plundered and destroyed. The priests who defended their holy places were slaughtered; their scriptures were burned. The Seleucid period that followed this time was one of despair for the Mazdean faithful. Persecuted, they saw their temples turned over to false gods, devils and magical spirits. Their holy teachings were dispersed throughout the world for the impious and unbelievers to read and perform.

The Zoroastrians regained their strength under the Sasanids, and came into conflict with the powerful Roman Empire and the Mercurian priests. During this period, the Mazdeans and their priesthood were in furious conflict in the Western provinces with the Mercurians of the Roman Empire. Mobeds marched with Persian armies in Syria and Palestine, calling down angels and spirits, and giving their generals

prophecies and visions of the future. These conflicts however were peripheral to the true struggle of the mobeds, which was principally a war against the followers of Ahriman (the Mazdean Devil).

Zoroastrians under Islam

The rise of Islam in early seventh century spelled the end of the Zoroastrian dominance of Persia. Large numbers of Mazdeans converted to Islam after the defeat of the Sasanid Empire by the Islamic armies. This conquest is known amongst Mazdeans as "the ruin and devastation that came from the Arabs".

For the Muslim overlords of Persia, Ohrmazd is one and the same as the God of Abraham; the Avesta was in the same category as the Torah and the Gospel, and Mazdeans were considered "people of the book" (*dhimmi*). Zoroaster himself was thought of as a prophet. Despite this, a large body of laws was instituted to enforce the social and legal inferiority of the *dhimmi* in the community. Zoroastrians particularly were (unofficially) discriminated against, called *gabars* ("infidels") and accused of fire and devil worship. Over the years many Zoroastrians converted to Islam.

Most Zoroastrians who did not convert moved to remote and poor areas of South Central Iran. Increasingly they are migrating further East to unknown lands. Despite this, Arabic has not displaced the local language, and the Iranians maintain distinctly Persian cultural practices. The ancient glories of the Achaemenian era, and the heroes who antedated the first Persian Empire, were preserved in countless tales, poems and stories. The Persian national epic, *Shah-nama* by the poet Firdausi in the tenth century is still widely read and told in the thirteenth century, and details the mythological and historical past of pre-Islamic Persia, including a history of Zoroastrianism.

Story Seed: The Demon-Blooded Paladins of Manochir

The paladins of Manochir roamed Persia before its conquest by Alexander the Great. Legends tell that the greatest paladin of the age fathered a white-haired child, a sign of demon blood. The descendents of the demon-blooded son were mighty warriors, nearly unstoppable.

When the Persian Empire was conquered, their order was disbanded by Alexander, who had their great arms and armor, including a mace and a belt, buried in secret in the desert. Alexander also tried to exterminate the demon-blooded lineage. Rumors from Alexander's troops who carried out his commands say that the mace could kill an elephant with a single blow, while whoever wore the belt was impervious to harm. Uncovering a cache of these paladins' weapons in the desert would be a valuable discovery.

The Mazdean Church

For much of the history of Mazdeanism, there existed a type of religious institution, comprised of hierarchies of priests supported by the emperor. It was not until the high priests Tanser and Kartir under the Sasanids that there existed a formal, Mazdean Church with an explicit hierarchy under the direct theological and spiritual rule of the high priests.

The mobeds that ran the Mazdean Church also engaged in the suppression of rival "false" faiths that were prevalent in the empire, including Christianity, Manichaeism, Judaism, and other exotic faiths from the lands to the East. This practice continued until the end of the Sasanid dynasty.

The Mazdean Church was as thoroughly destroyed as the empire that supported it, although the

institution of the priesthood survived. The priesthood is hereditary, rather than open to any who wish to become a priest.

The remaining institution is collegiate in nature, with no single prelate to firmly resolve doctrinal disputes. As the Mazdeans are so few, so dispersed and mostly persecuted, there are few theological or doctrinal disputes of significance.

Mazdean Faith

Humata, hukhta, huvarshata

("Good thoughts, good words, good deeds")

Mazdeans worship a single, all-powerful creator called Ohrmazd ("Wise Lord", Ahura Mazda), who is opposed by Ahriman ('Destructive Spirit', Angra Mainyu). Ohrmazd is the source of all creation, and all good things that exist, and is transcendent. Ahriman is the embodiment of every evil thing and concept.

Zoroaster preached a very high standard of personal morality that binds the laity and priesthood alike: actions taken in this life form the basis for reward or punishment in the next. Collectively, the actions of the faithful can bring about cosmic changes: the triumph of good over evil. Zoroaster's teachings stress personal honesty and harmony with society.

The material universe is God's good creation, and all unpleasant aspects of it such as plagues, cold and drought, are products of Ahriman. Because there is danger of physical corruption in the world, elaborate steps are taken with rituals and practices designed to maintain purity. These rites purify the body and the soul. It is in the material world that humanity makes its choices for right or for wrong. There is no rejection of the material world as being a source of sin or evil in itself. The world is to be enjoyed, although in moderation; asceticism has no place for the Zoroastrian faith.

The Mazdean "World Year"

According to Mazdean astrologers, there exists a "world year", during which all heavenly bodies complete a full cycle of movement. The "world year" is a cycle of 12,000 years, divided into spans of three millennia. Each span saw the birth of either Zoroaster or one of the three Saviors of the World, during which the broad pattern of events was repeated. The year 12,000 is believed to herald the victory of the Third Savior, the Saoshyant, who will complete the final defeat of evil.

Approximate dates are given in AD and BC. The date assumes a birth date for Zoroaster of 650BC. There is no agreement, even in the Zoroastrian texts, of when precisely he was born.

Year Events

0-3,000 Ohrmazd, with foreknowledge of need and means to destroy evil, brought his creation into being in a spiritual (*menog*) state. Ahriman, rising from the deep, perceived the creation, fashioned the evil spirits and attacked creation. Ohrmazd cast him down into hell by reciting the Ahunvar prayer. (9619BC-6619BC)

3,000-6,000 Ahriman lay prostrate. Ohrmazd gave material form (*getig*) to creation, shaping the world in seven stages, with one primeval man, animal and plant. (6619BC-3619BC)

6,000-8,969 Ahriman breaks into the material world, polluting it, and destroying the primeval creations. From their seed grew all existing plants, animals and men. The great king Yima reigned over mankind. Many events of

Persian myth, legend and epic took place. (3619BC-651BC)

8,970 Birth of Zoroaster. (650BC)

9,000 Beginning of Zoroaster's Millennium. Zoroaster receives his revelation and begins his proselytizing. (620BC)

9,001-9,969 Time of goodness, followed by slow decline. (607BC-349AD)

9,970 Birth of first World Saviour, Ukhshyat-ereta. (350AD)

10,000 Beginning of his millennium. He will lead the forces of good and overcome evil. A new time of goodness will again be followed by slow decline. (380AD)

10,970 Birth of second World Saviour, Ukhshyat-nemah. (1350AD)

11,000 Beginning of his millennium, where he will lead the forces of good to victory over evil, followed by period of slow decline. (1380AD)

11,943 Birth of third World Saviour, Astvat-ereta, the True Saoshyant. (2323AD)

11,973 He will bring the work of Frasho-kereti with the resurrection of the dead, the Last Judgment and the final conquest of evil. (2353AD)

12,000 History will end. The Kingdom (*Khshathra*) of Ohrmazd will come on earth and He will reign forever. (2380AD)

Ohrmazd

My sixth name is Understanding; my seventh is Intelligent One; my eighth name is Knowledge; my ninth is Endowed With Knowledge; my twentieth is Mazda [Wisdom]. I am the Wise One; my name is the Wisest of the Wise

– Yasht 1.7-1.15

Ohrmazd is the supreme creator of the world and all the good it contains. The Wise Lord is self-created, omniscient, omnipresent, holy, invisible and beyond human comprehension. He is neither begotten nor is anyone His equal. As creator of the earthly and celestial realms, He is the dispenser of every material good and spiritual blessing.

Ohrmazd revealed to Zoroaster personally the mysteries of creation, the reality of life and death, and the unseen spiritual powers that dwell invisibly throughout the world. To know Ohrmazd is to live in accordance with His divine will, to offer Him praise and worship, to please Him in purity of thought, word and deed, and to further His cause by joining His forces against evil.

In *Ars Magica*, Ohrmazd is the God of the Divine Realm, the single all-powerful creator and sustainer. He resides beyond the Divine Realm, and is the same creator worshipped by all other monotheistic faiths, such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism. His worshippers benefit from the Dominion, and those with a personal relationship with Him have True Faith.

Mazdean Divine Beings

There are a multitude of divine beings in the Mazdean celestial hierarchy. Most of the angels and even the Ameshaspand (Amesha Spentas) spend a great deal of time both in the celestial Divine Realm and the material world. Ameshaspand, yazdan and Mazdean angels possess the same traits as the angels described in *Realms of Power: The Divine*, Chapter Two.

Ameshaspand

There are seven personifications of Ohrmazd, called Ameshaspand ("Holy Immortals"), who represent the highest principles of goodness. The Ameshaspand care for and protect creation. Each is a pathway to reaching Ohrmazd and personifies ideal Zoroastrian qualities.

According to Mazdean teachings, the Ameshaspand are part of Ohrmazd's nature. In *Ars Magica* however, they are extremely powerful angels representing seven aspects of God; they only act according to the direct will of the Wise Lord and accordingly their every act is miraculous. They are not, however of the same nature as God. All Ameshaspand, in addition to their other Choirs, are also Arch Angels.

Vohu Manah (*Bahman*): The preeminent celestial being next to Ohrmazd, Vohu Manah ("Good Mind") embodies wisdom. He was the Wise Lord's first creation and he guards the animal kingdom in the material world. He presides over good thoughts and wisdom, and commands divine spirits that encourage such things. Those who marry and raise a family are more blessed by Vohu Manah than those who chose an ascetic life. Vohu Manah also appeared to Zoroaster and led him to Ohrmazd.

Asha (*Asavahisht*): As embodiment of divine and moral law, Asha ("Best Righteousness") leads the path of the pure to Ohrmazd. The entire celestial realm lives according to the principles that Asha embodies, while the material world gravitates towards him. Asha encourages saintly behaviour, nobility of character and truth. Asha guards the material fire, and thus embodies the highest value of the Mazdean faith.

Khshathra Vairya (*Shahrevar*): This Amesha Spenta embodies the realization of heaven on earth, the "Desirable Kingdom". Khshathra guards the sky, protects warriors and presides over metal, which is his symbol. The riches of the world – gems, gold and silver – belong to Khshathra.

Spenta Armaiti (*Spendarmad*): A feminine Amesha Spenta, Spenta Armaiti ("Holy Devotion") is believed to be the daughter of Ohrmazd. She personifies devotion, piety, religious harmony and faith. Particularly pious Mazdeans venerate Spenta Armaiti very highly (in this regard, she is held in similar regard to the Blessed Virgin Mary), as she enlightens the mind and purifies the heart. Zoroaster in particular loved Spenta Armaiti above all other Ameshaspand. She governs the earth, granting bountifulness on the Wise Lord's creations.

Haurvatat (*Hordad*): The personification of health, Haurvatat ("Wholeness") is another female Amesha Spenta. She governs water, and assists personal salvation and communication with Ohrmazd.

Ameratat (*Amurdad*): The personification of immortality and master of vegetation, Ameratat ("Life") is inextricably linked with Haurvatat. The two form a spiritual bond, promoting health, joy, comfort and pleasure amongst the faithful.

Spenta Mainyu (*Spenamino*): Spenta Mainyu ("Good Spirit") is the Amesha Spenta of God Himself, the active Holy Spirit. From Spenta Mainyu issues life, light and beauty. It is through Spenta Mainyu that God actively wages war upon Ahriman. He does so by creating good works and beautiful things, in opposition to the despair and evil created by Ahriman. Some Mazdeans believe Spenta Mainyu to be a part of the Godhead itself, a divine attribute. Like the other Ameshaspand however, Spenta Mainyu is actually a very holy, powerful angel (possibly the same being as Metatron).

The Yazdan

The yazdan (*yazad*, sing., "Adorable Ones") are Zoroastrian angels and benevolent spirits. Figures such

as Marduk and Mithras are yazdan (also called *yazatas*) of greater or lesser significance. They occupy the third celestial rank, after God and the Ameshaspand.

There are forty named yazdan, with the most important of the yazdan, such as Mithras, Haoma, Atar or Vayu, receiving a hymn or Yasht of their own.

Many yazdan personify natural phenomena or abstract ideas, such as the moon, stars and winds, or blessings, obedience, and peace. There are two distinct orders of yazdan: terrestrial (*gaethya*) and celestial (*mainyava*), although both have the same function: to grant various blessings to those who invoke them with offerings and sacrifices. Many yazdan are angels, but not all of them are; rather, some are Divinely-aligned spirits.

Many of the faithful and their communities have their own yazdan, which are venerated in the same way that Christians venerate saints. Yazdan can be invoked like a Saint (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 87), although they cannot be threatened. To invoke a yazata, the invoker must be ritually pure (having undergone the *Nahn* purification rite, see Rites and Practices, later).

Frohar

The frohar (both singular and plural, *fravashi*) are the perfect divine spirits of every created thing. For humans, they are Guardian Angels, although everything, plant, animal, element, even other divine spirits, have a frohar – only demons and beings from other Realms do not have one. The title of frohar is granted by Mazdeans to angelic beings of several different types – Choirs of the Potentates and Authorities and Angels. Frohar guide the souls of the dead to the afterlife. They help the sun and moon, stars and sky move, assist women to give birth, and bestow health upon the faithful. The longest Yasht of the Avesta (the Mazdean bible) is devoted to the frohar.

Heaven

I came to a place and saw the souls of generous people, who walked adorned and were above all other souls in brightness. And Ohrmazd ever honored the souls of the generous, which were bright and tall and strong. And I said: 'Happy are you, who are the soul of a generous person, exalted thus above all other souls.' And it seemed to me praiseworthy.

– Arda Viraz Namag, Ch.12

Reaching Heaven

Upon death, the human soul (*urvan*) remains with the body for three days. On the fourth, the soul is led by their frohar to the Chinvat Bridge ("the Bridge of the Separator"), which spans a great abyss. Heaven waits in the other side. At the bridge, each person's soul is judged by Rashnu; guarding the bridge also are the yazdan Mithra and Sraosha. If the record of the person's soul balances in favor of good thoughts, words and deeds, then the soul crosses without difficulty to heaven.

If the reverse is true, the bridge narrows to a knife's edge, and the soul is sliced into ribbons as it falls into the abyss of hell.

Limbo

Mazdean's who life's words, thoughts and deeds are equally good and bad are sent to *hamestagna* (*hamestakan*, "limbo"). Here the soul experiences no torment or torture, only discomfort.

Resurrection and Judgement

The blessed souls in heaven wait for the birth and triumph of the final and true *Saoshyant* ("World Saviour"). At his appearance, all the dead, righteous and damned will rise from the dead on the spot they died; their bodies will be surrendered from the seas and earth, their bones reformed from the earth, hair from plants, blood from water and life from fire.

They will gather for the final judgment. The wicked will be condemned to three days in hell; the pure will receive three days in heaven. After three days, all shall be purified, good and evil alike, by walking through molten metal. Every soul will speak the ancient tongue Avestan and worship Ohrmazd, and life will be restored to its perfect, primal state. This great army will then fight all of Ahriman's demons in the final Armageddon, leading to the triumph of Ohrmazd. His victory will herald an eternity of bliss.

Saints and Relics

The Zoroastrian Faith does not have a special category of people considered "saints". They do however have a preponderance of holy men and women – great kings, priests, warriors and so on – who are venerated and invoked in prayers. The faithful prefer to call upon the aid of the yazdan, Ameshaspand and angels. Similarly, the Mazdeans do not venerate relics, although there are a great many sacred and holy objects. These objects – including statues and inscriptions on walls – are imbued with Faith scores, and some may even have other divine powers.

The Staff of Yoisht Frayana

Yoisht Frayana was the descendent of the Turanian apostle of Zoroaster. Yoisht defeated the sorcerer Akhtya in a battle of wits. Akhtya had terrorized the Mazdean priests for years, killing them after they failed to answer his riddles. Frayana successfully answered each of Akhtya's ninety-nine questions with the help of the Yazdan, and cast the sorcerer into hell.

The Staff of Yoisht Frayana is a powerful Mazdean relic, with a Faith score of 5. It has the Acknowledgement of Evil, Celestial Immunity, Expel Demons and Grant Serenity powers (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 88).

Fire

Fire is the central symbol of the Mazdean faith and is the visible sign of Ohrmazd's divine presence. As the symbol of truth (*asha*), fire is highly venerated by Mazdeans. All sacred fires, whether for temple or personal use, must be kept constantly burning. Extinguishing a sacred fire is a grave sin, as is polluting it by dropping unclean objects into it. Only clean, dry wood can be used for a sacred fire, preferably sandalwood, aloe or benzoin.

The typical Zoroastrian sanctuary is the fire temple, the *agiari* ("fire place"). It is a square enclosed chapter with grillwork and vents to let the fire's smoke out. The fire rests in an iron urn on a stone dais; the urn is typically filled with sand or ash on which the fire burns continuously. Maintained by the priests

of the temple, they must add wood and say the appropriate prayers five times daily.

Devout Mazdeans visit fire-temples on a daily basis, while the less observant only attend on the sacred days of the month. In thirteenth century Mythic Europe, with the Zoroastrian faithful pushed to the edge of the Muslim world, there are only a few temples with fires burning full-time. In their place, many Zoroastrians keep small oil-lamps or wood-fires burning in the home. This type of fire is the simplest and is called *atesh dadgah* ("fire of the appointed place"). If this fire is used for cooking, then cooking pots must not be more than two thirds full, to avoid the contents boiling over and polluting the fire.

There are two grades of sanctified or "Royal" fire above the *atesh dadgah*: the *atesh adaran* ("fire of fires") and the *atesh Behram* (or *atesh Varahran*, "fire of the guardian Varahran"). The *atesh adaran*, is the union of four ceremonially ignited fires. The highest grade of fire, *atesh Behram*, requires the combination of fires from sixteen different sources and takes a long time to ceremonially light.

Mazdean Dominions

Mazdeans enjoy the same Dominion as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, with the Dominion Aura extending from the sacred flame at the fire-temple or from a sacred fire in the home. The size and sacredness of the fire increases the Dominion.

The Dominion Aura's rating decreases as the distance from the sacred fire increases, so that the aura ratings are the same in the community as laid out in Chapter One, *Realms of Power: The Divine*. Thus, the highest Dominion Aura is near the sacred fire, decreasing to the borders of the fire temple (or building), with the lower rating throughout the faithful community (the village or town and their fields).

In areas where Mazdeans live side by side with other Divine faiths (Islam for example), their Dominion aura is likely to be in Schism.

Atesh Dadgah: Increase Dominion Aura by +1 (max rating 3)

Atesh Adaran: Increase Dominion Aura by +3 (max rating 5)

Atesh Behram: Increase Dominion Aura by +6 (max rating 10)

Ahriman

Thus spoke the Evil One: "Neither our thoughts nor teachings nor wills, neither our choices nor words nor acts, not our inner selves nor our souls agree."

Yasna, Verse 45

Ahriman (*Angra Mainyu*, "Destructive Spirit") is the Zoroastrian Devil. He personifies the Lie (*Druj*), and is leader of the demonic hoards; he embodies every negative and evil thing and concept in the universe. Ahriman pollutes and corrupts the bodies and minds of humans, inflicting upon them disease, deformities and decay, as well as moral turpitude, lies, malicious thoughts and false teachings. For every good creation of Ohrmazd, Ahriman made an evil one. Ahriman is the same being as the Christian, Muslim and Jewish Devil.

Like the Devil in Christian tradition, Ahriman was not of evil substance, but made a conscious decision to deny God and be evil. Because he is not omniscient or omnipotent, Ahriman cannot foresee his own final defeat, and because he has no forethought, he cannot know of things to come.

Mazdean Devils

The Daevas and all Mazdean demons have the same traits as those in Chapter Four of *Realms of Power: The Infernal*. The Daevas are exceptionally powerful demons, with high Infernal Might scores and ranks.

The Daevas

Created by Ahriman in mockery of the Ameshaspand, the Daevas are the unholy arch-demons of evil who oppose and contrast the Holy Immortals. Together, they are known as the *Druj*, "the Lie". All that is foul and corrupt, vile and harmful is personified by a Daeva. Not merely to do with nature or physical corruption, the Daevas are also responsible for the darker emotions such as hate and envy.

Aka Manah is Ahriman's chief lieutenant and opposes Vohu Manah. He perverts the minds of humans with evil thoughts, and blunts their intelligence and reason. His chief role is to create discord and spiritual disruption. Mazdeans believe that the reason children cry when they are born is because Aka Manah frightens them with ghastly visions of suffering. **Indra** drives humans away from virtuous deeds and thoughts, opposing Asha. **Saura** also delights when the faithful discard the symbols of purity and goodness, although his main activity is to encourage tyranny and anarchy; Saura opposes Khshathra. **Naonghaithya** opposes Spenta Armaiti, and attacks the faith and devotion inside people's soul, encourages disobedience and opposes faithfulness. **Taurvi** and **Zairich** oppose Haurvatat and Amerertat respectively, causing imperfections and mortality in plants and animals, spreading diseases and deformity, creating poisonous plants and animals, and spoiling food with decay.

Demons

There are forty-five named demons in the Mazdean scriptures, all of whom oppose the yazdan and Ohrmazd. The demons assault the faithful, plot, seduce and destroy, kill and torment and seek at every moment to cause evil. Zoroastrian demons share the characteristics of demons as described in *Realms of Power: The Infernal*.

Hell

And I saw the blackest hell, dangerous, fearful, terrible, holding much pain, full of evil, foul-smelling. Then I thought that it seemed like a pit, to whose bottom a thousand spears would not reach; and if all the firewood which is in the world were placed on the fire in the most evil-smelling, darkest hell, it would never give out fragrance. Again, as close as eye to ear, and as many as the hairs on a horse's mane, so close and many in number are the souls of the wicket therein. Yet they see not, and hear no sound from one another. Each one thinks: 'I am alone'. And they suffer gloom and darkness and stench and fearfulness and torment and punishment of diverse kinds...

– *Arda Viraz Namag*, Ch.55

The Mazdean Hell is the abode of all evil rulers, evil-doers, evil-speakers and those of evil-conscience and evil-thinkers. Those damned souls condemned to go to hell are surrounded by demons and evil

spirits, doomed to suffer torments and deception for all eternity. Each type of sin attracts its own torments and punishments. Those who commit mortal sins of the flesh, extinguish holy fires, destroy bridges, speak falsely and give false witness are punished with bitter cold and blazing fire and foul stench. Those who deny the good religion are bitten and devoured by serpents. Women who are vain and falsely mourn have their heads cut off and their tongues torn out. People who do not keep themselves purified and clean, or who pollute lakes and rivers are beaten by demons.

Each individual thus holds the key to his or her own destiny. By choosing to perform evil acts or think evil thoughts, an individual condemns themselves to Hell.

Mazdean Heresies

Mazdeanism has had its share of heretical movements. In their time, the heresies were all severely persecuted and repressed by the Mazdean Church and imperial authorities. None survive into the thirteenth century. Nevertheless, the impact of these heresies, and their relics and monuments may still remain, lost and awaiting to be found. Mazdean heresies including the Zurvanites, who believe that Ohrmazd had a father called Zurvan (Time), and that free will was an illusion, and the Mazdakites, who were ascetics, and practiced poverty.

Story Seed: A Heretical Revival

The Cult of Mithras was a Mazdean heresy popular in the western provinces of the Persian Empire, especially following the arrival of Hellenism after Alexander the Great. Although it was persecuted by the imperial Mazdean priesthood, it had a profound effect on Western mystic practices and beliefs.

In a Mithraeum in Mythic Europe, a Hermetic magi and Cult of Mithras practitioner, perhaps a player's character, discovers a cache of scrolls explaining the historical link between Mazdeanism and Mithraicism, as well as suggesting the secret location of the birthplace of Mithras, in deepest Persia.

What would happen if a Hermetic Mithraicist discovers the still-living religion of Ohrmazd, and how will they react upon learning the Mazdeans believe Mithras to be a divine spirit?

Rites and Practices

Man's first duty on earth is to profess the religion and to practice and worship according to it; not to turn from it, but to have belief in the Good Religion of the Mazda-worshippers ever in mind; to distinguish profit from loss, sin from virtue, goodness from badness, light from darkness, Mazda-worship from daeva-worship.

– Extract from *The Teachings of the Magi*, 20-8.

A great number of ritual practices are performed as part of the Mazdean faith. For pious Mazdeans, their faith is not a set of doctrines or a system of belief, but rather a faith that is lived through its prescribed rites and sets of behavior that shapes their lives and endows them with meaning and purpose.

Like all faiths, the level of observance of the rites varies from person to person. Most Mazdeans observe the major rituals and ceremonies of their faith, recite the main prayers and genuinely believe in

the tenets of Mazdeanism.

Like the sacraments and other religious rites of other Divine religions, properly performed prayers, ceremonies and rituals have a real spiritual and mystical effect. In *Ars Magica*, purification rituals really do spiritually cleanse the person that performs it, burial rites allow a person's soul to reach the afterlife, and prayers really do result in miracles.

Prayers

The recitation of prayers is a major element of all Mazdean rites. There are hundreds of prayers recorded, although three have special prominence and are used most frequently. These prayers are: Ahuna Vairya, Ashem Vohu and Yenhe Hatam. Their potency and sacredness is so great that they are recorded in every Zoroastrian library and form a part of almost every ritual and religious ceremony. Their recitation is considered one of the most effective prayers to Ohrmazd.

Ahuna Vairya: "Just as God is powerful, so is Zoroaster, because of His power of Asha. The gift of Vohuman is for the person who serves Ohrmazd. Any person who helps the needy shall receive help from Ohrmazd."

Ashem Vohu: "Righteousness is good, it is best. According to our wish it is, according to our wish it shall be. Righteousness belongs to Asha Vahista"

Yenhe Hatam: "We worship those male and female beings whom Ohrmazd knows are best for worship according to righteousness."

Videvdat

A major liturgical service of the mobeds, the Videvdat is performed in the fire-temple by qualified priests. It takes place between midnight and dawn, with recitations from the Yasna, the Visparad and the Videvdat to invoke divine spirits and ward off demons. Offerings are made to Ohrmazd and the Ameshaspand to coincide with sunrise.

The Sacred Cord

The sacred cord of the Mazdeans (called a *kusti*) is a long woven cord, tied three times around the waist. The cord is central to many of the rituals and symbols of the faith, representing the connection between heaven and earth. All practicing Mazdeans have a *kusti*.

Purity Rites

The ritual link between purity and impurity symbolizes each Mazdean's personal participation in the cosmic war against evil. The purification ritual practices and symbolic gestures of Mazdeanism symbolize this struggle on a daily basis.

There are three categories of purification rituals. The most important is the Bareshnum, which is undertaken by each Mazdean at least once in their life. The second comprises of three rituals observed

on specific occasions: *Padyab*, *Nahn* and *Riman*. The final type of ritual includes various ritual actions to ensure continuous purification, both personal and communal.

All of the purification rituals (excluding *padyab* and the daily rituals) drive away any possessing spirit, infernal or otherwise and cancel any non-permanent, non-Divine supernatural effects.

Bareshnum: This rite is required for all candidates for the priesthood, but its function is to regain and maintain ritual purity. It also aids the soul's journey to heaven, and is often done before someone is about to die.

The ritual itself consists of three ceremonial baths performed with the aid of two priests at a fire-temple over a ten day period; a total of eighteen applications of *nirangdin* (consecrated bull urine), sand and water; the presence of a dog thirteen times, and the recitation of various prayers. The candidate similarly meditates, prays and observes ritual acts during the ten days.

The ritual's does not work if any of the ingredients used are contaminated during the ritual's performance, if any impurity enters the fire-temple, it rains during the ceremony, or if the candidate dies before the end of the ceremony.

In addition to the purifying effect described earlier, the subject of this ritual also gains a Faith Point, although he only gains it once (the first time), even if it is performed on subsequent occasions.

Padyab: A simple ablution ritual performed several times a day: in the morning after rising, after answering calls of nature, before taking meals and before saying prayers. The rite consists of a short prayer formula, the washing of the face and exposed parts of the body (generally hands and feet) and the untying and re-tying of the sacred cord.

Nahn: A sacred bath purification requiring the services of a mobed, it can be conducted either at home or in a fire-temple. It is only performed during the day, and is observed during the *Navjote* ceremony, marriage, forty days after child-birth and on any one day during the *Farvardegan* holiday marking the end of the Mazdean year. The ceremony involves the chewing of a sacred pomegranate leaf, drinking a few drops of consecrated bull urines, the recital of the Repentance Prayer, the application of unconsecrated bull urine (*gomes*) over the body from the head down, performance of the sacred bath, and dressing in a new set of clothes. A longer, more complex purification ritual similar to this is administered to those who are particularly impure – called the *Si-Shuy Nahn*.

Riman: This purification ritual requires two attendants (one who must be a priest), and is only performed on those who come into contact with corpses in the course of ministering to the dead. It involves chewing pomegranate leaves, drinking consecrated bull urine, and ritually washing. The two attendants must also purify themselves. If the candidate is a woman, she performs the ritual behind a partition.

Daily Rites: When a Mazdean comes into contact with substances considered impure, he or she is rendered ritually impure. Impure substances include hair, skin, nails, blood, saliva, urine, feces, semen and menstrual fluid when they leave or are separated from the body. Carrion, rotting flesh or plant-matter and foul-smelling air is also considered impure. There are thus specific rituals to be performed when cutting hair and nails, sneezing and yawning, urination and excretion, as well as sex (the act of which is not impure or sinful in itself, although the resulting excretions are). There are purification acts for purifying utensils, tools, furniture and rooms.

The Yasna

The Yasna ("sacrifice") is the most important ritual for Mazdeans, and is performed daily each morning

by priests in the fire temple. Performing the Yasna is considered a key weapon in the struggle against evil. This ritual is a priestly function and requires no witnesses or lay participants.

It takes about two and a half hours, and is performed by two priests in a special area in the fire-temple called the *pawi*. The Yasna establishes a connection between the spiritual (*menog*) and material (*getig*) worlds, inviting the tangible presence of Ohrmazd and the Ameshaspand to the fire-temple.

During the ceremony, Ohrmazd and His angels are reverently invoked, and the seventy two chapters of the Yasna are recited as the priests walk symbolically around the *pawi*. At the end of the ceremony, consecrated *haoma* is poured onto the floor as an offering to the Wise Lord. The remaining libation and bread is consumed by the priests and other attending worshippers. This consumption mystically links the attendants of the ceremony with the divine forces present.

Once the ritual is complete, the Dominion Aura around the holy fire increases by three points (maximum rating 8), decreasing by one point every five paces from the fire until returning to normal; this effect lasts for only an hour. The priests that perform the ritual and attendant worshippers gain a Faith Point.

Worshippers in a state of sin do not get this benefit, and if any of the priests are impure during the ritual, there is no benefit.

Haoma

Haoma (*hom*) is a sacred plant used to make an intoxicating drink. The drink is made by pounding the leaves and stems of the plant. The plant is so sacred that it has its own powerful yazata to protect and nurture it. When prepared according to sacred principles it increases health and fertility, and can even aid in the pursuit of immortality. Haoma is especially important for many Mazdean purification rituals, prayers and invocations.

Benefits of Haoma

When used in alchemical and herbal potions and brews, using haoma grants a +3 bonus for effects that promote health, fertility and effects that allow the consumer to see invisible, spiritual beings. When used in effects promoting longevity, it grants a +5 bonus.

Consumed without mystical preparation, but properly fermented, haoma has mild hallucinogenic effects (temporarily granting the Visions Flaw), increases arousal and increases strength (+1 bonus to acts of strength). The effects last between 1-3 hours.

Birth, Initiation, Marriage and Burial

There are four ceremonies that coincide with significant times in a Mazdean's life. There are prayers, purification rituals and devotions coinciding with birth, initiation of a child into the community, marriage and finally, burial.

Birth: Before birth, at the fifth and seventh month, a sacred lamp is lit to ward off demons that may seek to harm unborn babies. Forty days after the birth of the child, the mother is given a purifying bath (the *Nahn*). The first birthday of a child is taken to the fire-temple and has ashes from the sacred fire applied to his or her forehead.

The lamps lit in this ceremony increase the Dominion Aura in the room the lamp is in, by one point (up to a maximum rating of 3; there is no effect if there is no base Dominion Aura, or if the Dominion is already at level 3).

Initiation: This ritual, called the *Navjote*, makes a child, aged 12-15 responsible for honoring Mazdean

religious observances. The child receives his or her sacred cord (*kusti*) and sacred white shirt (*sedra*), takes purifying baths, and makes the declaration of the articles of faith (*fravarane*): "I profess myself a Mazdean, a follower of Zoroaster, opposing the demons, accepting the doctrine of Ahura, one who praises the beneficent immortals, who worships the beneficent immortals. I accredit all good things, those that are indeed the best, to Ohrmazd the good."

A character who undergoes the *Navjote* receives a Faith Point, which can be used as normal. It is lost if the character performs a significant sin. Additionally, the rites performed in this ceremony have the effect of rendering the child's name unusable as a True Name for supernatural activities, in the same way that Baptism does.

Marriage: The ceremony of marriage is an important religious occasion, involving the bride and groom taking purifying baths, and the ceremony itself happening just after sun-set. A procession of priests, officials, the bridegroom and his family (and sometimes musicians) enter the bride's home; the bridegroom stays outside, where his head is marked in red. After this, he enters and sits before the priest. The bride enters sometime later and sits next to the bridegroom, with a cloth hanging between them. Prayers are said, vows are exchanged, and benedictions are made. A sacred fire and candle are present throughout. At the end of the ceremony, there is typically a feast.

The marriage ceremony grants both bride and groom a Faith Point that may be used to strengthen their resolve in the face of adversity or temptation.

Burial: The ceremonies of death and burial are the most difficult, especially for those Mazdeans in Muslim lands where they are forced to comply with local laws and customs. Traditionally, the corpse is ritually washed and dressed. A dog is presented, so it gazes at the corpse, both to ensure the person is really dead, and to ward off evil spirits (this ritual is called *sagdid*, "dog-sight"). The Ahuna Vairya prayer is recited by priests, and then the body is taken to the funerary tower (*dakhma*, "Tower of Silence"), a massive tower-like building exposed to the sun and flesh-eating birds. The bones of the dead are left to dry, and then thrown into a deep well filled with lime and phosphorus.

The soul of a Mazdean buried according to this way (or any Divine ritual) can never be affected by any form of magic. This puts it beyond the reach of Hermetic and other forms of magic.

The Mazdean Calendar

The Zoroastrian calendar has a year of twelve months with thirty days each. There is no seven-day week for the followers of Zoroaster. Each day is dedicated to a divine being, to whom the faithful should dedicate their good actions and thoughts on that day. Each month is also dedicated to a divine being. Consequently, once a month, the day and month have the same name, which is the cause for special reverence. The ninth day of the month, sacred to fire, is favored in any month for visits to the fire temple, but especially so during the ninth month (also sacred to fire).

There has been periodic reform of the calendar to stabilize the months in relation to the seasons; over the decades and centuries, the dates have drifted to become out of sync with the seasons (with no leap year, the day drifts by one day ever four years). This has resulted in different Mazdean communities using different calendars: the Shenshai ("Imperial") and Kadmi ("Ancient"), which hold their holy days at different times.

During the five days of the holy festivals, the Dominion Aura radiating from the fire-temples takes on a nature abhorrent to the forces of Ahriman. Any creature with Infernal Might that seeks to enter the Aura is unable to do so if their Might Score is less than the Dominion Aura x10. Should they succeed in

entering the Aura, they suffer an amount of damage per hour equal to the Dominion Aura rating (which can be Soaked as normal). On the final day of each holy festival, the damage inflicted on Infernal beings cannot be Soaked.

The Thirty Days

Day of the month Divine being Area of responsibility

1	Dadvah Ohrmazd	Creator, God
2	Vohu Mana	Good Purpose
3	Asha Vahishta	Best Truth
4	Khshathra Vairya	Desirable Dominion
5	Spenta Armaiti	Holy Devotion
6	Haurvatat	Wholeness
7	Ameretat	Immortality
8	Dadvah Ahuras Mazda	Creator-by-Adar
9	Atar	Fire
10	Apo	Waters
11	Hvar khshaeta	Shining Sun
12	Mah	Moon
13	Tishtrya	Dog star (Mercury)
14	Geush Urvan	Ox-soul
15	Dadvah Ohrmazd	Creator-by-Mihr
16	Mithra	Loyalty
17	Sraosha	Hearkening
18	Rashnu	The Judge
19	Fravashayo	All Souls
20	Verethraghna	Victory
21	Raman	Peace
22	Vata	Wind
23	Dadvah Ohrmazd	Creator-by-Din
24	Daena	Religion
25	Ashi	Recompense
26	Arshtat	Justice
27	Asman	Sky
28	Zam	Earth
29	Manthra Spenta	Holy Word
30	Anagra Raocha	Endless Light

Holy Festivals

Although each day is holy, there are seven special holy festivals in the Zoroastrian calendar, dedicated to each Amesha Spenta. Each festival goes for five days. The seventh festival, known as No Roz ("New Day") is the greatest holy festival of the Mazdean calendar, prefiguring the final "New Day" of eternal bliss. Note, that the festival dates, although associated with seasons, drift significantly from their original dates. The dates are given in Imperial (K) and Ancient (S).

Festival Name	Associated Amesha Spenta	Associated Creation	Dates
<i>Maidhyoi-zaremayā</i> (Mid-spring)	Khshathra Vairya	Sky	26 Feb. – 2 Mar. (K), 27 – 31 Mar. (S)
<i>Maidhyoi-shema</i> (Mid-summer)	Haurvatat	Water	26 – 30 Apr. (K), 26 – 30 May (S)
<i>Paitishahya</i> (Bringing in Corn)	Spenta Armaiti	Earth	24 – 28 Jul. (K), 23 – 27 Aug. (S)
<i>Ayathrima</i> (Homecoming of the Herds)	Ameretat	Plants	23 – 27 Aug. (K), 22 – 26 Sep. (S)
<i>Maidhyairya</i> (Midwinter)	Vohu Manah	Cattle	23 – 27 Oct. (K), 22 – 26 Nov. (S)
<i>Hamaspath-maedaya</i> (All-souls)	Spenta Mainyu, Ohrmazd	Man	25 Jan. 1221 (K), 24 Feb. 1221 (S)
<i>No Roz</i> (New Day)	Asha Vahishta	Fire	27 Jan. 1220 (K), 26 Feb. 1220 (S)

The Twelve Months (in 1220)

1	Farvadin	January/February
2	Ardvahišt	February/March
3	Hordad	March/April
4	Tir	April/May
5	Amurdad	May/June
6	Shahrevar	June/July
7	Mihr	July/August
8	Avan	August/September
9	Adar	September/October
10	Dai	October/November
11	Vahman	November/December
12	Spendarmad	December/January

Mazdean Scriptures

Zoroastrianism emphasizes its oral traditions and all priests learn the scriptures by heart. The words of Zoroaster were written down over his lifetime to form the Avesta. There are many books making up the Avesta, many of which have been lost, destroyed or pillaged following the Muslim conquest of the Sasanid Empire. While some fire-temples may possess copies of parts – even large parts – the chief role of the priesthood is to act as living scriptures, memorizing every word and prayer.

Avesta

The Avesta contains the hymns, formulas, laws and stories of the Mazdean faith. There are two main parts to the Avesta. The Avesta is also written in multiple languages, Avestan and "Gathic", a liturgical language for prayers. The Ability "Dead Language: Avestan" grants knowledge in both. There are translations into Farsi (and other languages, like Latin, Arabic and Greek), although they are not considered holy.

Yasna: the chief liturgy of the Mazdeans. Yasna literally means "sacrifice", and includes confessions, rituals, prayers, exhortations, praise and worship of Ohrmazd. The Yasna is formed from six *Gathas* (hymns), and has a total of seventy-two chapters. Five of the six Gathas are considered to be the direct word of Zoroaster himself. The sixth was written by his disciples. (Tractatus, Theology: Zoroastrian, Quality 4, Level 9.)

Visparad: The shorter liturgy, the Visparad ("to all the lords") is twenty-three chapters of invocations, praise and hymns to Ohrmazd, the yazdan and the other powerful divine beings, and also includes the seasonal festivals (*gahambars*). (Tractatus, Dominion Lore, Quality 3, Level 4.)

Videvdat: The Videvdat (Vendidad, "law abjuring demons") has twenty-two sections containing the religious, civil, criminal, and purification laws of Mazdeanism. It also details the life of Zoroaster and the origins of medicine (medicine by knife, herbs and sacred rites). (Tractatus, Theology: Zoroastrian, Quality 6, Level 6.)

Khordeh Avesta: often combined with the Yasht (see later), the Khordeh Avesta ("Little Avesta") is for use by priests and lay folk in private devotion. It is a summary of the Avesta, containing prayers, invocations, and blessings. (Tractatus, Theology: Zoroastrian, Quality +6, Level 3.)

Yasht: The Yasht ("worship") is a collection of twenty-two hymns and prayers invoking yazdan and angels. Each prayer invokes only a single being, such as Ohrmazd, each of the Ameshaspand, or the sun, moon, stars, Mithra or Sroasha respectively. (Tractatus, Theology: Zoroastrian, Quality 6, Level 5.)

Mazdean Characters

Mazdean characters have access to unique Virtues, Flaws and Abilities, reflecting their faith, culture and society.

Virtues and Abilities

Making a Mazdean character depends on the saga. Sagas set in predominately Muslim or Christian lands would see the Mazdean character take the "Outsider" Major Flaw. In areas where Mazdeans are a sizeable minority, or even a majority, then the other social virtues and flaws can also be taken.

There are Zoroastrian versions of the Theology and Civil and Canon Law Abilities. Additionally, some mobeds and Mazdeans may speak Avestan, their sacred religious language. Most Mazdeans speak Farsi (Persian) or the language of their area, such as Arabic.

A mobed character may take the Senior Clergy Major Social Status Virtue (see *The Church*, Diocese

Chapter), reflecting the character's status as a *dastur* ("senior priest"). This reflects that your character is in charge of several subordinate mobeds, and probably governs a large fire-temple.

Mazdeans typically do not take virtues or flaws that would make them a monk or nun. To Mazdeans, the world is a wonderful place to be lived in and enjoyed. The fight against evil takes place in society, so being cloistered away and practicing an ascetic lifestyle of deprivation is not in keeping with their faith. There is also no tradition of wandering holy-men or women in orthodox Mazdeanism (precluding virtues or flaws such as Mendicant Friar).

New Ability: Dead Language (Avestan)

Avestan is the holy liturgical language of the Zoroastrian Holy Scriptures, used by Zoroaster himself. No longer spoken or written outside of the fire-temples, the language is now used purely for sacred hymns and prayers. This ability allows your character to read and write texts in Avestan, and to understand the words of prayers spoken in Avestan.

To write this language (written from right to left), your character must have a score of at least one in *Artes Liberales*. A low score in Avestan reflects the ability to copy or write the symbols of the language – which appear similar to Aramaic script, but comprise 53 unique characters – but not to understand it. This Ability is generally only possessed by mobeds.

Specialties: Liturgies, scripture, oral tradition, alphabets, myths. (Academic)

New Virtue: Magian Lineage

Minor or Major, General

This virtue represents that the character is a true blood descendent of the original Median tribe of Magians, the original priestly caste of Persia. Many mobeds possess this virtue, either Minor or Major, but is not a requisite.

Minor: Your character's lineage is weak, although he or she is still ethnically Magian, and gains a strong constitution due to their purity. The character gains a -1 to Aging rolls and +3 bonus to resist the effects of disease.

Major: In addition to the benefits of the Minor virtue, your character has an affinity to the ancient prophetic and other mystical arts of your ancestors. The player must choose three Arcane or Supernatural Abilities (which the character need not start play with, and which cannot be True Names), which are considered connected, so whenever your character successfully studies one of these Abilities (that is, gain at least one experience point from study), he or she gains an additional experience point in each of the other two.

New Virtue: Mazdean Priest

Minor, Social

Your character is an ordained Mazdean priest, initiated as a mobed. This means that the character may carry out the various rituals and ceremonies, such as the Yasna, Vivevdat, Navjote, Marriage, Burial, official prayers, purification rituals, lighting of sacred fires, and initiation of new priests. In Mazdean communities your character are held in high regard and treated with great respect. You wear pure white

clothes and when performing ceremonies, cover your face with a white veil to protect the sacred flame from your breath and saliva.

As a mobed, your character resides in a community that likely has a fire-temple. This means that your character has arduous and time-consuming religious and ceremonial duties. Most of your time is spent praying, performing ritual purification rites and tending to the sacred fire. If you are Wealthy, you have several ervads (junior priests) that perform many of the more arduous tasks. If you are poor, it likely reflects the poor station of Mazdeans in the community in general, and you may also possess the Outsider Flaw.

Your character may take Academic Abilities at character generation. You must take the Minor Personality Flaw Vow (ArM5, page 60) to reflect your constant state of ritual purity, and dedication to your community. This virtue is only available to male characters.

New Virtue: Knowledge of True Names

Minor or Major Supernatural

Your character may start play knowing one or more True Names of supernatural beings. Any Mazdean character may take this virtue, although it is only of use to those characters with supernatural abilities or powers. This virtue reflects the deep and ancient occult knowledge possessed by the mobeds.

At the storyguide's discretion, this virtue may be made available to other characters, such as Sahir, Hermetic theurgists, infernalists or Holy Magi.

Minor: This virtue grants you 30 experience points to spend on True Names – each True Name costs 5 experience points to learn (Names with fewer than 5 experience points provide no benefit at all). You can also decide to partially learn a True Name by spending fewer than 5 experience points on the name. Each True Name is recorded under Abilities as "True Name of (Being). You may know the True Name of a being from the Magic, Faerie and Infernal Realms. You may take this virtue more than once to gain more 30 more experience points to spend on True Names.

Major: The Major Virtue version of Knowledge of True Names is identical to the Minor version, except that you may know the True Names of angels and other divine beings. Storyguides and troupes should consider this virtue carefully before allowing it.

The Mobeds: princes of magic

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

— Pliny, *Natural History* 30.2.3

The priests of Ohrmazd are the mobeds, whose lineage can be traced back to the Median tribe and Zoroaster himself. The mobeds are a holy *societas* (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, pages 116-117), with initiations that grant them unique holy powers.

In centuries past, the mobeds were sages who possessed great occult knowledge. In addition to their holy powers, they had mastered the forces of magic, astrology, alchemy and theurgy. That knowledge is largely lost in the thirteenth century, and mobeds are now almost exclusively practitioners of holy powers.

The Mazdean priesthood is hereditary: only sons of a mobed or the male descendents of a priestly family can be considered for priestly office. Needless to say, mobeds are not celibate and may marry.

There are several ranks and initiations that must be performed to achieve that rank. The lowest rank of Mazdean priest is that of **ervad**. To become an ervad, a special initiation must take place. An ervad may perform ordinary services, but none of the important rituals. The ceremony of **martab** initiates a priest to the rank of mobed, a fully qualified priest, able to perform all services and rituals. The highest common rank is that of **dastur**, the head of a group of priests of an area or particular fire-temple. Higher levels of the priesthood above dastur have been lost to time.

Few mobeds possess The Gift. This allows them to integrate into society easily and take on influential and trusted roles. In the past, there were many Gifted mobeds, practicing holy magic and bound together through the discipline of their faith and hierarchy. Many mobeds possess True Faith and may perform miracles.

Mobeds in Western Eyes

To Western wizards and mages, the priests of Zoroaster are "an order of seers who are dedicated to the service of the gods" who "have strong constitutions and live to a great age, for their profession as magi makes it incumbent on them to observe the strict rules of life." They are known for their pious study and worship, their ethics, divinations and prophecy, holy learning, and rules of purity.

Few Hermetic wizards would believe that the Persian "magoi" still remain a living tradition. The relics, scriptures and holy rituals of the magoi are legend, highly sought after. Zoroastrian texts are considered masterpieces of the magical arts, from hidden truths of alchemy, to the names of archangels and demon princes. Some Hermetic magi however believe their knowledge to be primitive.

Mobeds and the Order of Suleiman

Non-mobed sorcerers before the seventh century were ignored and spurned by the Mazdean priesthood. The non-Mazdean sorcerers of Persia and the Holy Land were no match for the great imperial powers of the mobeds.

This situation was reversed after the seventh century. The Order of Solomon became the Order of Suleiman and the Islamic sages and sorcerers now reign supreme in Persia. The mobeds are an insignificant force on the periphery of the civilized world. Like in the West, their lore, rituals and secrets are greatly prized, and their knowledge of the mystic arts of astrology and alchemy are admired, if not associated with the mobeds still living.

The Magic of the Mobeds

Mobeds practice holy powers, although these powers are only bestowed upon those initiated into full mobed rank; ervads have no special divine powers. The rank of dastur, indicates both a political and ceremonial rank, and also suggests investment of some mystic powers.

Mobeds teach as favored Abilities the Holy Method **Invocation**; the Holy Powers **Adjuration** and **Wonders**; and the **Holy Magic**, and **Sense Holiness and Unholiness** Supernatural Abilities. The

rules here supersede the ones covering Zoroastrians in *Realms of Power: The Divine*.

Favored Abilities are Supernatural Abilities taught by the mobed tradition, and for which mobed characters do not need to subtract the total of their Supernatural Ability scores from their Advancement Total (see ArM5, page 166). Mobeds also teach a range of non-favored Supernatural Abilities, either suffering the penalties or initiating them as a Mystery. Favored Abilities only impact mobeds with True Faith or The Gift; unGifted mobeds (and those without True Faith) must take the appropriate Virtues at character creation, or initiate into them during play.

A great number of mystery powers are available to mobeds, although it is extremely rare for a community of Mazdeans to possess a mobed that knows more than one or two.

Mobeds experience the Divine Ascent in place of generic Warring or Twilight, with Divine Form the most common kind of Ascent.

Supernatural Abilities Taught by the Mobeds

Favored Abilities: Invocation, Adjuration, Wonders, Mazdean Holy Magic, Sense Holiness and Unholiness

Other Abilities (not favored): Ceremony, Dream Interpretation, Mythic Alchemy, Mythic Herbalism

Mobed characters are not limited to the Abilities listed here; these are simply common to the *societas*.

Mazdean Hedge Magic

The mobeds are known for their strong alchemical lore; the Videvdat for example focuses on alchemy and medicine. Mobeds may take the Mythic Alchemy and Mythic Herbalism Virtues (see *Hedge Magic*, page 82-82). If the mobed has Mazdean Holy Hedge Magic, both of these can become "Holy" Alchemy and "Holy" Herbalism.

New Ability: Mobed Lore

This Ability is the Organization Lore for the mobeds, and is used for their initiation rituals. This lore does not give any specific knowledge of the Mazdean faith, beliefs or rituals (this is represented by the Ability Theology: Mazdean), but rather the legends, history and structure, as well as the specific initiation rites and oral lore of the mobed tradition.

Holy Powers

The Holy Powers taught by the mobed tradition are spectacular and majestic, commanding the forces of nature and creating life out of nothing. When mobeds invoke their divine wonders, they use the sacred names of yazdan and the Ameshaspand; their prayers call upon the aid of the Wise Lord himself. Especially powerful mobeds can even call into existence divine spirits to perform tasks for them and give them aid.

Casting Score: Communication + Invocation + Holy Power + modifiers + aura + dice

If this total is less than the target Level, the effect doesn't happen, but there might be other effects instead, in the form of supernatural retribution. This is called a Tragedy of Hubris. It might manifest as a curse, a loss of ability, fatigue, a physical injury, or even a Flaw. It is also a great opportunity for an appropriate story event. This tragedy usually lasts only until the character has somehow atoned or made amends for his presumptuous actions, though the effects are sometimes permanent, depending on the severity of the transgression.

Tragedies of Hubris

Minor Tragedy (-1 to -10)

A Method, Power or other Supernatural Ability is halved

Gain a Minor Flaw, e.g. Lesser Malediction, Fear, Poor Memory, Simple-Minded

Suffer a Medium wound

Receive three extra botch dice on all rolls

Gain a Warping point

Major Tragedy (-11 to -20)

A Method, Power or other Supernatural Ability is lost

Gain a Major Flaw, e.g. Greater Malediction, Blind, or Enfeebled

Suffer a Heavy wound

Permanently suffer a minor tragedy

Gain a Decrepitude point

Ultimate Tragedy (-21 or more)

All Supernatural Abilities are lost

Character possessed by a supernatural creature

Suffer an Incapacitating wound

Permanently suffer a major tragedy

A terrible plague, war, or famine affects the entire region

Invocation

By addressing God and the servants of the Divine, commanding them by their names, and entreating them for aid, your character can cause holy effects to manifest. This might be because they hear your character's pleas and intervene, or because your character understands of God's word is such that she can wield His power using His voice. This typically relies on Communication, and requires that the character invest Confidence in the effect.

Adjuration

Adjuration is the Power to summon, control and banish supernatural creatures of all kinds, including dispelling their powers and compelling their cooperation. Through adjuration, God asserts His ultimate authority over creation and both the natural and supernatural worlds. Adjuration is also the witnessing of oaths and truths, by forcing otherworldly beings to recognize God's authority and obey Him. The target might cry out in pain and wonder when affected, or speak in a different voice that represents its true

nature for the effect's duration. Invocation is used to compel creatures to act, often forcing them to use their powers on the holy character's behalf.

Wonders

Those who ask properly will receive God's gifts, for God provides for the faithful in need. God also summons storms, fire, winds, and other powerful natural forces. These wonders are created at the holy character's command, and even controlled by him to some extent, although God always keeps His hand upon his miracles. Such things may appear at times to listen to another voice, and act in ways that the holy character does not anticipate.

These effects use Invocation to conjure and command divine forces by their name and purpose. When a character suffers a Tragedy of Hubris with Wonders, he might create unwanted items, such as rotten food, vermin, or mud. Or, the effect might still happen, but manifest completely out of his control.

Adjuration Guidelines

When these guidelines refer to a supernatural creature, it means a specific entity with a Might score.

Level 4: Bind a supernatural creature to the terms of a contract. (Invocation)

Level 5: Compel a supernatural creature within range to manifest in your presence. (Invocation)

Level 10: Compel a supernatural creature to reveal the truth, even a demon; you may ask one question, and if you overcome the creature's resistance it must answer you honestly. (Invocation)

Level 15: Compel a supernatural creature to do your bidding; you may give it one command which it must follow exactly for the duration. (Invocation)

Level 20: Compel a mundane creature to do your bidding, as above. (Invocation)

Level 25: Compel a human being to do your bidding, as above. This command must be within the person's nature, as evidenced by appropriate Personality traits. (Invocation)

Wonders Guidelines

General: Create a dangerous substance, like fire or poison, that does +(base level of the spell) damage upon contact. (Invocation)

Create a natural substance that harms non-divine supernatural creatures, such as water that corrodes like acid or a light that burns like fire, doing +(base level – 5) damage. (Invocation)

Level 2: Create a mature living plant, or cause a plant to grow more quickly. (Invocation)

Level 3: Create and control a common force of nature, such as a gust of wind or a burst of flame. (Invocation)

Create a nonliving natural object, such as an animal corpse, driftwood, or a rock. (Invocation)

Level 5: Create and control an unusual force of nature, such as a sudden storm from a clear sky, or a light that shines like the day. (Invocation)

Create nourishing food or drink, enough to sustain a single person. (Invocation)

Create a nonliving object that has been processed in some way, such as a leather coat, a lance, or a coin. (Invocation)

Level 15: Create and control a powerful force of nature, such as winds that lift a person off of the ground or a

flame that lights up the sky for miles. (Invocation)

Create a living, docile bird, fish, lizard or amphibian. (Invocation)

Level 20: Create a living, docile mammal. (Invocation)

Level 30: Create an animal with Divine Might 5. Each 5 points of additional Might increases the Level by 10. (Invocation)

New Wonder Guidelines

General: Create a sacred spiritual force that that can neutralize the spiritual taint of the Infernal Realm. For example, the force could transform Infernal Warping into Divine Warping (1 Warping Point per level of effect is transfigured), although the Warping itself is not removed. The power can strip the infernal nature of Infernal vis, completely destroying the vis (1 pawn of vis per 3 levels of effect). It can also destroy Confidence Points gained through committing sin (1 Confidence Point per 5 levels); note that doing this causes the target to feel great remorse for the acts they performed to gain the Infernally gained Confidence Points (this does not work against demons, but can work against other creatures with Infernal Might). Finally, this invocation can also call up such a potent divine force that it acts as the Scourging the Infernal power radiated by relics (*Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 45), forcing infernal beings to flee (equivalent Divine Might score per 10 levels; note that this is an equivalent effect, not a true relic power). (Invocation)

Level 35: Create a spirit with Divine Might 5. Each 5 points of additional Might increases the Level by 10. (Invocation)

Resurrect a dead human. This restores the deceased person's soul to their body and brings them to life, bestowing upon them the "Raised from the Dead" Major Flaw on the target (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 36). A person who has been buried with a Divine burial rite cannot be raised. (Invocation)

Holy Virtues

Adjuration

Major, Supernatural

This Virtue allows you to command and control supernatural beings, and you begin with the Supernatural Ability Adjuration 1.

Dream Interpretation

Major, Supernatural

You can understand and interpret the secret meaning of dreams. This Virtue gives you the Supernatural Ability Dream Interpretation 1, which may be used in place of Meditation to activate holy powers and also allows you to interpret dreams of a general nature. Mobeds may take Dream Interpretation, although it is not an Ability favoured by their tradition. It may, however, be initiated into as a mystery virtue.

Invocation

Major, Supernatural

This Virtue gives you Invocation 1, a Supernatural Ability which allows you use the Holy Method of Invocation and roll a stress die for miraculous effects.

Mazdean Holy Magic

Major, Supernatural

This Virtue is only available to characters with the Gift. You begin with the Supernatural Ability Mazdean Holy Magic

1, and all of your magical powers are specially adapted to your divine focus.

Wonders

Major, Supernatural

You begin with the Supernatural Ability Wonders 1, which allows you to conjure holy items, creatures, and the elements at God's will.

Using Vis

Mobeds may use holy and magical vis. If a mobed knows certain mysteries, they may even extract vis from an aura. Holy vis grants the same mechanical bonuses as magic vis. The consequences of profaning holy vis, or using it for diabolical ends can be dire, risking Divine retribution.

Holy Abilities

Adjuration*

You are skilled in controlling and banishing supernatural creatures and their powers (see Miraculous Effects, below).
Specialties: type of creatures (angels, demons, ghosts, faeries), causing a specific effect. (Supernatural)

Dream Interpretation*

In the Mazdean tradition, Ohrmazd and His servants regularly send messages and prophecies through dreams: Zoroaster received visions and guidance from the Wise Lord on many occasions. Dream interpretation helps mobeds translate the confusing symbolism in dreams to make clear their deeper meaning.

Dream interpretation can be used as a Holy Method (in lieu of Invocation), combined with Intelligence, by focusing the mind before going to sleep (approximately half an hour of prayer). You may also interpret other people's dreams, by spending at least an hour discussing the symbols of the dream with the subject. Roll your Intelligence + Dream Interpretation + a simple die and the subject's Communication + Folk Ken + a simple die, using the lesser of the two totals as your (Characteristic + Method) when activating the holy power.

Finally, you may use Dream Interpretation as a form of divination, allowing casual divination and ceremonial divination.

Specialties: particular targets of divination, interpreting others' dreams, with a certain effect. (Supernatural)

Mazdean Holy Magic*

You have translated your Hedge Magic Abilities (such as Mythic Alchemy) into a form of magic that is compatible with the Dominion and holy powers. **Specialties:** inventing spells, enchanting items, with a particular Ability. (Supernatural, Arcane)

Invocation*

Using holy words, phrases and prayers, you can invoke God's power. You must either cry out your prayer in a loud voice, or somehow inscribe your prayer in writing. This adds Communication to your roll, and requires that you spend a point of Confidence (or Faith) to bring the effect into being.

You may also roll a stress die instead of a simple die when calling a holy effect if you wish. By doing so, you essentially command rather than entreat God's aid, summoning more potential power but risking giving greater offense should you prove unworthy.

Specialties: using holy names, in writing, affecting a particular kind of target. (Supernatural)

Wonders*

You can cause living creatures, nonliving objects, and forces of nature to manifest through God's power (see Miraculous Effects, below). **Specialties**: causing a specific effect, a particular kind of material, in specific circumstances. (Supernatural)

Mazdean Holy Magic

The mobeds with The Gift may possess a form of holy magic similar to Hermetic Holy Magic. This allows them to transform their magical arts into ones compatible with the Dominion. Gaining Mazdean Holy Magic requires a profound spiritual transformation.

The Holy Magic Ability adds to any seasonal Laboratory Total. Mobeds with Mazdean Holy Magic experience the restrictions and benefits as explained in the nearby insert.

Mobeds without True Faith use Mazdean Holy Magic and convert their Supernatural Abilities such as Mythic Alchemy and Mythic Herbalism to "Holy" Alchemy and "Holy" Herbalism.

Mazdean Holy Magic Benefits and Restrictions

Restrictions

Cannot use magic to sin

Must release non-Divine spells

Incomprehensible to outsiders, study totals halved

Increasingly poor supernatural relations.

Benefits

Attuned to both Divine and Magic auras

May use long-term fatigue as vis in rituals

May use the Dominion for laboratory activities

May use holy power guidelines as spell guidelines

New range, duration, and target categories

Group Magic

Mobeds can practice their magic collectively. In times past, when they were an imperial priesthood, hundreds of mobeds would gather to perform great rituals in honor of Ohrmazd and his angels. In the thirteenth century, few communities have more than a few Mazdean priests and those that do are unlikely to possess the knowledge of such powerful rites.

To perform group powers, mobeds use the Ceremony Ability (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 34, 36), and engage in prayers and rituals. Most of these are communal in nature, and so lay-folk will often participate (although this gives no mechanical bonus).

Mobed Dream Interpretation and Divination

With the Dream Interpretation Virtue and Ability, mobeds may divine the past, present and future through their own and other's dreams. As this power is aligned with the Divine, it is more accurate than the Hermetic (or Magic) version, although it is still restricted by the Limit of Time – only God may truly

know the future.

For the purposes of this divination, any question that can be posed as a non-Ritual Hermetic Intellego spell (of any Form), of any range and target (other than Sense targets), and of Momentary Duration can be attempted using Divination.

The Ease Factor of the Divination is the level of the equivalent Hermetic spell, using the following formula:

Divination Total: Intelligence + Dream Interpretation + Modifiers + Aura + Stress Die

The mobed must sleep for at least fifteen minutes per magnitude of the divination effect, and allows the character to add sympathetic magic and devices. Use the multiplier for Arcane Connections (if the character has any for the target of the divination) on ArM5, page 84.

True Names

Mobeds may learn and use True Names (see *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 34, and also *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 20). Each True Name is treated as a special Ability called "True Name of (Being)", and costs 5 experience points to learn, and once a True Name is learned, your character gains 1 experience point to the being's associated Realm Lore. True Names grant a +5 bonus to Penetration modifiers, and are of indefinite duration.

Mobeds have access to hundreds of True Names of angels and demons. Characters may start play knowing the True Name of one or more beings (see the *Knowledge of True Name Virtue*, earlier in this chapter).

Holy Mobed Mysteries

The mobeds have several unique mysteries that are holy in nature (that is, they can only be initiated by a character with Holy Powers or True Faith). Many allow modeds to wield mystical powers.

Blessing of [Amesha Spenta] (Minor Mystery Virtue)

The mobed with this holy mystery gets a +3 bonus to Lab Totals and Casting Scores for holy powers used in the area covered by a specific Amesha Spenta. See nearby table for the areas covered by each Amesha Spenta. There is a different version of this virtue for each Amesha Spenta.

Blessing Areas

Amesha Spenta Equivalent Hermetic Form(s)

Asha Vahishta ("Best Righteousness") Ignem, Imaginem

Khshathra Vairya ("Desirable Dominion") Vim

Haurvatat ("Health") Aquam, Auram

Spenta Armaiti ("Holy Devotion") Terram

Ameretat ("Long Life") Herbam

Vohu Manah ("Good Purpose") Animal

Spenta Mainyu ("Holy Spirit") Corpus, Mentem

Mazdean Alchemy (Minor Mystery Virtue)

Through Mazdean Alchemy, a mobed may distil vis from a Divine Aura. Distilling divine vis takes a season before the vis is extracted. The character uses as his Lab Total his Intelligence + Invocation + Wonders + Holy Magic + modifiers + a simple dice. Modifiers include the aura, bonuses from Lab assistants and so on. The Lab Total is divided by ten, as per Hermetic vis extraction.

Mazdean Astrology (Major Mystery Virtue)

This mystery allows the character to use his knowledge of the heavens to determine the most effective time to perform an activity in the Laboratory. The mobed may also use new astrological durations. Finally, the mobed may determine the most favourable time to pray or use holy powers.

Celestial Blessing for Laboratory Activities

By aligning their practices to the beneficial powers of the stars, the mobed may gain between a bonus of +1 to +5. The player must decide on the bonus desired at the start of the Laboratory Activity, and the character must succeed in a roll of Intelligence + Artes Liberales (Astrology) + simple dice against an Ease Factor of (desired bonus x 4). If successful, the Laboratory activity gains the desired bonus. A failed roll means that there is no bonus possible in that season.

Celestial Durations

See the nearby insert for the additional astrological durations. No duration may be longer than a year. Failing the calculation roll causes the effect to fail. Botching a calculation roll causes the effect to botch.

Celestial Blessing for Holy Spell Casting

The mobed may determine the most favorable hour for performing holy magic, holy powers or use other divine abilities. This is determined in the same manner as described for Laboratory Activities, with only a single hour during the day the astrological calculation is done for able to gain the bonus.

Celestial Durations

Minutes: The effect lasts for a certain number of Astrological Minutes. Equivalent to Diameter. To calculate the duration correctly, succeed in a roll of Intelligence + Artes Liberales + dice against an Ease Factor of 6 + Number of Minutes desired.

Hours: The effect lasts a number of Astrological Hours, regardless of sunrise or sunset. Equivalent to Sun. To calculate the duration correctly, succeed in a roll of Intelligence + Artes Liberales + dice against an Ease Factor of 6 + Number of Hours desired.

Days: The effect lasts a number of Astrological Days, regardless of the lunar phase. Equivalent to Moon. To calculate the duration correctly, succeed in a roll of Intelligence + Artes Liberales + dice against an Ease Factor of 6 + Number of Days desired.

Sign: The effect lasts a number of Astrological Signs, regardless of sunrise or sunset. Equivalent to Year. To calculate the duration correctly, succeed in a roll of Intelligence + Artes Liberales + dice against an Ease Factor of 6 + Number of Signs desired.

Mobed Beliefs on Astrology

According to the holy Zoroastrian tome, the *Dadistan i Menok i Khrat* ("Judgments of the Spirit of Wisdom"), the art of Astrology was passed from the Spirit of Wisdom unto Zoroaster.

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

Righteousness of the Wise (Minor Mystery Virtue)

Mobeds believe that Spenta Mainyu revealed these secrets (and others) directly to Zoroaster before taking him to Ohrmazd. For many mobeds, the attribute of Wisdom is the highest nature of God.

This mystery virtue grants the mobed access to unique Ranges, Durations and Targets, which are compatible with Holy Powers (see insert).

New Ranges, Durations and Targets

New Range: Ground

The target can be affected so long as he/it is touching the same ground that the caster is standing upon. The caster need not be able to see the target. Rivers, mountains and other significant obstacles (although not roads or walls) act as boundaries to this range. Furthermore, the ground must be natural earth. Artificial ground, like floorboards or cobble stones, will not work with this Range. Ground is equivalent to Arcane Connection.

New Duration: Fire

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

New Target: Community

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

Saoshyant's Elixir (Major Mystery Virtue)

The ritual of Saoshyant's Elixir (*Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 117) is the Zoroastrian route to immortality. The ceremony itself is a sacred and holy purification rite. Gaining this Mystery Virtue grants you knowledge of the ritual, which can be performed with the Holy Powers, Invocation and Wonders. Like the ritual in *Realms of Power: The Divine*, the level of this holy rite is 50.

Saoshyant's Elixir

Invocation Wonders Level 50

R: Per, D: Mom, T: Ind, Ritual

Only the most pious, holy and experienced mobeds ever attempt the preparation of Saoshyant's elixir (such as those with the Hauvatat Mystery). This holy ritual requires a season of preparation to cast, and if you are under the effects of a Longevity Ritual, the Longevity Ritual loses its effectiveness. You cannot make another for as long as you are under the effects. For ceremonial casting purposes, the associated Method and Power are Invocation and Wonders.

These are the instructions for preparing the elixir of eternal life, that which raises our bodies from the elements into which they have been dissolved and reunites them with our souls, as handed down from Saoshyant the Savior.

You must first prepare yourself for salvation by undergoing a terrible ordeal. Molten metal (usually lead) is poured over your entire body, which you must endure for three days (see Injuries, Heat and Corrosion in ArM5, page 181). The surging metal removes all taint from your soul and purifies your flesh, but also causes you terrible pain and injury, though it is said to feel like being bathed in warm milk if you are completely without sin. Some of the metal will probably stick to your body, and if you survive you must bear these disfiguring patches grafted to your skin like tattoos for the rest of your days, as removing them again exposes you to evil and undoes the effects of the ritual.

Once you are cleansed of evil, you must sacrifice a holy animal, usually a bull with Divine Might. This provides the necessary vis for the spell, and from its fat Saoshyant's elixir may be distilled. Drink this, and for as long as you strictly follow the tenets of Mazdeanism, you do not have to make aging rolls and cannot die. Instead, you gain a Warping point every year, another whenever you gain Aging or Decrepitude points from other means, and another when you would die from your wounds or a lethal blow. Fatal wounds Incapacitate you instead. Zoroastrians believe that those who go into Final Twilight after drinking the elixir will join Ohrmazd in Paradise.

Saoshyant's Elixir is intensely personal and cannot be cast upon another; to gain the gift of extended life on earth, you must perform it yourself.

(Special)

Gifts of Gayomart (Major Mystery Virtue)

Gayomart ("Primeval Man") was the Zoroastrian Adam or "first man", and is seen as the embodiment of personifying human perfection. This Holy Mystery opens the human body and soul to the Light of God, making those characters with True Faith even more holy and sacred.

A character must possess True Faith to initiate this mystery. The mystery grants the character additional powers as their True Faith score increases (see "Embodying the Light", *Realms of Power: The Divine*, p.61).

Asha (Truth): True Faith 1

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

Vohu Manah (Good Mind): True Faith 4

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

Hauvatat (Wholeness): True Faith 6

Your physical body becomes immune to putrefaction, change, disease and all forms of material corruption and decay. Subtract double your True Faith score from Aging Rolls. You more easily resist magical attempts to alter the shape of your body, inflict harm upon you or give you diseases or wounds. You gain an additional bonus to Soak and Recovery rolls equal to your True Faith Score x3. Furthermore, you no longer scar or blemish, as your body slowly returns to its perfect natural state. Incapacitating wounds no longer leave permanent marks upon you, and given enough time (years) you can re-grow lost limbs and other body parts.

Ameratat (Immortality): True Faith 8

So long as you maintain the maxims of Zoroaster and Ohrmazd, remain in a state of purity and truthfulness, observe the taboos and behave with good thoughts, good words and good deeds, then you will never die, and instead gain a Warring Point instead of Decrepitude points. Mechanically this requires that you have a Faith Point gained from a purity ritual at all times. Your body slowly ages, although you can more easily resist its effects through the gift of Hauvatat. While this virtue means you effectively will never die, you can still be killed from massive damage.

Long Lived Mobeds

There have been several long-lived mobeds: the high priests Vishtana, Tansar and Kartir all lived for several generations, as did Osthanes the first Prince of Magi. However, each reached a point of wanting to take their reward in the next life. The practical life-span of a mobed with the Ameratat power is no more than around 200 years.

Mobed Initiations

Mobeds can initiate unGifted practitioners into their mysteries. The rules for this are laid out in *Hedge Magic*, page 13.

Mobed Initiation Scripts

Mobeds use their Mobed Lore for initiation totals. The mystagogue is typically another initiated mobed or dastur. It is possible for mobeds to self-initiate if they have a script but no mystagogue, although most mobeds will seek out a mystagogue from another community.

The scripts used by mobeds to initiate their various powers typically emphasize extreme purity and lengthy prayers. Initiations can also require the initiate to challenge and overcome great foes – powerful demons and evil sorcerers. Similarly, such ordeals could also require the initiate to end famine, hunger or disease for a community. Initiation quests typically involve the establishment of a fire-temple, the conversion of a significant or notable person, or recovery and proper burial of a deceased Mazdean.

While there are many written initiation scripts, Mazdeanism places great value on the oral tradition; many of the living initiations are oral scripts.

Initiation into Mythic Alchemy

Initiation Ease Factor: 21

Script Bonus: +5 (+3 Quest: light ceremonial fire, +1 Sacrifice of wealth, +1 time)

The initiate must light one of the grand ceremonial fires of the Mazdean faith, known as the *atesh adaran* ("fire of fires"), in honor of the first twenty-seven yazdan, and Ameratat. This typically takes a season to properly prepare and perform, and takes significant expentiture. The initiate must remain in a state of ritual purity throughout the process.

Initiation into Mythic Herbalism

Initiation Ease Factor: 21

Script Bonus: +13 (+3 quest, +9 Major Flaw: Enfeebled, +1 Sympathetic Bonus)

The initiate must hunt down and destroy a powerful disease-causing infernal spirit, while affected by the illness the spirit causes. The illness must inflict the equivalent of the Enfeebled Major Flaw. This shows that he is capable of personally overcoming terrible sickness mystically and physically. Apart from the illness, the initiate must remain in a state of ritual purity throughout the initiation.

Initiation into Dream Interpretation

Initiation Ease Factor: 21

Script Bonus: +6 (+1 time, +3 Sympathetic bonus, +3 Minor Flaw: Offensive to Animals)

Dream Interpretation can only be initiated into by a Mazdean who is married (using the Mazdean ritual). The initiate must spend a season in meditation, prayer, ritual cleansing and contemplation of his dreams. Finally, at the end of the season, the initiate must travel deep into the wilderness in an area with many wild animals, imbibe ceremonial *haoma*, and survive for the night without magical aid. During this night, the initiate has the equivalent of the Offensive to Animals Flaw. Overcoming this obstacle symbolises the initiate's triumph over nightmares.

Chapter 6: Arabia

Illustration: [Arabia \(arabia.jpg\)](#)

Arabia is the heartland of Islam, home to the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Muslims are encouraged to visit this region at some point during their lives to fulfill the obligation of the *hajj*, the greater pilgrimage to Mecca, though for many practical concerns make this impossible. Ancient cities lie buried beneath its sands, holy shrines are scattered across its landscape, and *jinn* and other supernatural creatures haunt deserted ruins or even mix with the inhabitants of some of its cities.

Landscape and Society

The landscape of Arabia is more varied than most western travelers would expect. North Arabia, once known as Arabia Petra to the Romans, is a desert land of stone and sand. While much of the peninsula

is indeed covered by arid deserts, there are also mountain ranges running parallel to most of the coastal regions, with narrow but fertile coastal plains between them and the sea. Of particular note is a large high plateau in the eastern half of the peninsula, encompassing the provinces of the Najd and Yamama, which has fertile valleys where crops are grown and animals (mainly sheep and goats) are pastured. In the south the land rises into hills and mountains rich with incense trees, water and other natural resources - significant portions of Hadramawt and Yemen are forested, and these features gave rise to the Roman name for the province, Arabia Felix. The old trade routes of the Incense road that once ran through the deserts now track through the Red Sea around the Arabian coast and onwards to the fabled ports of the Erythraean Sea of the ancients.

Much of the peninsula is dotted with oases, around which villages and towns have sprung up. This is particularly true of the coastal provinces and the Najd/Yamama region, though such settlements may also be found in some of the deserts. The exception is the dreaded Empty Quarter, an inhospitable wasteland that is rumored to swallow all who venture into it.

Hazards of the Deserts

Arabia contains three major deserts: the Nefud Desert to the north, the Empty Quarter to the south, and the Dahna corridor that links the two. These deserts present a range of hazards that must be overcome if characters are to travel safely within them.

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

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

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

Sandstorms that arise may suffocate travelers or even strip the flesh from their bones. These may be either natural, created by the magic of malevolent sorcerers or the manifestations of elemental *jinn*. The *zawba'a*, detailed in the Bestiary XREF, is an example of a malicious *jinn* of whirling sand.

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

The inhabitants of Arabia consist of a mixture of settled townfolk, many of whom cultivate crops for a living, and Bedouin nomads who wander with their families and flocks, trading with the townfolk or working as guides and caravan guards on the network of trade and pilgrimage routes that cross the area. Periodically tensions flare up between townfolk and nomads, but for the most part relations are peaceful. One influential factor here is the religion of Islam, which most people follow in one form or

another, although there are also many Christians and Jews living throughout the region.

The inhabited parts of Arabia are generally ruled by local dynasties, most of whom owe nominal allegiance to the 'Abbasid caliph of Baghdad. The Hijaz, 'Asir and Yemen are divided between members of the Ayyubid family (ay-YOO-bids, the family of Salah al-Din (Saladin)), with the Hijaz falling under the nominal control of the sultan of Egypt (al-Kamil Muhammad, r. 1218–38), while 'Asir and Yemen are controlled more directly by the sultan of Yemen (al-Mas'ud Yusuf, r. 1215–1229).

The Bedouin

Although the nomads of northern Arabia have nominally all converted to Sunni Islam, remnants of their pre-Islamic culture or code, known as *murū'a*, have survived. The importance of hospitality (*diyafa*), courage (*hamasa*) and honor (*sharaf* for men, *ird* for women) remain paramount and color aspects of even urban Arab society. Forgiveness, loyalty and self-sacrifice are also integral concepts. The Bedouin tribes still revere the camel above all animals, according it greater respect than even the magnificent Arabian horse or their prized falcons. Most Arabian sahir belong to a Bedouin tribe and comparatively few dwell within cities or formal *buyut*, preferring to form alliances along tribal kinship and bloodlines.

Bedouin characters may have Personality Traits or Personality Flaws that reflect these cultural legacies. The Minor Flaw Dutybound (Bedouin code) is universal amongst Bedouin characters and reflects a general obedience to these customs. Rare characters from the deep deserts may even have the Pagan Major Flaw.

Many Faerie *jinn* mimic aspects of Bedouin culture, particularly the less powerful creatures referred to as *jann*. Most of the nomadic tribes have *jinn* blooded elders, are advised by wandering sahir viziers accompanied by powerful *'afrit* or *marid* servants and count families of true Faerie *jann* amongst their blood kinsmen. Such *jinn* most often take the shapes of animals beloved of the tribes: camels, falcons, saluqi hounds, or the noble Arabian horses. The ancient Jurhumite tribe, former rulers of Mecca in pre-Islamic times, contains only dark Faerie *jann* blooded members and still refuses to submit to Islam. Several other tribes from the ancient times are believed to live on in Bedouin memory as clans of Faerie *jinn*, such as the Jadis, the tribe of Tasm and the Thamudites.

Regardless of whether he is human or *jinn*, Muslim or pagan, a member of a Bedouin clan owes absolute loyalty to their clan first, their family second.

Bedouin Wizards

A disproportionately large number of Bedouin possess supernatural ability when compared to the town dwellers in the settled parts of Arabia. Even Gifted characters are tolerated and it has been noted that Bedouin sahir are more often Gifted than their fellows in other areas of the Mythic Middle East. Such sahir typically specialize in either Solomonic Storytelling or Solomonic Travel, although some Bedouin sahir disdain the more specific techniques and concentrate on summoning and bargaining with *jinn* exclusively. These sahir are usually accompanied by their favorite falcon or saluqi which is actually a Faerie *jinn* servant bound by a *khadim* bond (see Chapter 4: The Order of Suleiman for further details on sahir).

All tribes include at least one sahir, often supported by female hedge magicians known as *hakima* (Arabic: “wise women”) or *kahina* (Arabic: “soothsayers”) that resemble Folk Witches aligned to the Faerie Realm or male *shai'ir*, poets resembling the ancient artists of pre-Islamic times. The unGifted hedge witches typically lack the Cursing and Flight powers and have the Animal Healing and Entrancement Virtues instead. Details of Folk Witches can be found in *Hedge Magic*, pages 33-53 although some of the ideas for Faerie Doctors presented in *Realms of Power: Faerie*, pages 117-118 may be equally appropriate. Details on Arabian poets are given in the sidebar on Arab Poetry below.

Story Seed: Brothers of the Tribe

Knowledge of *muru'a* is treated like a non-Hermetic Mystery Cult Organization Lore and can be used to initiate various Faerie aligned Supernatural Virtues of value to a desert nomad using the rules found in *The Mysteries: Revised Edition*, pages 8-20 with the tribe's *hakima* acting as Mystagogue. The following Virtues can be initiated and are commonly found belonging to exceptional Bedouin: Animal Ken, Art of Memory, Arcadian Travel, Cursing, Death Prophecy, Dowsing, Enchanting Poetry, Entrancement, Greater Immunity: Thirst, Puissant Arabic, Spirit Votary, Ways of the Desert, and Wilderness Sense.

Initiation scripts vary from tribe to tribe but typically involve Ordeals related to the central concepts of the Bedouin code and inflict Major or Minor Personality Flaws that reflect these tenets: Generous, Higher Purpose, Overconfident, Oversensitive (to breaches of honor), Proud, Vow (always keep your word) or Weakness. Story Flaws such as Close Family Ties, Dependent, Enemies, Feud, Pagan, and Oath of Fealty may also be appropriate.

Foreign characters that demonstrate values admired by the Bedouin may be invited into the clan and eligible to undergo such ceremonies, forging a blood kinship with a nomad tribe and gaining the Dutybound (Bedouin code) in return for the Close Family Ties (adopted Bedouin clan) Flaw. To the Bedouin and their *jinn* allies, this bond of clanship (Arabic: '*asabiyya*') supersedes all other loyalty and may create difficulties for Hermetic magi or companions when the clan's interests do not align with their covenant or the Order of Hermes as a whole.

Pagan Deities of Arabia

Trees, especially the date-palm, wind sculpted rocks and precious wells are treated with a respect that borders on the worshipful by the Bedouin – many of these sites are the abode of a supernatural spirit referred to as an '*ashira*' ("close friend"). These creatures are appeased with gifts or respect and their homes are typically the location of auras or vis sources aligned to the various Elemental forms.

Some of the more powerful '*ashira*' are Magic *jinn*, manifestations of Arab deities worshipped in pre-Islamic Arabia or else Infernal *jinn* that have usurped their place. The following represents a selection of such deities:

Abgal: Guardian god of Bedouin and camel drivers.

Dhu'l-Khalasa: God of oracles and divination.

Dhu Shara: God of mountains.

Hubal: Senior deity associated with the moon and divination. Son of **al-Lat**.

Ishtar: Goddess of fertility, sexual love and war. More commonly worshipped in ancient Mesopotamia.

Manaf: A fertility deity worshipped by women, though women who had their periods were not allowed to touch idols associated with it.

Nakhla: goddess of the date-palm tree.

Al-Qawm: God of war and the night. Protector of caravans.

Sa'd: Associated with steadfastness in battle.

Wadd: Protector god.

Yaghuth: Associated with victory in battle.

The nature of such old deities may vary and multiple entities bearing the same name can be found within miles of each other but with widely different alignment and power. The benevolent version of Wadd venerated by a tribe from northern Najd may be an aloof Magic *jinni*, while the vengeful Infernal incarnation of the same deity feared by tribes in Uman may be a False God trying to subvert the nomads away from their faith. Others may be Faerie *jinn* woven out of the stories told by the Bedouin at their night fires about such fantastic natural locations. The weakest may be no more powerful than a minor elemental *jinn* with a Might score of less than 10, whereas the spirits of larger and more isolated landmarks may have Might scores approaching 50.

Story Seed: The Stone Lovers

A group of magi or sahir wishing to settle a pair of uniquely shaped rock outcrops in a remote Magic aura inadvertently offend the local Bedouin tribe, who consider the stones *'ashiras* and thus part of their tribe. Their legends tell of two giants, Aja and Salma, banished lovers who dwelt for five hundred years at the site, slowly transforming into the vaguely human shaped stone sentinels of today. The tribe fears that the wizards will awaken the spirits of the ossified giants or draw the attention of the dark Faerie and Infernal jinn that haunt the outcrops at night.

To settle or access vis from the site, the characters must deal with the representatives of the local tribe, but also the evil jinn that haunt it. Frequent magical activity may awaken the sleeping giants, who may not respond favorably to the interlopers depending on whether they are elementals, demons, pre-Islamic jinn or even cursed humans.

The Najd and Yamama

The Najd and Yamama regions take the form of a high plateau that slopes down from the west to the east. Yamama is covered with a plethora of oases, making it home to a large number of settlements where the main form of subsistence is agriculture. The Najd is more mountainous and rockier, so settlements tend to be found in the valleys where the inhabitants may make use of run-off rainwater.

The majority of the population of the region are nomadic Bedouin, though the populations of some of the urban centers are quite large. Two ancient tribes of Faerie *jinn*, the Jadis and the Tasm, still wander through this area and are known for their unusual wares, unimpeachable honor, and the most marvelous hospitality.

Kohl

Various myths tell of the origin of *kohl*, the black or blue powder made from frankincense and other spices used by women all over the Mythic Middle East as eye make-up. Many attribute its origin to the *jinn* as the powder can be readily purchased from the stalls of the hidden race within the bazaars of Golden Baghdad, although the price is seldom in money and more often in metaphorical coin. In Yamama they tell a legend about a blue eyed witch named Zarqa al-Yamama who was blessed with vision so keen she could see a man approaching thirty miles in the distance. In the ancient times when the country was still called Tasma and Jadis, she was killed by an invading Yemenite king who ordered his physicians to examine her eyes to discover the secret of her magical vision. Her eyes were found stained and smudged with *kohl*.

The most common magical *kohl* in Arabia is equivalent to a potion created by Bedouin witches and confers the Minor Virtue Second Sight on a character for Sun duration when applied. Other formulations of *kohl* have been noted to confer differing Virtues related to enhanced sight: Keen Vision, Magic Sensitivity, Sense Holiness/Unholiness Piercing Gaze and Wilderness Sense.

Sahiras or Hermetic magas may use such substances for their enchantments. *Kohl* powder has a Shape & Material bonus of +3 to affect vision. Its main component is ground from charred resin, usually frankincense obtained from southern Arabia (see below).

Tayma' and Khaybar

Tayma', Khaybar and the surrounding towns have traditionally been havens for Jews, and in 1220 they are independent settlements owing allegiance to no sultan. The Jews make up the major portion of the inhabitants of the area and are known for being fierce and clever fighters. They continue to ensure that

their children learn the arts of war from an early age, and they keep their skills sharp with periodic forays, made in alliance with some of the Muslim Bedouin tribes of the area, against other settlements of the Arabian Peninsula.

Story Seed: The Jews of Tayma' and Khaybar

Fierce and cunning fighters, the Jews of Tayma' and Khaybar are able rapidly to muster armies at times of need. Anyone who could harness their strength would hence be able to assemble a formidable fighting force at very short notice. They could therefore be useful allies if the characters suddenly find themselves facing an enemy army (such as the classic necromancer with his undead horde). However, traditional Judaism takes a dim view of magic and its practitioners, so the characters may have to go to considerable lengths to convince the Jewish elders of the region that their cause is just.

Falconry in Arabia

Believed by some to have originated in Mesopotamia, the art of falconry or *al-Qanas* is widely practiced throughout Arabia, particularly by the Bedouin tribesmen. Unlike in Mythic Europe the primary goal of hawking was to supplement the meagre nomad diet, particularly in the winter months. An exceptional bird, particularly the better suited females is still considered a mark of status by tribal leaders. The main prey hunted are the *houbara*, the *karwan* (Stone Curlew) and the hare. The most commonly used bird is the *saqr*, similar to the gyrfalcon but the peregrine falcon, known as the *shahin*, is preferred for hunting.

The authority on falconry is currently an unnamed Arabic text by the falconer Moamyn, equivalent to a summa Level 4, Quality 7 on Animal Handling (falconry) but containing the equivalent of a single tractatus on Hunt (hawking), Quality 7. In the next decade it will be translated into Latin as the *De Scientia Venandi per Aves* by Master Theodore of Antioch at the court of King Frederick II. By 1250, the work will have been corrected and glossed by the *stupor mundi* himself, resulting in the superior work known as *De arte venandi cum avibus* and become widely copied and distributed throughout Mythic Europe.

See *Lords of Men*, Chapter 5: Leisure for further details on hawking and *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 86 for training animals using magic. Suggestions for the various birds used by Arab and Turkish falconers are given in the Bestiary (XREF).

Story Seed: the Seven Falcons of Lukman

Legend tells of Lukman, son of 'Ad and his extraordinary longevity. Climbing a high mountain one day, he heard a disembodied voice calling to him and discovered a nest with two falcon fledglings. Choosing the stronger, he carried back to his camp and brought it up as his boon companion. The falcon lived for a full 80 years - during this time, the falconer aged not a day. When it died, Lukman returned to the original mountain and was overjoyed to discover another fledgling, which lived another 80 years. Once again, Lukman retained his youth. He repeated this another five times, growing sadder with the passing of each successive hawk. The seventh falcon he named Lubad. "the accumulation of all times" and when it passed, the weight of five centuries crashed down on Lukman and he finally died.

The falcon's nest lies within a Magic regio, accessible only after an arduous climb somewhere in the mountains of western Arabia. Each fledgling, if raised and trained as a companion, grants its trainer immunity from all Aging rolls for a fixed duration of 80 years. Each year, the owner gains a single Warping Point from being under a constant mystical affect and the boon is incompatible with standard Hermetic Longevity Rituals or other similar magic. Once the falcon dies, the owner suffers from the Age Quickly Flaw until they re-climb the mountain and raise the next hatchling. Unlike a normally fragile hawk, the bird does not need to make Aging rolls until it reaches 80 years old at

which point it suddenly dies. The bird otherwise unremarkable apart from possessing a Magic Might of 8 and the Unaffected by the Gift Minor Virtue. Although possessing limited immortality, it can be slain or die by other normal means.

The tale of Lukman reaches the characters and they may be inclined to investigate its veracity, either to gain the secrets for themselves or to see if the bird's power may provide insight into a potential Longevity Ritual Breakthrough. Unfortunately, the current falcon has been trained by a hostile Bedouin sheikh who is unaware of his magnificent hawk's value and bluntly refuses to cooperate with non-Muslims. The wizards may try and slay the immortal hawk and then follow its aggrieved owner to the secret location of the nest but risk the ire of the tribe's sahirs and their *jinn* allies. Even if they defeat, compensate or pacify the sheikh, will the bird accept a foreigner ignorant of the Bedouin code of honor?

Bahrayn

The region of Bahrayn, consisting of both eastern coastal territories of Arabia and islands off the east coast, has had a chequered past. Perhaps its most notorious rulers were an Isma'ili (is-ma-'EE-lee) Shi'i group known as the Qarmatians (qar-MAW-tee-anz), who reigned in the region from 899 to 1076. In 930 the Qarmatians sacked the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, stealing the Black Stone from the Ka'ba. It was returned under mysterious circumstances in 951, left wrapped in a sack in the major mosque in Kufa with a note saying, "By command we took it, and by command we have brought it back." The Fatimids (FAW-ti-midz), an Isma'ili Shi'i dynasty who ruled in North Africa at the time, are generally credited with having persuaded the Qarmatians to return the stone, but no-one knows for sure. Whatever the truth of this, the Black Stone was broken into seven pieces as a result of its travels, and it is now held together with a silver band. The Qarmatians' reign ended when they were ousted by the Sunni Arab Uyunid dynasty, who still rule the region in 1220, but some Qarmatians still live in the area.

Story Seed: The Fate of the Black Stone

What did happen to the Black Stone during its sojourn in Bahrayn? Why was it broken? The characters find information (perhaps revealed by a Qarmatian) indicating that during its absence the stone was stolen from the Qarmatians by a renegade sahir who wished to use it to power a ritual of unknown nature. Eventually, at considerable cost in lives, the Qarmatians were able to slay the sorcerer and recover the stone, but by the time that they did so it had been broken into seven pieces. Now the supposedly-dead sorcerer has been seen abroad once more, and the survivors of the original battle against him are gradually being murdered. The characters may be asked to protect one of the survivors, to hunt down the sorcerer, or to discover the purpose of the ritual.

Hajar

Hajar is the most important city in Bahrayn, being its major port and a link between Bahrayn and the coast of Persia on the opposite side of the gulf. However, its inhabitants do not go outside at night, for it bears the marks of a past trauma. In 350 the Persian emperor Shapur II (r. 309–379) ordered his forces to attack the Arab tribes on both sides of the gulf, slaughtering, plundering and imprisoning thousands of people in Hajar, the surrounding area, and the Persian coast opposite.

Now these regions are haunted by the ghosts of the dead, who come out at night and beseech anyone

they meet to help them against their persecutors, at least until they are slain by weapons wielded by invisible soldiers. It is said that these weapons can slay the living too, so the local people remain indoors after dark, stopping their ears against the screams and the sounds of desperate hands pounding on their doors.

Story Seed: The Ghosts of Hajar

A mother in Hajar misplaces her child, who becomes lost outside at night in the city. The local community of sahir suspect the ghosts are responsible, but being unable to control the spirits of the dead directly seek outside assistance. Can the characters find the child before the ghostly soldiers do? This story could also become the basis for a longer saga arc involving laying the ghosts to rest and freeing Hajar and the surrounding regions from their curse.

The Empty Quarter

Rub' al Khali, the Empty Quarter, is the particularly inhospitable tract of desert that forms the border between northern and southern Arabia. No caravan tracks have crossed it since the fall of the kingdom of 'Ad in the third century and the loss of its trade in frankincense from the south – even the Bedouins skirt around its fringes. Several miles beyond any settlement in the periphery of the region, the dunes climb to great heights and the traveller enters the domain of *al-Khalil* (“the Empty One”), a powerful elemental *jinn* said guard over the lost lands of the *al-Jahiliyya*, the pre-Islamic times.

This vast trackless expanse forms one of the largest Magic Auras in the Mythic Middle East. Beyond the thousand foot tall dunes that mark its periphery, the aura strength rapidly increases to 10 and the mundane terrain breaks down into an ever shifting landscape of brightness. Multiple regioes of bright featureless sand lay within its boundary, providing subtle traps for the unwary. Such pockets of space may only be entered involuntarily but can be accessed with astonishing ease – add 6 to the roll for entering a regio as described in *ArM5*, page 189. Unfortunately, leaving the regioes is not as easy – the bonus for entering is reversed when trying to leave, making escape difficult for those without Second Sight or Magic Sensitivity.

Some travelers may even find themselves directly transported into the mystical space of the Twilight Void through some powerful mystical process, seemingly without passing through a detectible regio. By passing through this soft place they find themselves adrift in the ageless space, most commonly just outside the boundary of one of the provinces of Auram, Imaginem, or Terram. Some explorers describe encountering vestiges of ancient cities, migrating nomad tribes or have reported passing through provinces aligned to other Forms. Details on the Magic Realm and Twilight Void are given in *Realms of Power: Magic*, pages 24-26.

The ready access to different dimensional spaces appears to be the result of some lingering effect of an ancient magical disaster and a ritual level power of the *genius loci* al-Khalil – the featureless mundane landscape appearing to magically resonate with the emptiness of the void.

Story Seed: The Valuable Quarter

Due to the ease in which travelers can seemingly enter the Twilight Void and the Magic Realm, this area is sometimes

known as *Rub' al-Ghali*, the Valuable Quarter, amongst local sahir and the few Hermetic magi who have learnt of its existence. Potentially vast resources of vis and magic from the Magic Realm are within the grasp of even the most inexperienced wizard, but unfortunately for the hopeful, returning to the mundane world does not appear to be as easy as entering. Would be explorers would be advised to secure some sure means of return or become lost in the eerie landscape for many lifetimes, perhaps even forever. Those that return often come back irrevocably changed and Warped – instances of mundane characters returning initiated into Sihr and one or more of the Solomonic Arts are not unheard of but these unconventionally initiated sahir are never fully trusted by their fellows.

Criamon magi speculate that the Empty Quarter may contain a means to pass between this world and the Counter-Cycle Alam. Merinitia contend instead that the provinces of the Empty Quarter encircle a hidden entrance to Arcadia where reflections of the ancient deities of Arabia lie trapped - whether by God, Iblis or some other Magic entity. Perhaps both or neither are correct, but the joint sponsorship of a Hermetic expedition to investigate the Empty Quarter has recently been agreed on and the two Primi are looking for young magi willing to investigate the rival claims. Some sahir speculate that al-Hajjar and al-Zill, two of the early contributors to Solomonic Magic may have disappeared into myth in this manner and will one day return from their extensive wanderings like King Baluqiya of old, confirming the stories of magical kingdoms beyond the known world speculated on in Islamic theology.

The Hijaz

The Hijaz is the religious heartland of Islam, being home to the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina. As a result, it receives much more traffic than the rest of Arabia, particularly in the form of pilgrims. In addition, its position on the Red Sea makes it an important support for maritime trade between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, and its coasts are dotted with harbors that provide shelter for ships traveling to and from Egypt, the main link between the two. Sahir communities are notably few or found only far from the main cities – the density of Divine auras and regioes makes magic difficult and even without the Gift, wizards of all types prefer to keep a very low profile to prevent provocation from elements of the religious authorities.

Medina

Medina, *Madinat al-Nabi* (ma-DEE-nat un-NA-bee, "the City of the Prophet"), is the second holy city of Islam and is situated on a flat plain cradled between several mountains and ancient lava flows, the junction of a number of valleys and passes through the mountains. The soil is unusually fertile, and a variety of fruits and cereals are grown here. The city is surrounded by strong walls with watchtowers built by the sultan of Syria, Nur al-Din (r. 1146–1174), in 1162. The governor currently owes allegiance to the sultan of Egypt, although the city is largely left to run its own affairs. The city has traditionally been home to a large number of religious scholars; the famous jurist Malik ibn Anas (d. 795), who founded the major Sunni school of law that became known as the school of the Malikis (MEH-li-keez, the followers of Malik), is one of those who lived and worked here.

Dominion auras in Medina are one point higher than they would be elsewhere, and the city is the site of numerous mosques, shrines and other historical sites.

Story Seed: The Lava Flows of Medina

The lava flows around Medina cooled and hardened centuries ago, but occasional earthquakes open cracks in them, allowing fresh lava to flow out. The characters learn that the earthquakes are not a natural phenomenon but are instead the results of experiments by someone hostile to Medina who is attempting to re-liquify the lava flows all around the city. Will they be able to stop them before they achieve this and drown the holy city in molten lava?

Non-Muslims and the Holy Cities

Non-Muslims are not permitted to come within the *harams* (HA-ramz) of the cities of Mecca and Medina, sacred areas extending about five miles out of each of the cities. This may, however, be problematic when designing stories involving the two holy cities, unless the entire party consists of Muslim characters. Alternatively, you may wish to adopt one of the following approaches:

The characters may seek to visit the cities without being discovered. Magic will certainly help in this regard, though once the characters are within the cities they are likely to have difficulty casting spells due to their high Dominion auras. Mundane disguises may actually be a better option, though the characters will need to be at least slightly skilled to avoid discovery. Needless to say, doing this is a grave act of sacrilege, and characters caught trying to sneak into the cities in this way will face severe penalties.

You may wish to have a smaller group, consisting of only Muslim characters, visit the city, with the other members of the troupe taking on the roles of other Muslims whom the characters meet along the way.

Alternatively, maybe a special arrangement can be made if the characters are able to prove their need to visit the cities. Maybe they may visit as long as they are accompanied by representatives of the local authorities, or maybe the holy sites are still off-limits to the non-Muslim characters, but they may visit the other parts of the cities freely.

A more radical, but probably the easiest, solution is to assume that non-Muslims are allowed to visit the Mythic versions of the holy cities, with no further complications or restrictions involved.

Whatever approach you take, a visit to the holy cities, for a Muslim or a non-Muslim, should be an intensely religious experience. These are, after all, cities where God intervened directly and frequently in human affairs, and such concentrated divine attention has left a legacy of holiness that affects all who visit. As one result of this, the *harams* bear Dominion auras of 3, and the Dominion auras in the cities themselves are usually 4 and often even higher. Fighting and the taking of life (except slaughtering animals for food or destruction of savage or diseased animals) is forbidden in the *haram* areas of the two holy cities. Unless otherwise noted all Muslim Dominion auras within these areas bear a Calm Temper Trait at a score of +3 (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, pages 38-39). Transgressors may be struck down with a visible manifestation of God's ire, even for minor infringements – reports of impious travelers provoking instances of the Curses *Ignis Domini*, *Smiting of the Lord* or *Swallowed Alive and Sent to Hell* are well known, albeit rare (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 89).

Story Seed: the Lost Lords of Mecca

The Jurhumites are an ancient tribe of *jann* blooded Bedouin that once ruled Mecca and areas of the Hijaz. They rejected Islam and appeared to be defeated by the early armies but now live on within old tales about the pre-Islamic tribes of Arabia. The whole tribe consists of Faerie *jann*, although a few *Jinn*-blooded sahir are secretly considered adopted members of their clan. They are best represented as dark Faerie Jinn and play roles in stories about crises of faith or dishonor and tend to have more elemental magic (specifically Auram and Terram powers) at their disposal than their usual Faerie cousins (see Chapter 3: the Jinn and their Lands). As former inhabitants of Mecca, Jurhumites are potential guides for non-Muslims attempting to infiltrate the holy cities for subterfuge or war, being privy to secret ways into the closed areas.

Perhaps the Jurhumite sahir seek out Hermetic magi to aid them in their feud against the current regime? Are the Jurhumites behind the change in the lava flows around Medina or are they merely being used as scapegoats by a opportunistic group of renegade sahir?

Mecca

Illustration: Mecca (mecca.jpg)

The holy city of Mecca lies in a valley between several mountains, sheltered from the winds and heat of the wilderness. The city contains both urban dwellings and a multitude of shrines, convents, religious colleges and especially mosques, of which there are 100. At its centre lies the greatest of these, the Haram (HA-ram) Mosque, within which is the Ka'ba. As indicated earlier, the Arabic term *haram* indicates the inviolable sacred areas surrounding and including Mecca and Medina (see Non-Muslims and the Holy Cities, earlier), but it is also used to indicate the Haram Mosque specifically. The divine influence on Mecca is clear; the climate is supernaturally mild, vegetation grows lush but never wild, and a sense of peace pervades the streets. As in Medina, all Dominion auras in the city are one point higher than they would be normally.

Mecca is always densely populated. In addition to the townsfolk who serve the city's needs, many religious scholars live and work in the Mosque of the Haram and the other religious buildings here. In addition, the city sees constant traffic as pilgrims arrive, stay for periods ranging from a couple of weeks to a few years, then move on again. The majority of the people who live in Mecca are Sunnis, but there are also a large number of Zaydi (ZAY-dee) Shi's here. Pilgrims come from almost all Muslim denominations.

The city is ruled by a governor known as the Grand Sharif (sha-REEF), a descendent of the Prophet through his grandson al-Hasan and a member of the Hawashim clan; the current Grand Sharif is Qatada (r. 1201–1220). If your saga follows history, in 1220 Qatada, along with many other members of his family, is killed when his son al-Hasan carries out a massacre to ensure his succession. However, the Ayyubid sultan of Yemen, al-Mas'ud Yusuf, steps in to quell the chaos and imposes military rule. The Grand Sharifs only regain control after the sultan's death in 1229.

The Haram Mosque and the Ka'ba

Illustration: Haram Mosque (harammosque.jpg)

The Haram Mosque is the most sacred of mosques, the building that holds the Ka'ba, the shrine built by the angels, then rebuilt by Adam and subsequently Abraham and his son Ishmael. It takes the form of a rectangular courtyard, around which are highly-decorated open halls supported by multiple rows of columns. Off the north-west hall is the Dar al-Nadwa (DAHR un-NAD-wa), a building constructed around a second hall, where consultation is carried out between religious scholars and the Grand Sharif. Off the south-west hall is a building used by scholars of the Maliki legal school. The mosque has 20 gates and seven minarets. The Dominion aura here is overwhelming, with a score of 10. Muslim characters may invoke *baraka* here to request any of the Saint Powers listed in *Realms of Power: The Divine*, pages 88-89; if required, the site counts as having Divine Might of 100.

The Ka'ba itself takes the form of a cuboid shrine, about 40 feet on each side and 46 feet tall. Although it is richly decorated, the upper parts of the walls are generally kept mostly covered with a green drapery known as the *kiswa* (KIS-wa). Implanted into the wall at the eastern corner, about five feet from the ground, is the Black Stone, said to have been cast from Heaven to show Adam and Eve where to build the Ka'ba. According to tradition, the stone was originally white but turned black as it absorbed sins over the centuries. Muslim pilgrims attempt to touch or kiss the stone to gain forgiveness for their sins.

The Ka'ba may be entered through a door on the north-east wall, which is about seven feet above ground level and reached by a wheeled set of wooden steps that is pushed up to the door when it is opened. The inside is richly decorated with slabs of marble of many colors, and normally one finds within three columns that support the roof, a staircase leading to the roof, and a variety of Muslim artifacts and relics, including several ancient and valuable copies of the *Qur'an* and documents on the walls that record the activities of those who renovated the Ka'ba. The exception is on days when the Ka'ba is opened to the public, which is most Mondays and Fridays, for on those days pious Muslims who enter the Ka'ba find themselves in a terrestrial divine regio, still at aura level 10, which represents an even more richly decorated version of the Ka'ba and has the distinctive feature of being able to fit more people than it normally could in such a space. Muslims in the Ka'ba usually seek to pray at the place where the Prophet used to pray, about five feet from the south-west wall, and at such times, miraculously, they may all pray in the same place without crowding each other. Whether the regio is accessible or not, Muslims may seek to invoke *baraka* from Muhammad both inside and just outside the Ka'ba.

Within the courtyard of the Haram mosque also lies the marble domed Well of Zamzam, about 20 yards east of the Ka'ba. Revealed to Ibrahim's wife Hajar when she was searching for water for her thirsty son Ishmael, the well is older than the first buildings of Mecca. The waters are clean and pure but although drunk by many Muslim pilgrims as part of their devotion, do not usually have any magical properties.

Story Seed: the *Marid* of the Well

Unknown to most of the pilgrims, the eponymous Zamzam, an ancient Magic *marid*, lies trapped in a suppressed Magic regio at the base of the well, its powers overcome by the overwhelming Divine aura. The spirit's remaining magical power ensures the well's amazingly pure water but it has come to resent its imprisonment by the Dominion.

Ancient beyond belief, the Zamzam *marid* may also have knowledge of the past useful to the characters that cannot be gained from any other source, but how can one discreetly communicate with such an entity within the most holy shrine of Islam? If freed, what would its actions be and how would the Muslim authorities react to such desecration of the ancient spring?

Story Seed: the Restoring Waters of Zamzam

On the night after the end of Ramadan, the Divine aura in the well dips slightly and the water in the well can be harvested by moonlight to as an unusual form of Extraordinary Aquam Vis. Each mouthful of water is able to restore all of a character's lost Fatigue Levels through an unknown ritual level non-Hermetic effect. Hermetic magi may be tempted to obtain such a remarkable substance, whether for personal use or as a potential source of Insight into overcoming the Hermetic Limit of Energy.

The *Hajj*

The *hajj* is one of the five "Pillars of Islam," five practices that mark someone as being a Muslim. All Muslims are obliged to perform the *hajj* at least once during their lifetime, if at all possible, and for most who undertake it, it is a life-changing event, often leading them to abandon inappropriate practices and make a new start in life.

Details of the *hajj* are presented in *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 108.

A Muslim who has completed the *hajj* gains a Personality Trait of Pious +3. The Muslim also gains 3 Faith Points. It

is possible to undertake the *hajj* again to regain the Personality Trait and Faith Points, but repeated performance of the *hajj* will never raise the Personality Trait above +3.

Al-Ma'la Cemetery and the Mosque of the *Jinn*

Say (O Muhammad): It is revealed unto me that a company of the Jinn gave ear, and they said: Lo! We have heard a marvelous Qur'an,

Which guideth unto righteousness, so we believe in it and we ascribe no partner unto our Lord.

And (we believe) that He—exalted be the glory of our Lord—hath taken neither wife nor son,

And that the foolish one among us used to speak concerning Allah an atrocious lie.

- Qur'an 72: 1-4.

On the northern edge of Mecca is the cemetery of al-Ma'la, where many of the Prophet's family members and followers are buried, including Amina, his mother; Khadija, his first wife; and 'Abd al-Muttalib, his grandfather. Near the cemetery is a mosque known as the Mosque of the *Jinn*, where a group of *jinn* heard the Prophet reciting the *Qur'an* and were thereby persuaded to convert to Islam.

The mosque has since become the apparent center of *jinn* worship of God, and they continue to gather publicly at this place, so that at prayer times, and especially at the Friday noon prayer, it bustles with Faerie *jinn* of all manner of shapes and sizes. Even the mosque officials are undisguised *jinn*.

Unspoken convention requires that all *jinn* attending prayers avoid assuming forms that are too monstrous or so large as to take up too much space in the mosque. A few humans also attend prayers at the mosque, interacting freely with its supernatural inhabitants. Respectful mortals, including sahir and other wizards, are always welcomed, if sometimes a bit over-enthusiastically. The mosque has a Faerie Aura of 4 which rises to 5 when the *jinn* are attending prayers.

Story Seed: The Mosque of the *Jinn*

A magus of House Merinitia hires the characters to conduct an investigation into the Mosque of the *Jinn*, demanding that they provide an extensive report on its denizens and visitors in the hope of understanding how and why such Faerie creatures seemingly ape the worship of the Dominion without producing a Divine aura.

The normally hospitable *jinn* become considerably less enthusiastic when it becomes apparent that the characters are there to observe, rather than take part in Muslim worship, since it is from human participation in the latter that the *Jinn* derive vitality. Many of the *Jinn* object to being treated like lab specimens and . How can the characters resolve this situation without upsetting either their hosts or their employer?

Ta'if

About 60 miles to the southeast of Mecca, built on the mountain slopes, lies the town of Ta'if. Before the rise of Islam Ta'if was the site of a major idol to the Arabian goddess al-Lat, goddess of fertility and patron of shepherds and caravan travelers, but after the Muslim conquest of the city in 631 this idol was destroyed. Ta'if is well known for its orchards, and it supplies fruit to many other towns of the region, including Mecca.

The Cult of the Daughters of Allah

Al-Lat was one of three major goddesses worshipped in the local area, the other two being **al-Manat**, goddess of fortune and destiny, whose cult was based at a place called al-Qudayd, at an unknown location about ten miles from Medina; and **al-'Uzza**, goddess of strength and the planet Venus, who was worshipped at a sanctuary on the outskirts of Mecca. These three goddesses were known as the "Daughters of Allah," who before the rise of Islam was worshipped by the pagans as a supreme creator god, and are connected with a story known as that of the "Satanic Verses," which by 1220 has been circulating for centuries among Muslim scholars.

According to this story, at one point during the Prophet's lifetime the Qur'anic revelation allegedly was somehow adulterated by Iblis, who managed to achieve the temporary insertion into the text of verses that permitted the Muslims to ask the Daughters of Allah to intercede with Him on their behalf. According to the story, this was immediately corrected by God, who revealed to His Prophet verses that rejected such a role for the goddesses. Whether this incident actually happened remains a matter of debate among Muslim scholars of the 13th century.

In Mythic Arabia, Ta'if is home to the Cult of the Daughters of Allah, a family-based cult that has secretly kept the worship of the Daughters of Allah alive throughout the centuries. At any given point in time there are three members of the family, each of whom can channel the power of one of the three deities. The family's ultimate objective is to restore the worship of the Daughters of Allah, but first they need to find the sanctuaries of all three goddesses; they have found the sanctuaries of al-Lat and al-'Uzza, and now they are in the process of seeking out al-Qudayd and the lost sanctuary of al-Manat. The current family consists of a man named 'Abd al-Qadir, his son Yusuf and the latter's wife Farida.

Depending on how you wish to depict the cult in your saga, you may choose to generate the members of the cult using the rules for Spirit Votaries (*Realms of Power: Magic*, pages 88-89); alternatively, it may be that the cult is infernally corrupted, in which case the rules for Diabolists may be more suitable (*Realms of Power: The Infernal*, pages 101-113).

'Abd al-Qadir, as the representative of al-Lat, has powers over fertility and travel, including the ability to control the growth of humans, animals and plants, and travel supernaturally swiftly from one place to the next; Yusuf, as the representative of al-Manat, can affect probabilities, affecting characters' die rolls; and Farida, as the representative of al-'Uzza, is supernaturally strong and also has powers over Venus' traditional realms of beauty, romance, the performing arts and communication.

Story Seeds: The Activities of the Cult in 1220

The cult discovers the location of the sanctuary of al-Manat and begins a tripartite ritual that is intended to bring about apocalyptic results, possibly restoring the goddesses to the mortal realm or damaging or destroying the Ka'ba at Mecca. The characters get wind of this and must take action to stop them.

Farida, as the newest member of the family, has qualms about her involvement in the cult. Perhaps she feels strongly connected to her Muslim upbringing, which is leading her to have second thoughts. Maybe she is being asked to engage in practices that she finds conflict with her morals. More sinisterly, perhaps she is pregnant, and she has been told by her father-in-law that she will be giving birth to her replacement, making her concerned over what future lies in store for her in a family that is normally limited to three members. Will the characters be able to help her?

'Asir and Yemen

To the south of the Hijaz lie the provinces of 'Asir and Yemen, controlled by the Ayyubid sultan of Yemen. The majority of the population are either Sunnis or Zaydi Shi'is, although in Yemen there are also scattered communities of Tayyibis (TOY-yi-beez), an offshoot of the Isma'ili Shi'i Fatimids who

maintain the belief in a hidden dynasty of *imams*. The Tayyibis are heavily involved in trade and have regular contact with the legendary island of Socotra to the south, home to a strange culture of non-Hermetic sorcerers (See *Rival Magic* for more details on Soqotran Sorcerers). As a result of their seafaring, the Yemenites are even beginning to expand into the old Ethiopian lands in Africa and across the Arabian Sea into al-Sind, bringing back tales of mythical Hind...

Sana'a

Located in the highlands of Yemen, where the air is fresh and the temperature cool, the city of Sana'a is the administrative center of the Yemen/'Asir region, home to the Ayyubid sultan al-Mas'ud Yusuf. It is renowned for its market, the Suq al-Milh (Salt Market), where all sorts of oddities may be found by the persistent, and for the quality of its food.

Story Seed: The Food of Sana'a

Why is the food in Sana'a so universally good? The characters gain possession of a cooking vessel from Sana'a and discover that it bears a hedge-magic enchantment that makes meals unusually tasty but also warps those who use the vessel over an extended period. If such vessels are in widespread use, then the entire population of the town may be suffering from Warping but unaware of it. Who created these vessels, and are they aware of the damage that they are causing?

The Valley of 'Abqar

In *Al-Jahiliyya*, the pre-Islamic times, *jinn* said to dwell in the Valley of 'Abqar and inspire the greatest of the old Arabian bards and poets, acting as their Supernatural Muse. The valley may be a faerie regio accessed from both Yemen or southern Jordan, a city or town within Arcadia or perhaps all of these simultaneously.

Arab Poetry

Poetry has an important place in Bedouin culture, the earliest examples dating from before the rise of Islam. The *shai'ir* or poet (not to be confused with a *sahir*) and the reciter or *rawi* hold a position of combined historian, soothsayer and panegyrist. Verses in praise of the tribe or sheikh known as *qit'ah* and scathing attacks on the virtue of other tribes referred to as *hija'* form the bulk of the works transmitted through oral tradition. *Zajal*, mock battles in verse, remain popular as a way of resolving hostilities between Bedouin *sahirs*. This is mechanically an opposed roll of Communication + Solomonian Storytelling for *sahir*, or Communication and Folk Ken for battles between mundanes but characters with an Arabic score of 6 or greater gain a +2 to their total.

Poetry and storytelling remain an integral part of Arab life in the thirteenth century and it is thought that exceptional performances may produce wondrous effects. The Art of Memory valued by Islamic scholars for reciting the Qur'an, is believed to have originated amongst the pagan poets. Enchanting Poetry and Entrancement are common among Bedouin poets, even amongst non-wizards and the former is the most commonly initiated Major Supernatural Virtue gained through devotion to *muru'a*.

A fabled example is the irascible pederast, Abu Nuwas, a poet sponsored at the legendary court of Harun al-Raschid, who passed into the myth and legend of Golden Baghdad as a Faerie creature of Elysium, living within the tales of *The Thousand and One Nights*.

Story Seed: Poets and *Qareen*

'*Abqari*, contemporary poets blessed with an artistic *qareen*, can be created using the rules for Legendary Artists or Maestro Mythic Companions (see *Art & Academe*, pages 133-135). The *qareen* of such characters are best reflected by the Faerie Friend, Magical (Being) Companion or Impious Friend Minor Flaws, depending on the Realm affiliation of the artist. Many '*abqari* possess Enchanting Poetry and the Muse Minor Supernatural Virtues (*Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 56). Some of these poets are granted such power over words that they may mimic the Folk Witch power of Cursing or the Gruagach Arts of Give, Blessing, and Curse, reflecting their ability to lampoon and satirize opponents into misfortune through their verse (see *Hedge Magic* for details of these non-Hermetic powers).

Journeying to 'Aqbar may compose part of an Initiation Script for a member of the Merinitia "Keepers of Tales" Mystery Cult or be of interest to Jerbiton magi or artistic Redcaps passionate about the stories and legends of *The Thousand and One Nights*.

Story Seed: the Poetry Festival at 'Ukaz

Once a year the small oasis town of 'Ukaz, situated half-way between Mecca and Medina holds a poetry competition, a tradition dating back to ancient times. The seven great poems known as the *Mu'allaqat* ("the Suspended Odes") that now grace the walls of the Ka'ba had their origin in this fair. Today, the winner's prize varies from year to year as the sponsorship of the fair passes from one tribe of *jinn* to another. The prize is always something of great value - one year, the *jinn* may reward a winner with the secret path to 'Abqar, another year they may bestow kinship with their tribe for eternity, and yet another they may offer service of one of their younger *jinn* as an unconditional servant. Depending on the prize, magi and sahir may be drawn to the festival, hoping to gain something otherwise impossible to acquire – something vital to their plans. Competition is always fierce, but the poetry is always breathtakingly beautiful.

Ma'rib

To the east of Sana'a lie the remains of Ma'rib, the ancient capital of Balqis (or Bilqis), the Queen of Sheba. It was once ruled by *mukkaribs*, hereditary priest-kings of celestial deities representing the sun, moon, and stars: al-Shams, 'Imaqa and al-Zuhara.

Most of the palaces, temples and gardens lie in ruins now, but the great *jinn*-built temple of Ghumdam remains, standing in solitary silence and bearing a Magic aura of 6 although smaller less powerful auras are scattered throughout the city, home to pagan *jinn* that once served the Queen at the bequest of King Suleiman. The great dyke that once held back the waters of the Wadi Udhana, protecting the city from the depredations of the uncontrollable water elementals that plague the river upstream, lies broken in the high mountains.

The lands around here could be a good spot upon which to found a covenant, if the characters could overcome the difficulties of supplying such a remote site and the hostile supernatural inhabitants, who bear no love for wizards or summoners.

Suleiman and the Queen of Sheba

Suleiman heard from the hoopoe (a brightly-colored bird fond of traveling widely) of the Queen of Sheba's kingdom, a land where the people worshipped the sun alongside God, and so he decided to invite Balqis to discuss her faith with him. She accepted his invitation and prepared riddles and difficult questions with which to test him. Then she set out to Jerusalem in a caravan laden with gold, spices, and precious jewels.

Suleiman, in the meantime, asked his court if anyone could bring the queen's throne before she arrived. A *jinni* boasted that it could obtain it before Suleiman rose from his seat, but "one who had knowledge of the Book" promised to bring it in the blink of an eye. The throne thus procured, it was disguised to test whether Balqis was a recipient of divine guidance. When she entered Suleiman's throne room she remarked on how much the throne resembled her own, but then when she entered a hall paved with glass she mistook it for a lake, drawing up her skirts and baring her legs. When her folly was revealed, she recognized that her worship of the sun was also incorrect and acknowledged God as the only deity.

Story Uses: King Suleiman and the Queen of Sheba

This tale offers a number of elements that might be incorporated into an **Ars Magica** saga.

Remains of Sheba's sun-worship might still be present in Ma'rib or other sites across the Middle East – the actual deities that the people of Sheba worshipped might be in reality either powerful Faerie entities, who crave worship from humans and plot to achieve this, or demons who represent themselves as a heavenly trinity, seeking to turn people away from worship of the True God. Was the magic of the *mukkaribs* a variant of the more common summoning arts – instead of calling *jinn*, could it command and control celestial entities and Astra Planeta Daimons similar to the Theurgical Mysteries?

Characters might encounter the hoopoe or its descendents, magical creatures who might be guides through the region or even prove suitable as familiars or magical covenfolk. Also, what became of the queen's throne and the hall paved with glass? Perhaps they are supernatural or even Divine items that remain somewhere, waiting to be rediscovered.

In addition, what became of Suleiman and the Queen of Sheba? According to tradition, they both died, but they were powerful sorcerers. Could they still be alive, perhaps working behind the scenes to influence human events? Perhaps the Queen's skills at entrancement and political magic has secretly left a legacy within the Storytelling magic of current sahir, a legacy that may hint at further mysteries yet to be incorporated into the Solomonic Arts?

Hadramawt

Hadramawt is a relative backwater in the Muslim world. Its valleys contain few sources of water and are only sparsely populated, while the hills, though at some points heavily forested, are too steep to make agriculture or coppicing viable means of subsistence. Very few pilgrims or other travelers make it this far south, and the people tend to be surprised when they encounter strangers. It is remarkable only for the unusual creatures known as nisnas (see the Bestiary XREF) and being the source of many of the resins and spices traded throughout the Mythic Middle East passing along the coast to Mythic Europe.

Like other distant areas of the Mythic Middle East, its isolation may make it appealing as a potential site for initial Hermetic settlement for the magical resources of the wilderness and the various Magic *jinn* aligned to its natural features are relatively unknown to all but a handful of itinerant sahir. Compared to other potential covenant sites however, the extreme lack of mundane resources, sparse population, and its distance from larger settlements will require magical solutions for the covenant to prosper.

Frankincense and Myrrh

Both these resinous materials are obtained from gnarled trees that grow predominantly in the fog wrapped mountains of Hadramawt, although groves can be found in parts of Oman, Ethiopia and the isolated island of Socotra. Harvesters “tap” the trees, making small incisions which allow the milky sap to exude slowly and then harden into “tears” of sticky resin over three months. The two resins form the main ingredients of incense used throughout the Mythic Middle East and Mythic Europe. Myrrh was traditionally more expensive in ancient Rome, although frankincense has always been more popular and each is worth more than its weight in gold when traded.

The resin trees are found in the more inaccessible wooded slopes of the area and guarded by flying serpents known as *syrenii* (or *iaculii*). These mundane guardians must be driven off by harvesters with smoke created by burning a similar resinous reagent imported from Anatolia known as storax (see Bestiary XREF).

Frankincense, literally “incense of the French”, comes from the stunted and hardy *mogar* tree and, is commonly referred to as olibanum (Arabic: *al-lubban*, “that which results from milking”). It is a light yellow resin, often tinted with green known for its medicinal qualities, in particular its ability to quicken the blood. The quality of the resin depends on the exact climatic and soil conditions, with each tree having a specific time when it produces its best resin. When burned it gives off a slightly balsamic and lemony fragrance characteristic of incense. The charred resin is one of the main components of the eye-powder referred to as *kohl* (see above). Frankincense resin has the following Shape & Material bonuses: +3 medicine, +5 promote life.

Myrrh in contrast, is a reddish-brown resin, with the best quality specimens being both darker and more translucent than inferior examples. It has a sharp pleasant scent and when burned gives off a heavy smoke acrid smoke with a hint of vanilla. Apart from its use in incense, it is used as an additive in wine, for embalming ointment and in the holy oil used by the Eastern Orthodox Church. Myrrh has the following Shape & Material bonuses: +3 relieve arthritis or inflammation, +5 preservation, +2 sanctify.

Story Seed: The Trees that Cry Blood

In the seaside hills of Hadramawt is a grove of five ancient *mogar* trees that seem to grow directly from the rock, resisting even the thrashings of the seasonal monsoons of the Erythraean Sea. The resin produced from these trees, when harvested during a violent storm yields unusually pure frankincense tears that each contain a single pawn of dedicated Rego Terram vis – each tree producing several pawns of vis per harvest. The timing of the harvest storms is unpredictable, but well-known to the local inhabitants, who are terrified of the particularly large and aggressive population of *syrenii* nestled amongst the branches of the grove. Harvesting the vis is no easy undertaking as the serpents seem immune to the usual *styrax* smoke and standard wards appear to have little effect.

Even if successfully harvested, the existence of the trees will become readily known to another magical group, whether they be rival Hermetic explorers, local hedge wizards or sahir representing the Order of Suleiman. Perhaps renegade members of the Olibanum tribe of the normally isolationist Soqotrans are interested in the unusual resin produced (see *Rival Magic* for details on these non-Hermetic wizards). Continued supernatural disturbance and intense magical activity or botches in the grove may awaken the trees, providing another obstacle to harvesting as the animated bushes gain the ability to actively resist interlopers with their spiny arms. Are the tears of the trees worth the price in blood?

Iram, City of a Thousand Pillars

(The tribe of) 'Ad rejected warnings. Then how (dreadful) was My punishment after My warnings.

Lo! We let loose on them a raging wind on a day of constant calamity,

Sweeping men away as though they were uprooted trunks of palm-trees.

Then see how (dreadful) was My punishment after My warnings!

Qur'an 54: 18-21.

The city of Ubar was home to the people of 'Ad, a race of giants who held sway over much of Yemen,

Hadramawt and 'Uman five generations after the Great Flood from their mythical homeland of al-Akhaf. However, the people of 'Ad were idolaters, and when God commissioned one of them, the prophet Hud, to bring them back to the right religion, they rejected him, persisting in their idolatry even after God inflicted a drought on them as a warning. In the end God destroyed them with a great storm, with the exception of Hud and the few who accepted his message, driving the city deep into the sands. There it lies still, waiting to be discovered by explorers.

The great depression in the sands above the surface of the city has a Magic aura of 5, hinting at the greater riches beneath.

Story Seed: Discovering the Lost City

There are a number of ways that characters might come across the lost city of Ubar. They might come across a map indicating its location; they might be approached by a descendent of one of the survivors of the destruction who wishes to recover something from the city; or they might come across it purely by accident, finding a tunnel into the earth or even reaching it after falling victim to a patch of dry quicksand.

However they find it, visitors to the city will find it intact in a great cavern under the desert, still filled with the riches of its inhabitants, along with their desiccated corpses, and the Magic Auras here remain strong. Indeed, this makes it an attractive site for a new covenant. The major difficulty will be navigating the city, for its inhabitants were about twelve yards in height and hence everything is built on a much larger scale than it would be for normal humans.

The discovery of the ancient city may draw the attention of the remaining Giants of 'Ad, itinerant stonemiths renown for their building skills (see the Bestiary for details on the Giants of 'Ad, XREF). Will the giants look favorably upon the discoverers or will they try and prevent the city from disclosing its ancient secrets and treasures?

'Uman

Located at the eastern end of the Arabian Peninsula, 'Uman's interior is mostly hot and dry desert, while the coastal mountains and plains are cooler and more fertile, supporting agriculture. The province also forms a channel for trade between Arabia and the Indian Ocean, which is conducted via various ports on its coasts. The majority of the population of 'Uman follow a variant form of Islam called Ibadism.

Muscat

Perhaps the same as the *Crypto Portus* (“Hidden Port”) of Ptolemy or the *Moscha* of Pliny, this coastal town is a prominent trade point for voyages destined beyond the Mythic Middle East. Many voyagers dreaming of wealth depart, never to return, from its quays. Recently conquered from the Abbasids by the local Yahmad tribe, the city is looking to expand trade further eastwards than Persian towards Mythical Hind. It is the home of a large group of sahir specializing in the Solomonic Art of Travel, who have founded a *bayt al-hikma* dedicated to discovering the legendary islands encountered in the tales by Sinbad the Sailor.

Nizwa

Nizwa is the royal city of 'Uman, home to the local Nabhanid kings and a center of religion, trade and art. It has numerous beautifully-decorated mosques and palaces, as well as bustling markets that are particularly famous for their silver jewelry and finely-crafted daggers. Several *buyut* of sahir are found within the city and its hinterlands.

However, Nizwa also has a darker side, being reputed to be the home of witches and sorcerers. Among the deeds ascribed to these are instantaneous travel, achieved by crossing a line drawn in the sand to appear at another location, and, more sinisterly, turning people into mindless slaves by making them appear to die, then taking their "corpses" and controlling them.

Story Uses: The Witches of Nizwa

The witches of Nizwa offer a number of possibilities for **Ars Magica** sagas. Perhaps they are a movement of Infernalists or Faerie wizards who will become the arch-enemies of the characters. Banished Soqotran witches may have formed a secret community in exile or the group may be agents of the Olibanum King trying to discredit and destabilize the Order of Suleiman. The group may even be the last remnant of a tradition of sorceresses privy to the astral magic of ancient Sheba. Alternatively, the rumors may be utterly unfounded, which has interesting implications if the characters have found an attractive site for a covenant near the city, leading to stories, or even a complete saga, based on the theme of overcoming negative preconceptions and stereotypes.

The Political Center and the North-West Provinces

Illustration: Iraq, Jazira and North-West Provinces (iraq-jazira-northwest.jpg; additional version with terrain features also included to aid the artists)

This chapter covers the political center and north-west provinces of the Sunni Muslim world, most of the rulers of which proclaim at least nominal allegiance to the 'Abbasid caliph in Baghdad. While this is the theoretical situation, in most areas provincial governors reign as independent rulers, only seeking approval from the caliph when it helps to bolster their claims to legitimacy.

The terrain of this region is divided broadly into three zones. In Iraq and much of the Jazira, especially between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, are fertile plains where agriculture flourishes; in Iraq in particular many of these plains benefit from being irrigated by a network of canals thousands of years old, though recent geological changes, combined with little effort made by the government to address the effects of these or maintain the existing network, have sharply reduced their productivity. To the north, east and north-west of these plains the terrain becomes more mountainous, making cultivation more difficult, although valleys provide areas where crops may be grown. Meanwhile, to the west lies the great Syrian desert that divides Mesopotamia from Syria and the Holy Land; this desert also merges to the south with the Nefud of Arabia.

Most of the inhabitants of these regions are Muslims, although there are also significant populations of Christians and Jews. The majority of people live in the cities, towns, and villages that cover the area, but the desert areas are home to a more even mix of wandering nomads and settled communities at oases.

Iraq

There have been human settlements in Iraq for thousands of years, and this continues to be the case in 1220, especially along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The ancient Faerie gods who used to rule over this land are no longer seen abroad, though remains of their ziggurat temples still tower into the sky to mystify the passers by. Now Iraq is the political centre of the Muslim world, which it has been, with varying degrees of actual authority, since the 'Abbasid takeover in 750. Soon after this event the 'Abbasids built their capital at Baghdad, from which they have reigned almost continuously ever since. For much of the 10th, 11th, and 12th centuries the 'Abbasid caliphs were figureheads under the control of their deputies, but since the reign of the caliph al-Muqtafi (r. 1136–1160) the caliphs have been able to resist control by others and rule Iraq independently. As noted earlier, the current caliph, al-Nasir, is a strong ruler; at times his direct authority has also been acknowledged in the Jazira and parts of Persia, and many rulers of the provinces respect his authority, in name at least.

The Starving Gods

The great gods, the Anunna,

Stayed parched and famished.[...]

But, like sheep, could only fill their windpipes (with bleating).

Thirsty as they were, their lips

Discharged only the rime of famine.[...]

(Atrahasis) put down...

Provided food...

The gods smelt the fragrance,

Gathered like flies over the offering.

Atrahasis, Tablet 3

The gods of ancient Mesopotamia, as ancient Faerie creatures, offer interesting possibilities as protagonists in sagas and stories. Faeries ultimately depend on human involvement with them to gain vitality, especially through the retelling of stories in which they are characters. However, the gods of ancient Mesopotamia have been largely abandoned by their worshipers. Nevertheless, the religion persists in scattered cult centers throughout Iraq and the Jazira, notably Harran, Mardin, Assur, and Mosul. Although not sanctioned by Islam, the priests (many of them yatus — see *Mythic Persia*) walk without fear through the streets in their distinctive tall conical hats and tunics. These pitifully-few worshipers are woefully insufficient to sate the gods, who have been forced to remain in hidden regions for centuries. Literally starved of human interaction, they are desperate for attention and may by now not be too discriminating about how this attention is gained. Some may have grand ambitions of having their cults resurrected. Others may simply seek to make friends with player characters, though their means of doing so may at times demonstrate a lack of understanding of human emotions, perhaps becoming aggressive or worse if their initial overtures are rebuffed.

Deities of Ancient Mesopotamia

The following represents a selection of the deities worshipped in ancient Mesopotamia:

Anu: Sky god; head of the elder gods (Anunnaki); cult center at Uruk

Ea: God of subterranean fresh-water ocean; god of arts, crafts, magic and wisdom; cult center at Eridu

Ellil: God in charge of the earth; head of the younger gods (Igigi) and keeper of an object of supreme power known as the Tablet of Destinies; cult center at Nippur

Ishtar: Goddess of fertility, sexual love and war; cult centers at Uruk, Nineveh and Erbil

Dumuzi: God of flocks and agriculture; lover of Ishtar, for whom he spends six months every year in the Underworld

Adad: Storm god and canal controller; lord of omens and divination using animal livers; cult center at Aleppo

Mami: Great mother goddess; cult center at Kesh (unknown site in central Mesopotamia)

Nergal: God of war, plague and forest fires; king of the Underworld; cult center at Kutha

Ereshkigal: Weeping queen of the Underworld; wife of Nergal; cult center at Kutha

Sin: Moon god; god of wisdom; cult centers at Ur and Harran

Shamash: Sun god; god of justice; cult centers at Sippar and Larsa

Marduk: Patron deity of Babylonia; king of the gods; cult center at Babylon

Assur: Patron deity of Assyria; king of the gods; cult center at Assur

Qasr Shirin

Overlooked by the mountains of the Persian plateau, Qasr Shirin ("the palace of Shirin") is a large walled village on the road to Jibal province. It takes its name from Shirin, the wife of the Persian king Khusraw II Parviz, who used to dwell here. The ruins of her palace remain, and on nights when the moon is full, the palace comes alive with Faerie versions of Shirin, Khusraw, the sculptor Farhad, and the rest of their court, eternally re-enacting the story of the courtship of Shirin. Characters who visit the site at the full moon take on the roles of characters in this tale, gaining rewards or wisdom from their participation therein. A character might become Shirin, sought after by two men and unsure which of them to love; she might become Khusraw, the king, who expects to receive all that he desires and is bemused when he is unable to gain what he wants through the force of his position alone; or he might become Farhad, jockeying for Shirin's affections even though his rival is the all-powerful king of Persia. Perhaps a trio of characters might take on all three roles, interacting with each other in ways that they would not do in their regular lives.

The Courtship of Shirin

The Persian tale of Khusraw and Shirin is best known in the version by the poet al-Nizami (d. 1209). Khusraw II, the King of Persia, falls in love with Shirin, an Armenian Christian princess. However, their courtship encounters difficulties, at which point there appears a rival for Shirin's affections, the supernaturally-strong sculptor Farhad. Khusraw and Farhad contest with each other, and the rivalry grows intense. Eventually Khusraw is able to get rid of his rival by ordering him to cut away the Behistun cliffs in the Zagros Mountains to find water, a seemingly impossible task. Khusraw is briefly taken aback when news reaches him that Farhad has completed the task, so he sends a message to Farhad that Shirin has died. Farhad, distraught, throws himself from the cliffs to his death. Before doing so, he throws away his axe, made of pomegranate wood, and where it falls there grows a pomegranate tree, the fruit of which will cure any illness. Meanwhile Khusraw's courtship of Shirin continues, and after he has proven

himself through many acts of heroism, including killing a lion with his bare hands to save her life, she finally consents to marry him.

Samarra

The capital of the 'Abbasid caliphs between 836 and 892, the city of Samarra used to be a sprawling complex of richly decorated palaces and mosques on both sides of the Tigris, where for most of that time the caliphs were virtual prisoners of bodyguards who in the meantime fought each other for control of their masters. However, after the caliphs returned to Baghdad the city fell into disrepair, and most of its buildings are now ruins. The major exception is the Great Mosque of al-Mutawakkil (r. 847–861), an immense structure that is largely intact and is particularly well known for its spiral minaret, which towers about 180 feet above the ground.

In 1220 the majority of the inhabitants of Samarra are Twelver Shi'is (*Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 112), who have remained in the city as it is home to the tombs of the 10th and 11th *imams*, as well a mosque with an underground chamber where the 12th *imam* vanished, which is also one of two places where he may re-appear at the end of time (the other being Hilla, described later). Thus these Shi'is await his return here.

Story Uses: Samarra

While parts of the city of Samarra are holy sites, it is a sprawling complex of buildings covering a wide area, and it may be that parts of it hide Magic Auras and devices dating from the activities of sorcerers at the courts of the caliphs. Thus it could be an attractive place to set up a covenant, particularly as even though the buildings are ruined, the underlying structures (wells, irrigation canals, etc.) also remain largely intact. The major question is how the current mundane population of the city would react to a bunch of foreign wizards setting up home nearby.

Baghdad

Illustration: Please re-use the illustration on page 29 of *Blood and Sand*, with the following corrections:

1 = Tomb & Mosque of Abu Hanifa

5 = Bab al-Khurasan (Khurasan Gate)

9 = Bab al-Dhahab Palace and Mosque

D = Rusafa Quarter

E = Bab al-Basra Quarter

J = Qurayya Quarter

Baghdad is the political centre of Islam in as far as it is the seat of the caliph, even though the caliph's political reach is actually fairly limited. Founded by the second 'Abbasid caliph, al-Mansur (r. 754–75), the city has been home to the caliphs for most of the 458 years that have passed since its first stones were laid in 762. The oldest part of Baghdad is the Round City, the original triple-walled city founded on the west bank of the Tigris by al-Mansur, at the center of which lies the Bab al-Dhahab (Golden Gate) palace, which was the first caliphal palace. Over the next two centuries the caliphs expanded the

city on both sides of the river, building mosques, palaces and gardens, so that it enjoyed a summer of intellectual and cultural achievement.

However, Baghdad has declined greatly since the old days. Repeated fires, floods and civil conflict have left much of it in ruins. On the west bank, each of the quarters is isolated from the others by walls and surrounded by a wasteland of architectural remains. On the east bank, the quarters around the caliph's palace are prospering, but this only comprises a third of the city. Sectarian dissent between both Shi'is and Sunnis, and also between different Sunni schools of law, are a cause of internal tension, which occasionally turns into violence. The major social group in the city unaffected by the decline is the Sufis (SOO-feeZ, Muslim mystics), who are flourishing as a result of the building of several *ribats* (ri-BAWTZ, hospices) for them by the caliphs. The caliphs have also been building or restoring a number of other religious institutions, including the city's many mosques, shrines, and religious colleges, in an attempt to ease tensions, remove the divisions in the community, and promote a cultural revival.

Every summer, many of the streets and most of the open land on the south side of Baghdad fills with stalls and tents in an enormous fair. This event is well-attended by merchants and travelers from all over the Mythic Middle East, and typically lasts most of the season. It is said that all manner of goods and services may be found at this event, including unique items and entertainments brought by strange men from fantastic lands. Visitors are usually cautioned to maintain a clear idea of what they seek before they go exploring, for there are said to be many vendors who appear only when their wares are especially desired, or who lure unwary travelers into their tents where they disappear forever. The summer bazaar is the site of the yearly meeting of the Suhhar Sulayman (XREF Order of Suleiman: The Majlis al-Suleiman).

The Dar al-Hikma

More Solomonic sahirs live in Baghdad than anywhere else in the world — easily a thousand of them. The city is home to no less than eight buyut al-hikma, including the great academy that sahirs call *Dar al-Hikma*, which was originally established by the First Council in Baghdad, north of the palace and halfway between the Bab al-Sham and the Bab al-Khurasan. This large building currently houses nearly a hundred young and old sahirs living and studying together, and is currently overseen by Niya al-Waziriyya al-Jabr Satefa al-Inshai al-Qasri al-Qalb. It is known to have an exceptional astrological observatory, with perhaps the finest astrolabe ever constructed to date, and the architecture is as grand as that of the Bab al-Dhahab Palace and Mosque.

The Dar al-Hikma typically chooses its leader and thus the representative for Majlis based on the achievements of those who attend the academy. Niya has discovered a unique method of combining her Solomonic arts, yielding two spells that allow her to summon a spirit directly from the Magic Realm and to summon multiple spirits at once. For this reason, she was chosen by the other sahirs to lead the bayt, despite her relatively young age and the fact that she has The Gift. She will probably become Asala of the Ashab al-Qalb once her predecessor dies. She is said to believe that the Suhhar has stagnated, and that Gifted sahirs (in both senses) are its best hope to avoid extinction. This is a controversial position, as less than ten percent of the Suhhar has The Gift and Gifted sahirs are not generally admired.

Golden Baghdad

As noted previously, Baghdad enjoyed its time of greatest prosperity during the reign of the caliph Harun al-Rashid, and this period has left its mark on the city. Scattered across Baghdad are numerous places where it is possible to cross into a Faerie version of the city. Here the roofs are covered with gold, the

streets are paved with marble and the tales of the *Arabian Nights* are re-enacted, with or without the participation of visitors. Here it is possible to receive a visit at night from the caliph Harun al-Rashid, his vizier Ja'far the Barmakid, and his executioner, Masrur the eunuch, who frequently venture out in disguise to observe the behavior of the city's inhabitants, rewarding the good and punishing the bad. Here one might find oneself eavesdropping on Sinbad the Sailor as he recounts his adventures to Sinbad the Porter. One might even travel beyond the walls of the city, going fishing with Judar the fisherman, seeking the ring of Solomon with Bulukiyya, or helping Hasan the goldsmith of Basra to obtain the love of a *Jinn* maiden. It is also possible to take the role of one of these characters, experiencing their adventures first-hand.

The entrances to Golden Baghdad may take any form, from a simple mundane doorway that happens to lead there to an invisible gate that can only be perceived by those with Second Sight, Faerie Sight or similar magic or powers. It is entirely possible to stray through such entrances into the Faerie Realm (*Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 20) without initially being aware that one has done so, especially in cases where the Guardian actually forms part of the Threshold. Indeed, straying into Golden Baghdad by accident is a common enough hazard that it is an acceptable excuse for absence among the people of the mundane version of the city, and most people in mundane Baghdad have visited Golden Baghdad at least once. Members of the Suhhar Sulayman have attempted to map the entrances to Golden Baghdad, but entrances behave differently for different people, and most appear, disappear and change, seemingly at random, with the result that only a small number of relatively stable entrances have been identified with any certainty. Members of the Suhhar also debate whether supernatural creatures found in mundane Baghdad are native to the mundane world or are visitors from Golden Baghdad who have strayed the other way through such portals.

Story Seed: The Wandering Caliph

>From a scant few years following his death right up to the current day, the Suhhar Sulayman have heard tales of encounters with Harun al-Rashid. These encounters start innocuously enough, as a chance conversation with three strangers, but usually blossom into strange and fantastical adventures in Golden Baghdad. Many sahirs believe this Harun al-Rashid (accompanied by his vizier and executioner) to be the faerie ruler of Golden Baghdad, and those whom he invites across the Threshold into the Faerie Realm are chosen based on a contribution they can make to the betterment of his city.

Al-Mada'in

Al-Mada'in is a small but densely-populated town to the south-east of Baghdad. In the 7th and 8th centuries it was a much larger complex of seven towns, but over the years it has gradually declined. It is still much admired for its mosque, near which is the tomb of Salman the Persian, an important companion of the Prophet. Al-Mada'in is also the site of the ancient ruins of Ctesiphon, the Persian imperial capital, and the ruins of the imperial palace still remain as witnesses to the passing of Sasanid power.

Story Seed: The Ruined Palace

The imperial palace at Ctesiphon is remarkable for its vaulted arch over the remains of what used to be the Persian emperor's throne room, which is over 110 feet tall at its highest point. This is of great interest to practitioners of the

Mystery of Hermetic Architecture (*The Mysteries*, pages 97–101). If a character seeks candidacy in such a cult, he might be asked to investigate the site as part of his Initiation. Otherwise, the characters might be asked to accompany a cult member to Ctesiphon on some pretext. Investigating the site will present its own challenges though, as the people are likely to be suspicious of foreign strangers poking around in the ruins of the palace.

The Christian Monasteries

Downriver from al-Mada'in are three Nestorian Christian monasteries (Arabic: *adyar* (ad-YAHR), sing. *dayr* (DAYR)) that are unknowingly interconnected. They each have their own unique features and are described below.

Dayr al-'Aqul

Located on the banks of the Tigris, the monastery of Dayr al-'Aqul is surrounded by a fairly large town of the same name, which includes a major mosque. Here the monks levy a toll from river traffic, which they share with the townsfolk, making it a major source of income for the town as a whole. However, recently the monks have noticed that rapid changes are taking place in the river's banks, with the result that the river is gradually drawing away to the west, which means that they may soon be cut off from the source of their livelihood. All attempts to prevent these changes have failed, and both the monks and the townsfolk suspect that some supernatural force may be involved. They have been unable thus far to identify their enemy, but some suspect that the monks of the monastery of Dayr Qunna may in fact be foul sorcerers seeking the destruction of Dayr al-'Aqul.

Dayr Qunna

A mile to the east lies the monastery of Dayr Qunna, which is a large building with walls that are so strong and high that the monastery resembles a fortress. This is perhaps not entirely surprising, as the building is not actually a monastery but a bayt al-Hikma inhabited by members of the Suhhar Sulayman and their followers, posted here to keep an eye on the caliphs and posing as Nestorian monks in the meantime.

Dayr Hizqil

20 miles south of Dayr al-'Aqul is the town of al-Nu'maniyya, within which is the monastery of Dayr Hizqil. Here the monks maintain a madhouse, caring for those who have been afflicted with insanity. To work in such a place requires a strong mental and physical constitution, and the monks are mostly down-to-earth, brawny types who are well-capable of manhandling their charges if needs be.

Story Seed: The Enemies of Dayr al-'Aqul

Who is diverting the river? The characters get involved when they are caught in a sudden change of direction of the river, and are rescued by the monks of Dayr al-'Aqul. The sahirs of Dayr Qunna may be keen to restrict the spread of the Dominion near their fortress, so they have a motive. In addition, if any of the sahirs have summoned spirits that

are stronger than they can control, these may be trying to make trouble for their summoners. Alternatively, the culprit may be at Dayr Hizqil. Perhaps the monks there would like to claim the income from the toll levied on the Tigris traffic, in which case they may, with supernatural aid, be trying to cause trouble for either or both of the other monasteries. Or perhaps one of the inmates is to blame. Unbeknownst to the monks of Dayr Hizqil, the sahir of Dayr Qunna recently dropped off at the madhouse one of their own who had summoned forces greater than he could control, which blasted his mind and destroyed his sanity; perhaps he has now attained enough coherence to seek revenge. Or maybe an enemy sorcerer is hiding at Dayr Hizqil, merely feigning insanity to allow him to direct magical attacks on Dayr al-'Aqul and Dayr Qunna. Finally, perhaps a demon or faerie is the one making trouble, thriving off the reactions of the mortals involved.

The Ruins of Babylon

"And you, Belshazzar his son, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this! You have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven! The vessels of his temple have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them. You have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know; but the God in whose power is your very breath, and to whom belong all your ways, you have not honored." [...] That very night Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was killed.

Dan 5: 22–23 and 30

The city of Babylon, in southern Iraq, has been the site of many dramatic events of history. It witnessed the chaining of Harut and Marut, the angels who taught magic to humans and now hang bound beneath the ruined city; the building of the Tower of Babel; the exile of the Jews; the construction of the Hanging Gardens by Nebuchadnezzar; and the subsequent destruction of the city and Belshazzar's kingdom by the Persians. As such, it is a site of great potential interest to explorers. More details on Babylon and its mysteries may be found in *Ancient Magic*, pages 12–15.

The Great Swamp

South of Babylon lies the Great Swamp, a marshy area that stretches between the two rivers until they join further south. Despite a noxious atmosphere and frequent plagues of insects, the swamp is dotted with villages and towns inhabited by determined souls who have managed to drain small patches of land and grow crops on them. Navigation through the swamp is primarily achieved using shallow-drafted boats. The inhabitants of these swamps are pagan followers of the old religion, although in the absence of a formal priesthood they have but fragments of their faith left to them. One tale they do know, and have faithfully recited for generations, is the Epic of Gilgamesh

The Ruins of Uruk

In the center of the Great Swamp rises the ruins of a great stepped ziggurat, all that remains of a great temple to the goddess Ishtar. Local people stay clear of the site, since some of those who visited it have never returned. The temple has a Faerie aura of 2. In addition, explorers who break through a rubble-strewn doorway (actually a Faerie Guardian) find themselves inadvertently passing through an entrance to the Faerie Realm of Elysium. The Threshold Strength here is 33, but those who visit the temple and cross the doorway automatically accumulate the requisite number of Threshold Points (major border (12) + trod (the doorway, aura 5) + any temporal thresholds + any personal thresholds + any shortfall made up by the Guardian's Spirit Away Faerie Power). See *Realms of Power: Faerie*, pages 18–21.

Upon entering the Faerie Realm, characters encounter Gilgamesh, who seeks to make one or all of them identify with Enkidu, taking on his role in this tale; this sets them on the Path of Destiny (see *Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 33). If they agree, Gilgamesh sends the characters out into the wilds, there to await the arrival of Shamhat.

The Epic of Gilgamesh

Of him who found out all things, I shall tell the land,
Of him who experienced everything, I shall teach the whole.
He searched lands everywhere.
He who experienced the whole gained complete wisdom.
He found out what was secret and uncovered what was hidden.
He brought back a tale of times before the Flood.
He had journeyed far and wide, weary and at last resigned,
He engraved all toils on a memorial monument of stone.
He had the wall of Uruk built, the sheepfold
Of holiest Eanna, the pure treasury.

The Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablet 1

The ancient Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh* attained its final form in the 8th or 7th century BC, though it owes its origins to a variety of much older stories about the mythological king of the city of Uruk, who may be based on a real person who ruled two millennia earlier. It tells the tale of King Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu, who adventure together until they are cruelly torn apart by the vengeance of the gods. There are actually three known major variants of the tale; the following is a very brief summary of the most popular version.

King Gilgamesh of Uruk is an unpopular ruler, and the gods send him Enkidu a wild man, to distract him. Enkidu is tamed by Shamhat the temple prostitute, and after a wrestling match in which neither wins, Gilgamesh and Enkidu become close friends. Seeking fame and honor, the pair go to the Pine Forest to slay the monster Humbaba. Upon return to Uruk, the goddess Ishtar tries to seduce Gilgamesh, but he rejects her. In a rage, she brings the destructive bull of heaven to attack Gilgamesh and Enkidu, but they slay it and insult Ishtar. The gods decide that the pair have gone too far and strike Enkidu with a fatal illness.

The distraught Gilgamesh takes to wandering in the wilderness. He makes it as far as the gate through the mountains that guard the sunrise, where he is permitted to pass by the humanoid scorpions that guard it. Beyond, he meets Siduri the alewife, who advises him to go home and make the most of this life, since the afterlife is nothing to look forward to. Gilgamesh is undeterred, and he obtains directions from Siduri to the abode of Utnapishtim, a mortal king who was made immortal by the gods after he survived the great flood. Gilgamesh fails to obtain immortality from Utnapishtim, and is instead forced to return to Uruk with only the wisdom that he has gained on his journey. This is sufficient to make him a good king.

Characters who take on the role of Enkidu in this story, then, are doomed to die. This is something that may be known to some of the players, even though it is highly unlikely that any of the characters will know it. Any player who, despite knowing the fate that lies in store, still has her character adopt Enkidu's role and allows the character to be killed not only achieves an Unmitigated Success in re-enacting the story, but should also receive an extra Confidence Point as a reward for bravery at the end of the session.

Ancient Mesopotamians did not believe that death meant the complete end of existence, but rather that the human soul was transported to a dry, dusty underworld where the dead led a miserable, dreary existence: essentially a place devoid of vitality. To faeries, the deserted Temple of Uruk, abandoned by humans, is a symbol of such a place, and

any character who has died as Enkidu thus finds himself sent through the Guardian portal back to the temple, alive and having gained whatever he sought.

Storyguides may wish to draw out the suspense by having any companions of the dead character complete the remaining story of Gilgamesh's travels before they also are returned to the temple, where they will find their apparently deceased comrade alive.

The Whirlpool at Ubulla

On the north side of a canal leading into the Shatt al-'Arab lies the town of Ubulla, a busy settlement with palaces, mosques and markets. However, in the late 8th century the town was plagued by a vicious *Jinni*, who took the form of a whirlpool in the Shatt al-'Arab and wrecked any ships that came within its reach, thus blocking the trade route between Baghdad and the Persian Gulf. The *Jinni* was only defeated through the cleverness of Zubayda bint Ja'far, the wife of Harun al-Rashid. She discovered through her studies that the *Jinni* in question was vulnerable to stone, so she had a large number of ships loaded with stones, floated to the whirlpool and then sunk, filling the *Jinni's* maw and burying it in the riverbed, thus calming the waters and enabling ships to travel the Shatt al-'Arab once more.

Story Seed: The Whirlpool at Ubulla

The *Jinni* at Ubulla is imprisoned on the river bed, but not slain. The characters get word of a group of sorcerers who are planning to free the creature and use it as a weapon with which to impose their will on the caliph. Should they try and prevent this directly, or should they try and warn the caliph, all the time knowing that the sorcerers back in Ubulla are gradually getting closer to achieving their goal?

Basra

Located on two canals leading into the Shatt al-'Arab, Basra is an important city in southern Iraq. It contains numerous shrines and mosques, the best known of which is the mosque built by 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, which has a minaret that shakes or remains still depending on whether an oath sworn before it is true or false. Basra is also well-known for its library, which reputedly contains over 15,000 books.

Story Seed: The Thief of Basra

The characters catch someone stealing books on arcane lore from the library at Basra. The thief is taken to the minaret, and there his guilt is confirmed and he is sentenced to have his hand cut off. However, before the punishment is carried out, the thief tells the characters that he was only conducting the theft at the command of a sorcerer who is holding his family hostage, and he begs them to gain proof of this so that his crime will be pardoned, as well as to rescue his family and keep them from harm. If the characters agree to help, the local chief *qadi* (QAW-dee, judge) gives them a week to obtain the proof required.

Of course, it may be that the thief is in fact lying, and there is no sorcerer or family, in which case the characters return from their wild goose chase only to discover that the thief has escaped and they are now responsible for tracking him down again. This may be a tricky task if the thief also has supernatural powers.

Kutha

Within the town of Kutha stands an immense tower of solidified ashes, all that remains of a furnace built by the ancient tyrant King Nimrod, the builder who also built the Tower of Babel. Nimrod attempted to kill Abraham by hurling him into this furnace, despite the fact that Abraham was the son of his vizier Terah, but God commanded the flames to be cool, and Abraham walked out unharmed. Meanwhile, the furnace itself was consumed by the flames.

Story Seed: Nimrod's Furnace

[Abraham] said: Worship ye then instead of Allah that which cannot profit you at all, nor harm you?

Fie on you and all that ye worship instead of Allah! Have ye then no sense?

They cried: Burn him and stand by your gods, if ye will be doing.

We said: O fire, be coolness and peace for Abraham,

And they wished to set a snare for him, but We made them the greater losers.

And We rescued him and Lot (and brought them) to the land which We have blessed for (all) peoples.

Qur'an 21: 66–71

The furnace was originally dedicated to the powers of Hell, and was home to a fiery demon. However, direct intervention from God on Abraham's behalf made it into a holy object; and trapped the demon inside to quell the flames. Now, a cabal of corrupted individuals seek to light the fires of Nimrod's Furnace once more; a feat that can only be achieved following a weakening of the faith of Kutha's inhabitants; followed by profaning the testament to Abraham's miracle by burning holy men to death within it.

Karbala'

Karbala' is a site associated with a traumatic event in Muslim history, having witnessed the violent end to one of the first Shi'i revolts against the Umayyad dynasty. In 680 al-Husayn, the son of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and grandson of the Prophet, sought to advance his claim to the caliphate after the death of the caliph Mu'awiya. However, he and his followers were intercepted and slain at Karbala' in the desert by Umayyad troops. This event sent an emotional shockwave through the Muslim world; this was, after all, the Prophet's *grandson*. The event is still remembered with regret by all Muslims and particularly mourned by Shi'is, who hold ceremonies commemorating the event on the day of 'Ashura' ('ah-shoo-REH', "the Tenth"), the 10th day of the Muslim month of Muharram (mu-HAR-ram).

Karbala' is now home to a small town, at the center of which is the tomb where al-Husayn's body is interred (his head is in Cairo), which is a major place of pilgrimage for Shi'is. It takes the form of a domed shrine surrounded by a garden pool. The gateway of the shrine itself is made of silver, while inside the tomb is lit by golden and silver lamps. The other doorways in the shrine are closed off by curtains of silk. Pilgrims coming to the tomb kiss the silver gateway before entering to pray. The tomb has a Dominion aura of 8, and visitors may attempt to invoke *baraka* from al-Husayn's tomb in the form of any of the following Saint Powers: *Apparition, Acknowledgement of Evil, Expel Demons, Resist Temptation, Grant of Serenity, Straighten the Crippled, The Faithful Made Whole, Celestial*

Immunity, Mass Healing, Humility of Caesar, Terrify the Unbeliever. Al-Husayn has a Divine Might of 75. See *Realms of Power: The Divine*, pages 87–89 and 105.

Hilla

The city of Hilla occupies both sides of the Euphrates river, though its greater part is found on the western bank. The two sides are joined by a bridge of boats held fast by great iron chains. Hilla contains a shrine where it is said that the twelfth *imam* will re-appear at the end of time, so many Twelver Shi'is live here, awaiting his return. Indeed, Hilla is a center of Twelver Shi'i scholarship, with many religious scholars making their homes in the city.

Story Seed: The Scholars of Hilla

The characters are contacted by a powerful, but physically disabled, Shi'i sahir, who asks them to travel to Hilla on his behalf and seek the wisdom of a scholar named Muhammad ibn Muhammad, who makes his home there, providing the characters with a list of questions that they must ask him. However, it quickly becomes clear that there are three scholars with this name in the town, all of whom have wildly varying responses to the questions, and also that relations between these scholars are intensely hostile due to their theological differences. The characters will have to spend a considerable amount of time, and no small amount of tact and diplomatic energy, to gather all three scholars' answers without upsetting any of them (by clearly associating with either of his rivals) and causing them to become uncooperative.

Najaf

The city of Najaf is of immense importance to Shi'is, as it contains the tomb of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. As stated previously, 'Ali was killed in 661, an event which took place in Kufa. As he died, he instructed that his body should be put on a camel, which should be turned loose, then followed; where the camel knelt was where he should be buried. This was done, and for a long time his supporters kept the location of his grave secret, fearing that the Umayyads might desecrate the site if they found it. However, in 791 the 'Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid was hunting nearby, and he chased a deer into a thicket and then discovered that neither his horse nor his hounds could enter the spot. He made his servants dig in the thicket, and when they discovered the corpse of 'Ali he ordered a tomb to be built on the spot. This tomb has been refurbished and expanded over the years, and it is now an ornate structure that forms the focal point of the city and sees visits from thousands of pilgrims every year. Najaf is also home to an immense graveyard, where several prophets and numerous important Shi'i nobles are buried. There are also several *madradas*, mosques, and other religious institutions here.

The shrine of 'Ali takes the form of a gold-domed structure, on each side of which is a monumental portal with a silver doorstep. It is richly decorated with glazed tiles, thick carpets and gold and silver lamps. The doorways are covered with silk curtains, and silk hangings also adorn the walls inside the structure. The actual tomb itself is surrounded by a railing made of engraved gold plates held together with silver nails. The Dominion aura in the shrine has a score of 8, and visitors may pray for *baraka* from 'Ali to invoke any of the following Saint Powers: *Acknowledgement of Evil, Apparition, Celestial Immunity, Cure Blindness, Expel Demons, Grant of Serenity, Mass Healing, Resist Temptation, Straighten the Crippled, The Faithful Made Whole, Humility of Caesar, Rebuke the*

Unfaithful, and Terrify the Unbeliever. The shrine is particularly well known for healing miracles, so attempts to invoke Saint Powers of this type enjoy a +1 bonus. 'Ali has a Divine Might of 75. See *Realms of Power: The Divine*, pages 87–89.

Kufa

About seven miles north-east of Najaf lies the city of Kufa. This used to be a vibrant center, but recently it has declined, and much of the city is in ruins, although in the eastern part of the town the Great Mosque of Kufa remains in good condition. This is the mosque where 'Ali was mortally wounded by his killer, and the site of the attack is marked by a *mihrab* that has been built on the spot. Kufa continues to be visited by Shi'i pilgrims, usually on the way to or from Najaf.

Story Seed: The House of Ibn Muljam

As indicated in XREF Chapter 2, 'Ali was killed by a political opponent with a poisoned sword. His killer, named 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljam, was subsequently executed. However, his sword was taken away by associates and buried in a house where he secretly stayed while he was in Kufa, in which it has subsequently spread an Infernal taint while also becoming an object binding 'Abd al-Rahman's ghost to the site. Since then the house has changed hands many times, for people have found it uncomfortable to stay in, and household accidents have happened there with increasing frequency, though the cause of this remains unknown to the general populace. The house finally passes into the hands of a friend of the characters who has enough insight to realize that there are supernatural forces at work, and he contacts them to ask for their help in discovering and removing the cause of the troubles. However, by the time the characters reach Kufa the spirit has become strong enough to possess their friend. Can they remove the taint and defeat the ghost without harming him?

The Jazira

To the north of Iraq lies the Jazira. Like Iraq, this is mostly a fertile area where agriculture flourishes. Much of the region is ruled by the Ayyubids, who currently spend much of their time intriguing against each other, with the result that those cities that are not ruled directly by them are able to assert their independence, only acknowledging their authority in name. Most of the rulers here, including the Ayyubids, acknowledge the ultimate authority of the caliph, although again this has little real impact on them.

Mosul

Mosul lies on the east bank of the Tigris, opposite the remains of the ancient city of Nineveh. Since 1128 the city has been held by members of the Zangid (ZANG-gid) family, whose progenitor, 'Imad al-Din Zangi (d. 1146) is best known for having taken Edessa from the crusaders in 1144. Currently Mosul is effectively ruled by a Mamluk regent, Badr al-Din Lu'Lu', ruling on the behalf of the emir al-Qahir Mahmud and acknowledging Ayyubid overlordship.

Mosul is defended by a double wall, a strong citadel and, on the east side, the Tigris itself. Outside the walls are suburbs and fertile gardens, while a wide north-south road runs through the city itself. Many of the houses are built of marble. Mosul contains numerous important religious sites, including mosques housing the tombs of Jonah and St George (who is also a prophet in Islam), a healing spring, a squash tree planted by the Prophet himself, and several *madrasas* and Christian monasteries. The population here consists of a mixture of Muslims, Christians and Yazidis (on the last, see *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 136).

Mosul is particularly well known for its textiles. Indeed, it is from the name of the city that the word "muslin" is derived.

Story Seed: Tensions in Mosul

The people of Mosul follow a righteous path, doing pious works. You will meet none of them but has a cheerful countenance and a soft word. They are generous to strangers, receiving them kindly, and using justness in all their dealings with them.

Muhammad ibn Jubayr (d. 1217), *Travels*

The characters are contacted by a magus or sahir who recently traveled to Mosul. The wizard in question, having read the travelogue of Ibn Jubayr, decided to investigate and see if the legendary kindness of the people of the city had a supernatural cause. However, his magical experiments in the city have gone awry, and he has inadvertently set the people against each other, so that civil war is brewing. The wizard has the Blatant Gift, impeding his ability to defuse the tension, so he asks the characters to come and act as mediators between the hostile factions while also helping him to cancel the effects of his magical meddling.

Barqa'id

The city of Barqa'id is avoided by travelers, for it is populated almost entirely by thieves who rob unwitting visitors and prey on caravans passing it on the road to Nasibin. As a result of its ever-worsening reputation, and the consequent reduction in the number of travelers passing near it, its inhabitants have become ever bolder in their atrocities, attacking other nearby towns and villages, to the point that their victims have appealed to the rulers of Mosul and Nasibin for help; however, each ruler has refused, claiming that it is the other's responsibility and leaving the people to fend for themselves.

Story Seed: Against the City of Thieves

The characters are victims of a raid conducted by the people of Barqa'id, and their victory over the thieves is witnessed by the inhabitants of a local village, who offer them succor. When they arrive at the village they find themselves welcomed like heroes, and it quickly becomes evident that the people are expecting them to destroy Barqa'id and rid them of their oppressors. How will the characters respond to these expectations?

Nasibin

An important center of Nestorian Christian scholarship and the seat of a bishop, the city of Nasibin is

home to a mixed population of Christians and Muslims. It is famous for its gardens, said to be 40,000 in number and blessed with unusually large and fragrant white roses, but also for its scorpions, which deliver a particularly venomous sting and fill the city in great numbers.

Story Seed: The Battle for Nasibin

Nasibin is actually the site of an invisible battle for souls between an angel and a demon, of which the outward manifestations are the roses and the scorpions. So far, the battle between the two has reached only a stalemate, but either party might decide to try and enlist the aid of the characters. If the characters are taken in by the appeals of the demon, either succumbing to promises of rewards or mistaking the disguised demon for an angel, they may unwittingly find themselves aiding the cause of Hell...

The Astrologers of Nasibin

For most of the life of the Suhhar Sulayman, Nasibin was home to a great bayt al-hikma known as the House of the Heavens, the seat of the great family of Solomonic astrologers called the *Ashab al-Najm*. This was a series of five large buildings carved from white stone and placed around a central building that housed an observatory with an astrolabe, with a great procession of statues in the courtyard between them fashioned to represent each of the ancient Babylonian figures associated with the planets and zodiacal constellations.

In the year 1186, however, a fascinating event occurred. It is said that soon after the vizier representing Nasibin and the Asala al-Najm returned to the bayt from that year's Majlis, they and all of the other sahirs of the city departed in a mass exodus. Some of them had made arrangements and had their possessions ready to transport, while others simply set down their work and left whatever they were doing unfinished. This departure occurred just before the end of summer, and astrologers have calculated that at about that time all seven planets were in the sign of Libra, a rare event that indicates powerful celestial influence in acts of subtlety, independence, and the assistance of others.

Neither the Asala nor the vizier who once led the House of the Heavens have been heard from since, and so have never explained this strange direction the great house suddenly took, but there are now many groups of sahirs who tell different stories and give different reasons. The predominant belief is that they scattered to better assist Salah al-Din in the Battle of Hattin and the recapture of Jerusalem in 1187, though others say they acted to put a plan into place that would remove Rashid al-Din Sinan of the Syrian Nizaris (see XREF Mythic Persia: The Nizari Isma'ili State).

All of the remaining sahirs from Nasibin now travel in roving caravans across the Mythic Middle East, each occasionally stopping in one place or another when the stars seem right. Their mobile laboratories are still more common in Jazira than other regions, being closest to where they came from. Meriq, the current Asala (see XREF Persia, Savah) maintains that their family bayt is still located in Nasibin, even though no one currently lives there, and supposes that those who left must eventually return there one day.

Mount Judi

Mount Judi is believed by the Muslims to be the final resting place of the Ark of Noah. The mountain is

topped by a mosque marking the spot, and at its foot lies the city of Thamanin ("eighty"), said to have been founded by eighty of Noah's companions, whose inhabitants claim descent from this illustrious group.

Mount Judi and Mount Ararat

And it was said: O earth! Swallow thy water and, O sky! Be cleared of clouds! And the water was made to subside. And the commandment was fulfilled. And (the ship) came to rest upon al-Judi and it was said: A far removal for wrongdoing folk!

Qur'an 11: 44

And in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.

Gen. 8: 4

According to the Bible Noah's ark came to rest upon Mount Ararat in Armenia, something that accords with Christian and Jewish belief but contradicts Islamic belief. In fact, both groups are right in a sense: the remains of the ark are in a regio that may be reached from either mountain. On Mount Judi it is possible to enter the resting place of the ark from the mosque; characters have merely to walk *through* the *mihrab*, even though it appears to be made of solid marble, in order to be transported there. For more on Mount Ararat and the resting place of Noah's ark see *Ancient Magic*, pages 70–73.

Amid

The black basalt city of Amid has been massively fortified by its Turkish overlords with thick walls, multiple watchtowers and iron gates. The central portion of the town includes a tall hill upon which is built the citadel. Outside of this wall lie the suburbs of the city, again enclosed by another fortified wall. The city is home to several religious buildings, including both a major Sunni mosque and a great Jacobite church, both of which are built of black basalt and iron and are renowned for their beauty.

The over-fortification of Amid is the result of repeated attacks on the city that have been made over the centuries by immense armies of Faerie creatures wielding wood and stone weapons and clad in an ancient and unknown form of leather armor. The precise reason for these attacks is unclear, though they always take place on the spring equinox. The people of the city have become fatalistically used to preparing for these attacks on a regular basis. On the other hand, the shared foe has proved to be a factor that has led to extremely good relations between the Muslims and Christians of the city.

Story Seed: The Death of Tenik

In ancient times there were two chieftains named Tigran and Vasdes. Tigran ruled a village on the site of Amid, while Vasdes ruled another village nearby. One night, Tigran raided the village of Vasdes and took the latter's wife, Tenik, hostage. The following night, the night of the spring equinox, Vasdes led his troops out to rescue his wife and take revenge on Tigran, but Tenik, who wished to prevent further bloodshed, threw herself between the two warbands in an attempt to halt the fighting, meeting an accidental death under her husband's already-swinging club. Horrified, both men called a halt to the conflict and resolved their differences.

The Faeries at Amid seek to re-enact the conflict of Tigran and Vasdes, but they are unable to bring it to its final resolution due to human ignorance of the story. In the meantime, their army, the Faerie manifestation of the warband

of Vasdes, has grown as Amid has grown, with the result that it continues to be a threat to the city. The characters learn of the story from a Faerie that lives nearby and realize that the conflict may be brought to an end if someone takes the role of Tenik and falls under Vasdes' axe. Yet how may this be achieved without someone having to die?

Raqqa and the Battlefield of Siffin

Once a residence of the caliph Harun al-Rashid, Raqqa is enjoying something of a resurgence under the Ayyubids. Its markets are flourishing, and it is famous for its blue-glazed ceramics. Meanwhile on the opposite side of the Euphrates from the city is the site of the Battle of Siffin, which was fought place between 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufyan in 657. After several months of skirmishing, Mu'awiya asked his opponent for resolution of their dispute by arbitrators. 'Ali agreed, but some of his followers did not and abandoned him; Ibn Muljam, who slew 'Ali, was an adherent of this group.

The supporters of 'Ali who died in the battle are buried here, and it is possible to see through the ground to their uncorrupted bodies from afar. However, when one comes to the places where they lie, the bodies may no longer be seen. The battlefield is a place of pilgrimage for Shi'is.

Story Seeds: The Dead of Siffin

The identity of one of the corpses buried at Siffin causes concern for the characters:

Perhaps the one of the bodies, from a distance, looks like an ancestor of a character, in which case, why is the ancestor here among the dead? Did an ancestor of the character travel here and become involved in the fighting between 'Ali and Mu'awiya? If the ancestor was in the region for a significant amount of time the character may have other, unknown relatives in the region, waiting to be found. This has even more interesting implications if the character in question is Gifted; perhaps there is a whole magical lineage to which she is related.

Alternatively, maybe the cause for concern is a corpse that, from a distance, resembles a still-living character or one of the characters' associates. Is this a warning of some sort, a premonition of the future?

Of course, with both storylines the characters will need to find ways to observe the corpse in question more closely, to ensure that they are not merely seeing a coincidental resemblance. This can probably be achieved using magic either to gain a closer view of the body or to mark the grave so that they may disinter the corpse. Of course, if they do the latter, they will have to ensure that they are unobserved by people who might object to them disturbing the site.

Harran

Currently ruled by the Ayyubids, the city of Harran has an ancient pedigree as the dwelling place of Abraham and later as the first center of the scholarly movement that began translating many works of Classical scholarship into Arabic in the 8th century. About nine miles south of the city is a shrine marking where Abraham and Sarah used to dwell. Harran is also famous as having been the center of a cult of monotheistic star-magicians known as the Sabians, who were first encountered by the Muslims in the 9th century; they are said to have since died out, but some of them may still exist, posing as Muslims to avoid harassment. Harran is also home to a prominent cult dedicated to the Assur, patron god of the Assyrians.

Story Seed: The Heat Is On

This is a town with no beauty about it. It has no shade to mitigate its feverish heat, and its climate follows from its name (*harran*, "hot"). Its water bears no acquaintance with freshness, and its squares and outskirts never cease to burn from the heat of its midday sun. No noontime place of rest will you find there, and you will breathe no air that is not heavy. Thrown into the naked waste, it has been founded in the midst of the wilderness and, without the brightness of a city, its shoulders have been stripped of the clothing of verdure.

Muhammad ibn Jubayr (d. 1217), *Travels*

Why is Harran so unusually hot? The characters discover that the growing heat in the town is the work of remnants of the Sabian magi, who hope that by making the city inhospitable they may drive away the population, leaving it an empty site that they may excavate for ancient treasures of their tradition and in which they may resurrect their cult. This desire to reclaim the site may find sympathetic ears with the characters, since Hermetic magi often have mixed feelings about similar mundane encroachment on magical sites. The magi may be tempted to aid the Sabians in their efforts, or they may seek to arrange some sort of compromise that allows them to practise their magic while leaving the local populace undisturbed.

Edessa

The city of Edessa has changed hands many times throughout its history, having been held variously by the Byzantines, the Muslims, and others. In 1098 it was taken by the crusaders, who made it the capital of one of their four states. However, as noted previously, on Christmas Eve 1144 it was conquered by Zangi, and it currently is under the control of the Ayyubid sultan of Aleppo, al-'Aziz (r. 1216–1236). The majority of the population of Edessa are Christians, of various churches, and its chief claim to fame used to be a Christian relic, the Holy Mandylion, a cloth bearing an image of Christ's face, which was sent by him to King Abgar of Edessa. However, this relic was given to the Byzantine Emperor in exchange for prisoners by the Muslim rulers of Edessa in the 10th century, and then lost when the crusaders sacked Constantinople in 1204. What became of the relic remains unknown, but the people of Edessa hope that it will be miraculously restored to them someday.

Story Seed: The Holy Mandylion

The Image of Edessa (as the Holy Mandylion is called by the West) is now in possession of Otto de la Roche, the crusader Duke of Athens, not only one of the most powerful mundanes in the Thebes Tribunal, but now virtually invincible thanks to this powerful relic. For his persecution of the orthodox clergy, the pope has recently excommunicated de la Roche (See *The Sundered Eagle*, Chapter 5: Athens, and 9: Relics of Constantinople). The characters are somehow motivated to return it to Edessa; perhaps they are hired by an Armenian nobleman (or magus), or else it is necessary to defeat a great evil that threatens Edessa.

The Sanjah Bridge

Crossing the river Sanjah, a tributary of the Euphrates, is an exceptionally well made bridge, consisting over a single arch over 200 paces long, made from huge blocks of dressed stone. This was constructed in ancient times by a sorcerer working for a local ruler, who was aided by a talisman that he carried. The

talisman is now implanted in an arch at the crown of the bridge. No-one knows exactly what its function is, nor what would happen if it were to be removed.

Story Seed: The Missing Talisman

The characters are approached by representatives of the villages around the Sanjah Bridge. The talisman has been stolen, and the bridge is starting to crumble at a supernaturally-fast rate. The local villagers depend on the bridge to allow them to transport crops to market. Can the characters track down the thief? Even if they do, can they restore the talisman's magical effect before the bridge collapses completely?

Arzanjan

The bustling market town of Arzanjan is mostly populated by Armenian Christians. It is famous for the quality of the various pieces of work produced by its crafters, with pride of place going to its brass-smiths, who produce works of remarkable beauty in shapes unattainable by the brass-smiths of other towns.

Playing an Arzanjani Brass-Smith

Arzanjani brass-smiths have a magical talent that allows them to manipulate brass by hand, enabling them to produce exceptional pieces of work. This is represented by the Minor Supernatural Virtue Lesser Power (*Realms of Power: Magic*, page 45), which is gained through guild Initiation. The Initiation Script to gain this power always includes the Minor Personality Flaw Vow (guild loyalty). Mechanics for Initiation can be found in *The Mysteries Revised Edition*, pages 8–16. Arzanjani Brass-Smiths' Guild Lore (an (Organization) Lore Ability) may be used in place of (Mystery Cult) Lore in this instance.

Crafter of Brass, 1 Fatigue level, Init equal to (Qik – 6), Terram

R: Touch, D: Conc, T: Ind

A piece of brass touched by the user of this power becomes supple to the touch, so that it can be reshaped into a different form. This does not enable the smith to fuse pieces together, so she must still carefully cut out the basic shapes of the objects to be made. However, it does enable an imaginative smith to create pieces of great intricacy and beauty.

ReTe 15 (base 4, +1 Touch, +1 Conc, +1 for intricacy): Lesser Power (15 levels, –2 Might cost)

A character may begin the game with this Virtue, in which case she should also take the Vow Flaw and a score of 1 in Arzanjani Brass-Smiths' Guild Lore. She should also consider taking Flaws that represent the experiences of her Initiation.

Story Seed: To Learn the Craft

A magus of House Verditius is intrigued to learn about the powers of Arzanjani brass-smiths and sends the characters to find out more. He particularly encourages one of the characters (perhaps a filius) to learn the Mystery, so that they may later examine its similarities to aspects of Verditius Magic. However, in order to achieve this the characters will have to persuade the elders of the Arzanjani Brass-Smiths' Guild to initiate one of them, including convincing them that their secret will not be shared with the world at large.

Azarbayjan

Azarbayjan is a mountainous province to the north of the Jazira. Both it and the province of Arran to the north are nominally ruled by a dynasty known as the Atabegs (A-ta-begz) of Azarbayjan, the current head of which is Muzaffar al-Din Uzbek (r. 1210–1225), who rules from Tabriz. Uzbek's hand lies lightly on his domain; much of it is left in the hands of local governors, and Uzbek himself both acknowledges the overlordship of the Khwarizm-Shah and pays tribute to the king of Georgia.

The population of Azarbayjan is incredibly diverse. Ethnically, it includes Turkic peoples, Persians, and people from the Caucasus, while its religious tapestry includes a broad mix of Muslims, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and followers of other religions. As a result of its terrain, communities are very scattered and its major centers are little more than large towns. The *lingua franca* of the region is a Turkic language, though most of the people also speak local dialects.

Lake Urmiya

Taking its name from the town on its western shore, Lake Urmiya is a startling shade of blue and smooth as glass. At its center is a small island inhabited by fishermen, who catch the strange dog-headed fish that inhabit the lake. In ancient times this island was home to a powerful sorcerer who conducted experiments on these fish, but an explosion triggered by a failed experiment destroyed most of the tower, including its master, though catacombs remain beneath the ruins. The residue of the sorcerer's magical activities have left the lake and island with a Magic aura of 1.

Story Uses: The Sorcerer's Tower

The secluded tower at Lake Urmiya could be a good site for a new covenant, even though the Aura is rather weak. Alternatively, it also provides a great excuse for an old-fashioned dungeon crawl, should the players feel nostalgic for the early days of role-playing. In both cases, given that the sorcerer clearly bred the hybrid dog-fish found in the lake, it is more than likely that the tower and the tunnels below it house all sorts of hybrid monstrosities that may oppose or welcome the characters, depending on the needs of your saga.

Maragha

The city of Maragha seems to enjoy the favor of some supernatural entity, for it is surrounded by flourishing orchards that produce a strange type of melon, green-skinned with red flesh, that tastes like honey. In addition, the sky is always clear here, so the city is favored by astronomers who enjoy the opportunity to study the heavens without having to rely on good weather.

The Observatory at Maragha

If your saga follows history, then in 1231 the Mongols occupy Azarbayjan. In 1260 Hulagu, the Mongol *khan* of Persia (r. 1260–1265), makes Maragha his capital. In 1262 he finishes building an observatory on the outskirts of the city for the famous Muslim astronomer Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (d. 1274). Nasir al-Din subsequently makes important astronomical observations including mapping the movements of the planets.

Story Seed: Dim Skies and Rotten Fruit

An unheard of thing happens: the skies above Maragha become cloudy. At the same time, the melon crop fails suddenly, going rancid overnight. The characters are asked to investigate, and they soon discover that the town has fallen out of favor with the supernatural entity that up until now ensured its prosperity. Yet what act by the populace has earned the creature's enmity, and how may it be appeased?

Gilan

The province of Gilan is a relative backwater in the Muslim world, not being particularly rich or famous. Most of it is mountainous and covered with jungle, but the coastal plain is fertile, and the people who live here grow various crops including rice and wheat. The local rulers of Gilan pay tribute to the rulers of Jibal, to the south, but are otherwise broadly left alone to rule the province independently. The emir of Gilan has been forced into a political alliance with the leader of the Nizari Isma'ili (see XREF Mythic Persia).

Barvan

Barvan is the major city of Gilan and is notable only for its bad reputation, being said to have no good houses or markets. It also does not possess a major congregational mosque, although a number of minor mosques do exist. The Dominion aura in the city is unusually low, with a score of only 1.

Story Seed: To Build a Mosque

Some of the people of Barvan would like to see a major mosque built in the city, both to provide a gathering point for the people and to improve the town's reputation, but the governor is not of particularly pious inclination and would rather spend his money on worldly pleasures. In addition, the most logical way to build such a mosque would be through the expansion of one of the existing mosques, but the townsfolk cannot agree on which mosque to expand. The characters are prevailed upon to act as external mediators both with the governor and between the leaders in the various mosques. Can they come up with a solution that will please everyone?

Mukan

Most of the province of Mukan consists of a swampy plain stretching from the mountains in the north-west portion of the province to the Caspian Sea. Much of this area is cultivated, with rice and wheat

being particular crops grown here.

Bajarvan

One of the chief cities of Mukan is Bajarvan, which while a modest settlement in itself enjoys its fame through proximity to the source of the Water of Life, which is said to be near the town. However, no one has as yet managed to find the fountain, or if they have, they have not returned to tell the tale.

Khidr and the Water of Life

Khidr (the Green One) is an important Muslim prophet. He is said to be immortal, having drunk or dived into the Water of Life, which he found by means of a shining jewel brought from Paradise by the prophet Adam. According to some stories, he and Alexander the Great sought the Water of Life together, crossing a dark land to find it. Alexander, however, became lost, so that only Khidr actually reached the goal of their quest.

Khidr wanders the world giving advice wherever God directs him; indeed, he is believed to have given guidance to all the prophets who have lived since his birth, with the exception of Muhammad, who instead tutored Khidr. Khidr has power over the sky, the sea and all plant life, and is a particularly important figure to the Sufis, who see him as the epitome of the Sufi *shaykh*. Khidr usually appears as a venerable Muslim in a woolen cloak. As a result of diving into the Water of Life, his skin and clothes are a bluish-green color.

Khidr is best used as a mysterious advisor to the player characters. He is unlikely to reveal his true identity to them, and at times he will give advice that seems bizarre and unreasonable, although it will always be proved correct in the end (see Moses and Khidr, later). Should the characters wish to find the Water of Life — which purportedly grants immortality to those who bathe in it — they will need to seek his guidance, though he will only help them in this if their intentions are pure.

Arran

As noted above, the province of Arran is ruled by the Atabegs of Azarbayjan, though their actual involvement here is minimal. The majority of the population follows Armenian Christianity, but there is also a significant Sunni Muslim community here, including most members of the ruling classes.

Baylaqan

The most important city in Arran is Baylaqan, which stands in a river valley supplied by several streams, with the result that the town has many mills, as well as flourishing gardens and orchards. However, this idyllic setting has recently become the site of discord, as the citizens are divided about how to treat a popular preacher who raves about a "storm gathering in the east" that will soon engulf its people. Some wish to lock him up or even have him executed, while others hail him as a seer.

The Fate of Baylaqan

The seer of Baylaqan is indeed correct, for in 1220 the Mongols descend on Baylaqan and destroy it. According to the sources, since they are unable to find suitable rocks nearby for their mangonels, the Mongols cut down plane trees, saw their trunks into chunks, and use these as ammunition when they attack the city walls. They then pillage the city and burn it to the ground. Depending on when your saga is set, characters may arrive here either just in time to help fight the Mongols or after the conquest, in which case they may be asked to help with the rebuilding.

Shirvan

To the north of Arran and Mukan lies the province of Shirvan, a mountainous region with a number of towns dotting the valleys. For centuries the province has been ruled by a Persianized Arab dynasty known as the Shirvanshahs (shir-VEHN-SHAHZ), who rule from their capital at Shamakhi. Currently power is shared between two members of the royal family: Farrukhzad I ibn Manuchihr III (r. after 1187–before 1225) and his son Garshasp I (r. 1204–1225). The majority of the inhabitants of Shirvan are either Sunni Muslims, like their rulers, or Christians.

Shamakhi

The royal capital of Shamakhi consists of a town built entirely of stone, situated at the foot of a mountain and surrounded by gardens. Like Bajarvan, Shamakhi claims to be near to the source of the Water of Life, so it may be that explorers should start their search at the junction of the Cyrus and Araxes rivers. Shamakhi also possesses the Rock of Moses, which marks the spot where Moses met Khidr. A fish placed upon this rock by Moses and his servant came to life and swam away, and local people still come to the spot to pray for the healing of those languishing near death. For Muslims the rock is a relic with a Faith score of 3 and the Saint Power *The Faithful Made Whole*; see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, pages 43–46 and 88.

Moses and Khidr

Then found they one of Our slaves, unto whom We had given mercy from Us, and had taught him knowledge from Our presence.

Moses said unto him: May I follow thee, to the end that thou mayst teach me right conduct of that which thou hast been taught?

He said: Lo! thou canst not bear with me.

How canst thou bear with that whereof thou canst not compass any knowledge?

Moses said: Allah willing, thou shalt find me patient and I shall not in aught gainsay thee.

He said: Well, if thou go with me, ask me not concerning aught till I myself make mention of it unto thee.

Qur'an 18: 65-70

According to the *Qur'an*, when Moses and his servant met al-Khidr Moses asked if he could follow the prophet and learn from him. Khidr initially suggested that Moses would not be able to accept his actions without protesting, and eventually only allowed Moses to follow him when he agreed not to do so.

Khidr then led Moses to a boat, which he scuttled. Moses protested, but Khidr reminded him of their agreement and

Moses agreed to keep silent. The same thing happened when Khidr slew a young boy, and again when he built a wall near a city where some people had refused to give them food. After Moses' third protest, Khidr explained his actions: The boat belonged to people who depended on it for their livelihood, but there was a coming a king who was taking possession of the boats of his people, so by rendering the boat unusable Khidr saved it from being taken. The boy, unlike his parents, was not a believer in Islam, so Khidr slew him so that they might get a better child (according to tradition, they gave birth to a daughter who was the progenitor of many prophets). The wall hid treasure that belonged to two orphans in the city, so by building it up Khidr was protecting it until they should be old enough to claim it. Moses and Khidr then parted ways.

The story of Moses and Khidr is a lesson in unquestioning obedience that might prove a useful model for Mystery Cult Initiations your saga. Magi might be required to follow a Mystagogue, keeping silent in the face of apparently bizarre acts. Sufis take the story as a model for the relationship of a Sufi student with his master.

Georgia

The Christian kingdom of Georgia is, strictly speaking, outside the Muslim world, but its independence from Muslim rule is recent and hard won. Invaded by the Muslims in the 7th century, then embroiled in centuries of warfare with Muslim overlords, Georgia finally won independence in 1121 when King Dawid II (r. 1073–1125) took the capital of Tiflis, which remains the capital of the state today. The current king is Giorgi IV Lasha (r. 1213-1223).

Georgia is a country of mountains, hills and plateaux, with lowland areas only on the coast of the Black Sea and the valleys of the rivers Rioni and Kura. It is inhabited by a number of different peoples, including Turks, Persians, Georgians, Armenians and Alans. There are both Christians and Muslims among its population, although the dominant faith is its own national Christian church, which owes loyalty neither to the Pope in Rome nor the Byzantine Emperor.

Tiflis

Located on major trade routes, including the Silk Road, and itself a major trade center, Tiflis is a city of great importance in the region. As a result it has been hotly contested over the centuries, and this is reflected in its fortifications, which include double walls and three heavily-reinforced gates. Despite this history of hostility between groups, Tiflis' population is remarkably ethnically and religiously diverse and tolerant, and mosques, churches and synagogues exist at times literally next to each other in the city.

Story Seed: Sorcery, Treason and Plot

The characters prevent a magical murder attempt made on the King of Georgia, and they are charged to bring the perpetrator to justice. It is clear that magic was involved in the attempt (perhaps a character saved the king from a bolt of magical lightning), which makes the need to find the person behind it all the more urgent. If a Hermetic magus was responsible, then he is guilty of breaking the Code's prohibition on mundane interference; although a tribunal must determine whether he has brought ruin on his sodales and thus liable for censure. On the other hand, if it was not a Hermetic magus, then it was clearly someone with power that might be a threat to the Order of Hermes, in which case the investigation is all the more necessary.

Greater Armenia

To the east of Asia Minor, and to the south-west of Georgia, lies the war-torn state of Greater Armenia. It is a land of mountains, high plains and valley basins. Its climate is very severe, with winters often lasting for over eight months. The country was conquered by the Muslims in the 7th century but managed to become an independent, tributary state in the mid-9th century. However, soon it was torn by wars between the Muslims and the Byzantines, and in the 10th Century many Armenians migrated to Lesser (Cilician) Armenia in Asia Minor. Greater Armenia fell to the Turks in the 11th Century and remains a contested area, for the Ayyubids have annexed some of its southern territories; the Byzantine Comneni retain part of it under the control of their empire at Trebizond, to the north-west; and the rest lies in the hands of local dynasties.

The population of Greater Armenia is mixed, consisting mainly of Greek and Armenian Christians and Turkish Muslims. They grow cereal crops, fish in the rivers and mine for various metals and minerals, including silver and salt. The area is also well-known for its weaving, dyeing and embroidery.

Story Uses: Greater Armenia

Greater Armenia offers an attractive location for a Hermetic covenant, for it contains numerous isolated sites that have resisted mundane encroachment and may preserve high-level Magical Auras. In addition, the rather chaotic politics of the region makes it very easy to establish an independent presence, provided that the characters do not become so powerful as to pose a threat to neighboring political leaders.

On the other hand, setting up a covenant in the area is not without its challenges. The severe climate makes a covenant difficult to supply and support. In addition, as the current tribunals reach their limits in terms of how many Hermetic magi they can support, other magi may also be looking to set up covenants in the region and may challenge characters for the best sites.

Mythic Persia

Persia stretches from the Tigris River in the west to the Oxus River in the north and east. It is ethnically and culturally diverse; a consequence of both its vast size and its central position. However, over seven tenths of its land area is desert and waste. Much of the country is high plateau, four to five thousand feet above sea level. Exceptions include the lands around the Persian Gulf south of the Zagros mountains, which is just above sea level, and the narrow coastal strip to the south of the Caspian Sea, which is just below sea level. The plateau is bounded by the Alborz mountains to the north and the Zagros mountains to the south and west. The plateau lacks major rivers since they find no outlet; many rivers on the plateau are simply lost in sands and swamps rather than reaching the sea.

Persians are linguistically and ethnically different from the Arabs to the west. The majority of the population is found outside the great cities. Most are tenants, sharing their crops with their landlords, who tended to live in the towns. The low rainfall for most of the region results in a reliance on irrigation, through the use of underground water channels called *qanats*,

which required constant and skilled maintenance. A significant minority of the population is nomadic or semi-nomadic; principally the Lurs of the Zagros mountains and the Ghuzz of Khurasan. Most of the provinces are ruled by a dynasty of Seljuk Turks who have sworn loyalty to the current shah; these rulers are either *atabegs* or *mamluks*. The atabegs were originally provincial governors who were tutors of Seljuk princes, but in the thirteenth century are semi-autonomous princes in their own right. The mamluks are raised as slave-soldiers to be utterly loyal to their masters, and placed in territories as direct subordinates of the sultan.

The language of Persia is Parsi, or Persian; a tongue unrelated to other Middle Eastern languages. Arabic is the language of Islam, and retains its pre-eminence when discussing religion; it used also to be the language of all scholarship, but in the thirteenth century most Persian secular books are written in Parsi. Turkish became well-established during the period of Seljuk dominance, and various dialects are found amongst the Ghuzz and the Lurs.

The *Shahnameh*

The "Epic of Kings" is the national saga of the Persian people, composed by Ferdowsi in the tenth century. It is a record of the pre-Muslim history and legends of Persia. It begins with the creation of the world and of man, and then the introduction of fire, metal-working, agriculture, and other technologies. The early kings and their accomplishments are followed by the deeds of the great heroes: Saum, his son Zal and grandson Rostam. The age of heroes ends with the conquest of Alexander the Great; Ferdowsi then gives the history of the Sasanids, and ends with the conquest by the Arabs (whom he calls "the Army of Darkness").

The *Shahnameh* is written in Parsi, and copies are often beautifully illustrated and decorated with gold leaf, and runs to seven volumes in length. A good quality copy such as this is a summa on Persian Lore, Level 4, Quality 12. It can also be studied as a series of tractatus on Magic Lore, Faerie Lore, Divine Lore, and Infernal Lore, each Quality 10.

Recent History

The Seljuk Turks ruled Persia for nearly two centuries. It was always an empire of two halves, with a sultan appointed in Khurasan to rule the east, while the Seljuk overlord ruled from the west. The sultanate of Khurasan came to an abrupt end in 1149 when the Shansabani family destroyed Seljuk rule there using infernal powers. To add to the troubles in Persia, the Ghuzz — who had been invited to settle in Persia and join the armies — rebelled in Khurasan in 1151, and invaded the neighboring provinces. Despite holding Sultan Ahmed Sanjar captive for over three years, the Ghuzz rebellion was short-lived, but the Seljuks never reclaimed Khurasan from the Shansabanis.

Ala ad-Din Tekish, the mamluk ruler of Khwarazm, expanded his territory following the gradual collapse of the Seljuk empire after the death of Sultan Ahmed Sanjar, and eventually defeated his successor Togril III in 1194. Tekish's son Ala ad-Din Mohammed continued his father's work to conquer the remaining parts of the Seljuk empire, and proclaimed himself its *shah* in 1205, although the Caliph has yet to recognize this title. Since then he has crushed the Shansabanis in Khurasan, and extended his reign to Transoxiana; and is now the ruler of a vast empire that stretches from the River Jaxartes to the Persian Gulf. Two years ago the shah met with emissaries from Genghis Khan in

Samarkand. The shah had them killed and shaved — a grave insult — and sent back to the Khan. It remains to be seen what the Great Khan's response will be.

Persian Supernatural Factions

In addition to the Suhhar Sulayman — who are ubiquitous in Persia's cities — there are five key supernatural factions who are active throughout Mythic Persia.

The Yatus

In ancient times, the kings of Persia received assistance from sorcerers who went by the name of yatus. Unlike the mobeds who served Persia in a sacred fashion, the yatus were wholly secular, and had practices that were deprecated by the Mazdean priests. Several of the ancient Persian kings used cadres of these sorcerers attached to their armies; the initial successes of Darius and Xerxes against the Greek city states can be attributed to the lack of preparedness amongst the Greeks for such magical assaults.

In the main, yatus of old were faerie wizards; legends hold them as the inventors of the *Ars Fabulosa* (*Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 131), which encompass Faerie Summoning and related practices. Oral history recounts that these Arts were adapted directly from Canaanite Necromancy that are held to be the origin of all summoning powers. Some yatus followed darker Arts and it was these Goetic yatus who prompted the persecutions by the mobeds that eventually lead to the decline of Persian magical warfare. When the Suhhar Sulayman was formed, Persia contributed several lineages of yatus who had survived the Mazdean purges and the Muslim invasions, and they brought with them the knowledge of True Names and the Invocation of Names of Power Virtue (see XREF Order of Suleiman).

The yatus today can be found in western Persia, Iraq, and the Northwest provinces. Most are members of the Suhhar Sulayman, combining Faerie Summoning with the Solomonic Arts, principally Solomonic Storytelling. Non-Solomonic yatus are faerie wizards specializing in the *Ars Fabulosa*. Faerie blood is quite common amongst the yatus. They are often pagan, which causes them to clash with many sahirs, so they tend to found closed communities of solely yatu buyut al-hikma.

The Mobeds

The glory days of Zoroastrianism are long-gone, but the faith is by no means extinct. Enclaves of mobeds can be found in Yazd, Daylam, and Kirman. For more information on the mobeds, see Chapter XREF, Mythic Zoroastrianism.

The Nizari Isma'ili

The original assassins. The Nizari Isma'ili are a fanatical sect who use murder to further their religious and political agendas. They are a renegade faction of sahirs, and are detailed in the Nizari Isma'ili State, later.

The Ghuzz

The Ghuzz are a race of magic-blooded humans who originate from the steppes to the north of Persia and east of the Caspian Sea. Legend tells that they are the scions of the biblical giants Gog and Magog, and there is no denying the giant blood that runs strong in these fearsome tribesmen. In addition to their size and their warrior reputations, the Ghuzz are also infamous for their uncontrollable nature. They would be all the more terrible if they could remain organized or loyal enough for long enough to make an effective force. The Ghuzz can be found in many of the southern provinces of Persia, particularly Kirman, Makran, and Seistan. Ghuzz breed and ride huge horses; those of the magic kin are the size of elephants.

Ghuzz Characters

All Ghuzz tribesmen have the Large Virtue, except for those in whom the blood of Gog and Magog runs strong. These, typically the leaders of the Ghuzz, are magic kin; and they have the Giant Blood Virtue, and a Greater Immunity to mental manipulation. These Ghuzz cannot be swayed through mundane or magical means; and thus cannot be controlled through Leadership, Charm, or Folk Ken, through Virtues such as Inspirational, or even through the *Command the Masses* Greater Power Virtue common amongst the Ghuzz leaders. The Ghuzz — magical kin or otherwise — often have the Rebellious Personality Flaw.

New Virtue: Greater Power (Command The Masses)

Major, Supernatural

This Virtue grants the Command the Masses power described below. The Greater Power Virtue is further described in *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 44.

Command the Masses, no cost, Init Qik – 2, Mentem: The Ghuzz can issue an order, and a standard Group of men are strongly inclined to obey this order. In battle, this secures total leadership, and the Ghuzz need not spend his turn forming a trained group or changing their actions. ReMe 30 (base 5, +2 Voice, +1 Diam, +2 Group) Greater Power (30 levels, –3 Might/Fatigue cost, +1 Init)

New Flaw: Rebellious

Major or Minor, Personality

You react adversely to any attempt to oppose authority over you, and work against those who are in command. You do not necessarily have any desire to be a leader yourself, but you don't like to be pushed around.

Zahhak

Zahhak was the demonic ruler of Persia in its heroic age, holding the nation in his evil thrall. He ruled from Ctesiphon in the days of Jamshid (see Istakhr, later), and conquered Persia after sawing Jamshid in two. Under his reign, virtue was despised and wickedness lauded. His thousand-year reign was eventually ended by the hero Feridun. Since that time, a Zahhak has periodically appeared and been battled by Persian sahir, but he has never achieved the same level of power that he did in Jamshid's day.

Zahhak is not a demon in the traditional sense. Rather, when the demon Azi Dahak possesses an individual, that person becomes Zahhak. Possession is indicated by the growth of a black snake from each of the victim's shoulders. When cut off they simply regrow; only removal of the possession can cure them. The snakes crave human brains, and the victim is driven to satisfy this need by the demon inside him.

In the first instance the possessing demon forces the new Zahhak to do evil deeds, but over time the victim is corrupted by the whispers and promises of power of the demon, and so far none have resisted his lure. Once the victim embraces evil, he is taught the Goetic Arts (*Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 114), and can use Ablating to extend his life, gain magic resistance, and call upon all manner of evil powers by stealing them from other demons and supernatural creatures. Statistics for the Azi Dahak can be found in the Bestiary (XREF).

Story Seeds: The Zahhak

The last Zahhak was the Shansabani Sultan Mohammed al-Ghuri, defeated fourteen years ago (see Ghur, later). It would be unusual for another to be formed so quickly, but some Persian sahir believe that Genghis Khan is, or is advised by, a Zahhak. The predatory way in which he is turned towards Persia is typical behavior of possession by Azi Dahak. If in your saga Zahhak is behind the Mongol invasion, then a whole campaign could revolve around ridding the Horde of the demonic influence.

The first Zahhak was not killed by Feridun, rather he was chained and buried under Mount Damavand (see Mazandaran, later) with the assistance of an angel. He is no longer possessed by the demon, but dwells there still, protected from death by the divine bindings about him. This ancient individual from Persia's heroic age might be able to give an insight to characters facing a reborn Zahhak.

Fars

This province was the birthplace of two of the greatest Persian dynasties, the Achaemenians (6th – 4th centuries BC) and Sasanian (3rd – 7th centuries AD). It thus gave its name to the whole region; for the original name Parsa became Hellenized to Persis. Fars is currently an atabegate ruled from Shiraz by the Salghurid dynasty.

Climatically, the province is divided into two: the Hot Lands (*Garmsir*), the lowlands near the coast; and the Cold Lands (*Sardsir*) to the north, in the highlands. In its southwest corner is the desert of Mandistan.

Arranjan

The westernmost of Fars's five great cities, Arranjan lies on the south bank of the Tab River, which forms the border with Khuzistan. It is surrounded by date-gardens and olive-groves, and is known for both soap and bitumen. There have long been Isma'ili strongholds on the hilltops around Arranjan, and the city itself has recently been captured by the Isma'ilis.

Story Seed: The Well of Hindijan

Hindijan is the port of Arranjan on the lower reaches of the Tab river. Many fruitless nights have been spent by treasure hunters in Hindijan, searching for a cache of treasure rumored to be hidden there. A certain well has drawn much interest from the treasure hunters; it emits poisonous vapors, such that any bird flying over it fall dead into the well. However, because of its poison, the well remains as-yet unexplored.

Darabgerd

The circular city of Darabgerd was founded by a family of Daylamite origin, and has always held Isma'ili sympathies even if this has not been openly declared. Near Darabgerd is the Kubbat-al-Mumiya, the 'Bitumen Dome', which is locked by an iron door and opened once a year when an officer of the sultan arrives and gathers in a box the twelve months' accumulation of bitumen for royal use.

Salt of Seven Colors

Near to Darabgerd is a hill where rock salt of seven colors is occasionally dug out. This salt is of interest to sahir for it is Dedicated Vis (*Realms of Power: Magic*, page 122), exceptionally suited to the summoning of jinn who find it particularly pleasing. Each pawn of this vis gives the same bonus as two pawns of normal vis when summoning jinn (but not other types of spirit). Princes like to keep control of the salt mines and use the salt of seven colors to court sahir, or reward them.

Story seed: a sahir is gifted with a princely sum of salt of seven colors, either as an inducement or a reward for a trivial task. This allows him to summon and bargain with much more powerful jinn than he ever could before, and his benefactor hints that he can get much more. Unfortunately, the salt provided to the sahir is tainted to be highly addictive, and the jinni summoned keeps demanding more and more. This is fine while the benefactor keeps supplying the salt, but he eventually starts to ask for bigger and bigger favors. The sahir comes to the characters (or perhaps is one of the characters) in need of solutions: how to escape from the powerful jinni he has summoned, and how to uncover the nefarious plot of his 'benefactor'.

Istakhr

The governance of the north district of Fars is administered from Istakhr, which was known to the Greeks as Persepolis. Around and inside the city are several buildings that date to the time of Jamshid and King Solomon. The shores of nearby Lake Bakhtigan are crowded with villages growing rice and pomegranates.

On the hills to the northwest of the city are the *Sih Gundaban*, the 'Three Domes'; three

great fortresses, behind which has been built a great dam in a deep gorge. The dam provides sufficient water for a thousand men during a year long siege. There is also a training ground on a flat hilltop.

Between Shiraz and Istakhr is the Forest of Kamfiruz, an oak forest surrounded by pasture land, and the town of Bayda. The forest is home to fierce lions which are the terror of the cattle on its pasture.

Jamshid

The fourth king to rule the world, according to the *Shahnameh*, Jamsid made his capital at Istakhr, which then was called Takht-e Jamshed. He was a mighty sorcerer who had control over all the jinn of the world, and invented armor and weapons, weaving and dyeing, masonry, making wine, and navigation and ship-building. He was endowed with the royal *farr*, a shining light that indicated the blessing of Ahura Mazda. However, he grew to boast of his accomplishments, and the *farr* abandoned him. Without the *farr*, Zahhak (see later) was able to make war on him, and Jamshid was brutally murdered by the demonic tyrant.

The Jaam-e Jam

The Cup of Jamshid is a silver cup ringed seven times with gold and gems. For it to work, it must be filled with an elixir of immortality. This can be any liquid that grants long life, such as al-Iksir (see XREF Solomonic Magic) or a Hermetic longevity ritual in an appropriate form. It must be invented afresh each time it is made, and brewed specifically for the user of the cup; and permits use of the device for one season. Once used in the cup, the elixir loses its magical properties. When activated, the cup allows the bearer to see any place in the world, similar to *Summoning the Distant Image*, but without the need for an Arcane Connection to the place scried. The user needs to merely mention the name of the place to be viewed, and an image appears in the cup. The Jaam-e Jam can also give visions of the heavens, and doubles the wielder's Artes Liberales for astrological calculations, and doubles Solomonic Astrology for magical workings.

The Cup of Jamshid was used by the ancient Persian dynasties right up to the Muslim invasion. It was never taken by the Arab rulers and remained hidden in Istakhr until rediscovered by a sahir several years ago.

Story Seed: The sahir in possession of the Cup of Jamshid has been using it for petty purposes; spying on his neighbors and rivals, which may include the characters. In the midst of his nosy scrying, he stumbles on a noted member of the community doing something unconscionable; such as binding a sentient being, sacrificing to the devil, or something similar. There is no way he can reveal what he has seen without revealing how, and so must manipulate the characters through his secret knowledge of them into uncovering the deeds of the eminent citizen.

Kajaran

A small but prosperous town near the Persian Gulf. Endemic to the region is a type of magical worm that grants skill and luck to those that possess it. The fortune it grants is proportional to its size, but the Kajarani are careful not to allow the worm to grow too big. In the past, Haftvad allowed his worm to grow for seven years, into a glossy black dragon with a splendid saffron-colored pattern on it. Once a simple peasant, Haftvad used his good luck to become a tyrant who controlled all the land from Basra to Kirman. His armies defeated King Ardeshir (founder of the Sasanid dynasty), and it was not until Ardeshir killed the elephant-sized dragon with boiling lead that Haftvad's luck ran out and he was slain. Haftvad's mighty fortress still exists, hidden high in the mountains.

The Kajarani Worms

The worms are an unusual Beast of Virtue, in that they can be Enriched (*Realms of Power: Magic*, page 124) while they are still alive. A worm must be kept on its own in a box for a season, and not be exposed to any light during this period. Every day the worm must be fed twelve mulberry leaves, each one precisely folded into a pellet. At the end of the season, the worm grants the Luck Virtue to the person who fed it. If it was fed by more than one person, it dies. A Kajarani worm eat any other worms it comes across. After a year, the Enrichment process must be repeated, or else the worm dies. If repeated, the worm grows bigger — to the size of a mouse — and grants Puissant (Ability) Virtue to its owner in addition to Luck. To prevent the worm from dying it can be Enriched in the third and fourth years; the worm grows to the size of a cat and a dog respectively, and grants the Venus' Blessing Virtue in the third year and the Wealthy Virtue in the fourth. All Virtues are cumulative. However, in the third year the possessor of a worm cannot refuse to pander to the worm's comfort (the Compulsion Flaw); and in the fourth year it begins to repulse him, eventually developing into the Fear Flaw. No-one in Kajaran permits their worms to live for a fifth year, in fear of becoming another Haftvad.

Kish

The island of Kish is the principle port of the Persian Gulf. A great walled city dominates Kish, which lies about twelve miles from the coast. Famous in its own right for the pearls fished here, Kish throngs with trade from Arabia, Africa, and Al-Sindh; which is transported to Huzu on the mainland and taken north to Shiraz. Kish has risen in prominence over the last hundred years or so, ever since the previous port of Siraf further west around the coast was destroyed by an earthquake that lasted seven days.

Abarkavan

The Long Island is home to pirates and raiders, and is the bane of the emir of Kish who prefers that the traders coming to his port are unmolested. Kish's lucrative pearl fishery banks are also close to Abarkavan, and divers risk encounters with the pirates whenever they collect their harvest. The pirates have amongst their number an elementalists (*Hedge Magic Revised Edition*, Chapter 2) who plays havoc with the wind and waves.

Mount Kavarvand

The home to Adur Farnbag, one of the three Royal Fires of Zoroastrianism (for the others see Mihr and Takht-i-Suleiman, later). The Royal Fires were believed to have been ignited before creation, and brought forth on the back of the ox Srishok to propagate faith and protect mankind. Adur Farnbag is to be found within a terrestrial Divine regio (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 13) with an aura of 8. The entrance to the regio opens on the west side of the mountain every dawn and the east side of the mountain every dusk; the pure holy fire pours forth from the regio entrance, earning Kavarvand the epithet of 'the shining mountain'.

Adur Farnbag is housed within a Zoroastrian fire temple. It is accounted the most holy of the three Royal Fires because it is seen as the earthly representation of the yazata Atar, who

burns in the presence of Ahura Mazda. It was originally located in Khwarazm, but later brought here by mobeds who still dwell on Kavarvand thanks to the Gifts of Gayomart (see XREF, Mythic Zoroastrianism). Adur Farnbag represents the priests of Ahura Mazda, and anyone who has undergone the navar initiation receives a bonus to all Ability and magic rolls equal to their Theology: Mazdean Ability whilst within the regio. Mount Kavarvand is a place of pilgrimage for Zoroastrians. Any temple fire which is lit from a flame deriving from Adur Farnbag has the Divine aura increased by an additional +1.

Shiraz

Shiraz was made the capital of the Persian empire by the Buyid dynasty (945–1055), who decorated it with palaces, mosques, and the great wall that surrounds it. Today, Shiraz is famed as a place of learning, home to several academies and the schools of famous poets; and it has been granted the epithet of *Dar al-Elm*, the House of Knowledge. Its central position in Fars makes it a thoroughfare for most of the provinces business and trade. It is packed with narrow, crowded markets, and boasts three great mosques.

Perhaps the most famous structures of Shiraz are its many shrines to the imamzadihs — the relatives or descendents of the twelve Shi'i imams. Each imamzadih can grant a different miraculous power (mostly regarding healing specific ailments, finding a spouse, or easing childbirth), and the shrines vie for the attention of pilgrims and visitors.

The Imamzadihs of Shiraz

The shrine of the brother of the fourth imam and the shrine to the daughter of the sixth imam have a long and bitter rivalry. The former is found on the Street of Butchers, and is known for *baraka* to cure injuries to the limbs. The latter has a much more prominent position just off the main square, and grants *baraka* to cure all problems with the feet. When a powerful emir is inflicted with a painful abscess on his foot, devotees of each shrine clamor for his attention, knowing the prestige (and riches) they will earn from his healing. Characters who have been healed at one of the shrines might be asked to provide testimony, and get caught up in the riots when the other shrine tries to disrupt the proceedings. The emir might ask the characters to determine which of the two shrines is the most worthy — or the most likely — to cure his complaint.

Shapur

The City of Flowers, as it is sometimes known, Shapur's exports are irises, violets, jasmine, narcissuses, and most notably, the red rose of Shapur. Ten different kinds of perfumed oil are made in Shapur, made from the various flowers of the city. Of these, attar of roses is perhaps the most famous; this expensive perfume makes it all the way to the courts of England and France.

The Black Man

In a cave near Shapur is a 40' tall statue of a man carved in black stone. At the base of the statue are three carved leaves. Some say that the statue is carved to represent King Shapur; others believe it to have been a real man turned to stone by God. The kings of Persia's ancient dynasties used to anoint the statue in oils, but none have given it homage for many centuries. The cave behind the statue has a waterfall, and a wind always seems to be blowing from its mouth.

The statue is actually a mighty *div* (demon), bound into this statue by a mobed many centuries ago. It is believed to be one of the 45 named demons (XREF Mythic Zoroastrianism), but which one is unknown. Knowing he was not powerful enough to bind the demon in perpetuity, he fashioned the three leaves — originally colored green — as a warning of when to repeat the binding; as it eroded the color would fade from the leaves. In the days of the Zoroastrians, the anointment of the statue was accompanied by a blessing by the mobeds to renew the binding. Since the days of Muslim rule this practice was abolished as idolatry, and the demon is close to being free. Only one tenth of one of the leaves remains green.

Yazd

The mountainous region around Yazd became the stronghold of Zoroastrianism after the coming of Islam to Persia, and remains one of the few regions where the Mazdean faith is still practiced openly. The mountains around Yazd contain six holy shrines, or *pirs*, which form the destinations for yearly communal pilgrimages for the Zoroastrian villages, and an excuse for feasting and dancing.

The city of Yazd is well fortified, and has two iron gates on the Istakhr road. The city is very fertile thanks to the streams that flow from the nearby mountains, and it seems like paradise to have such a fertile land so close to the Great Deserts. The mobeds are held responsible for this minor miracle.

Jibal

Named "the mountains" (*al-jibal*) by the Arabs, this province is dominated by the Zagros mountains which run northwest to southeast along its southern quarter. Its four great cities (Hamadan, Isfahan, Kirmanshah, and Qazvin) have all at one time been home to one or more of Persia's dynasties or conquerors, and their fortunes have waxed and waned; but at all times the largest city Isfahan has flourished. South of Hamadan is the emirate of Luristan, the home of the Lurs, a semi-nomadic people who herd the foothills of the Zagros mountains.

The chief road through Jibal — called the Khurasan Road — passes from Baghdad to Kirmanshah, then Hamadan, and Rayy before heading into Qumis through the Caspian Gates. Jibal is one of the most densely populated of Persia's provinces, and has a corresponding high number of sahir. It is common to see a sahir carried aloft on a jinni-made whirlwind, or riding one of Isfahan's famous flying carpets; speeding to some important engagement.

Isfahan

Arising in the Yellow Mountains to the west of Isfahan, the Zayandah River passes through the city and flows into the swamp of Gav-Khanah on the borders of the Dasht-i Kavir. Here the river sinks underground and emerges 90 leagues away in Kirman where it eventually reaches the sea.

The biggest of Jibal's cities lies on the northern bank of the Zayandah River. It is actually a twinned city: to the east is Jay, surrounded by a wall with a hundred towers, and to the west is Al-Yahudiyah, the 'town of the Jews', who have dwelt here since the time of Nebuchadnezzar. The noted physician Ibn Sina (known as Avicenna in the West) lived and taught here. Isfahan exports silk and cotton, as well as saffron and all kinds of fruit, but it is for its carpets — the famed Persian rug — that Isfahan is best known.

Persian Rugs

A famed export from all over Persia is the intricately-woven carpet or rug; and the center of excellence in Persia is Isfahan. A traditional Isfahan rug has an ivory-colored field bearing a single central medallion surrounded by leaves and vines. Vibrant hues of blue, rose, and indigo are employed using dyeing techniques that are a closely guarded secret of the Isfahani weavers.

There are several weavers of magical carpets in Isfahan; these craftsmen mostly have the Touched by Magic Major Virtue (*City & Guild*, page 72). This Virtue allows a weaver to make a magical carpet by adding the magnitude of the magical effect and the Uses per Day modifier to the basic Craft Total of 12. Each weaver can only instill magical effects which cover two Hermetic Forms. A magical carpet only ever operates for the person for whom it was made.

The two most famous weavers are Dadvand and Yarankush. Dadvand is a manufacturer of the famed flying carpet. Dadvand's family have been making these carpets since the time of the Sasanids, and they have patrons amongst the Suhhar Sulayman. These are exceptionally expensive due to the skill required to make them. Dadvand makes other magical rugs as well, such as ones that promote an aura of health which speeds recovery from wounds.

Yarankush is known for making carpets which protect their owner. He specializes in rugs that let out a loud noise when they are stepped on by anyone other than their owner; and in these days of secret murder such carpets are a boon to any powerful man. Unknown to all, Yarankush is a member of the Isma'ili assassin sect (see later); and hidden in the design of the carpet he hides a secret warning so that they know not to step on the carpet. Since advertising that one has a Yarankush rug defeats the point of having one, this has not affected Yarankush's sales.

Enchanted Carpets

Dadvand's Steed of the Air: Twice per day, this heavy woolen carpet can lift off the ground and transport its owner, and everything he is carrying, through the air as fast as a horse can run. ReAn 15 (base 1, +1 Conc, +2 very unnatural motion, +1 carry person on carpet, +1 speed; +5 maintains concentration). Ease Factor to make: 16

Yarankush's Murderers' Chagrin: Twice per day the owner can activate the warning function of the carpet. As long as he remains in contact with the carpet (sleeping or sitting on it, for example), any other individual touching the carpet causes it to emit a loud sound for a round; each carpet produces a different noise. CrIm 3 (base 1, +1 Touch, +1 Size). Ease Factor to make: 14

Kargas Kuh and Siyah Kuh

The 'Vulture Hills' and 'Black Hills' are the highest points on the plain of Persia: black, evil-looking mountains and famous hiding-places for robbers. Between the two mountain ranges is the caravanserai of Dayr al-Jiss, where, by order of the Sultan, four great tanks are kept full of water to supply travelers crossing the Dasht-i Kavir.

Kirmanshah

The seat of the semi-independent province of Kurdistan, created in about 1150 by Sultan Sanjar for his nephew. Kirmanshah boasts a great mosque and a sumptuous palace. About a day's march east of Kirmanshah are the sculptures of Bustam, carved into the black rock of the mountain. These depict King Darius receiving tribute from his subject kings, and the much later sculptures of King Khursaw Parviz and Queen Shirin; whose story are well-known — Shirin was loved by the sculptor Farhad, who killed himself in despair for his love of her.

Kanguvar

Kanguvar, called Kasr-al Lusus, the Robber's Castle by the Arabs, lies near to the road heading east from Kirmanshah; so named because of the larcenous activities of its inhabitants. Travelers are well-advised to count their fingers and toes after passing through Kanguvar.

Qum

Perhaps the second most holy place in Persia after Mashhad, Qum bears a shrine to the Fatima, sister of Imam Reza (see Mashhad, later). Buried with her are the three daughters of the ninth imam. Reza once told the faithful that a pilgrimage to his sister's tomb would assure entrance to Paradise.

A few miles east of Qum is the mosque of Jam Karan. In 986 Hassan ibn Muthih was visited by the Imam of the Ages and the prophet al-Khidr, and told to build a mosque on the sacred ground of Jam Karan. The mosque built at his direction is virtually unequalled in Persia in terms of architecture and embellishment. The mosque has a Dominion aura of 7.

Rayy

The city of Rayy is strongly fortified, and has five gates over the five roads that radiate from here — to Hamadan, Qazvin, Mazandaran, Khurasan, and Qum. The inner city, containing the mosque and the houses of the bureaucrats, is surrounded by a ditch. The outer city surrounds and overlooks the inner city, and has a prominent fruit market selling melons, peaches, apricots, and so forth. It also exports blue-dyed cotton, particularly as striped cloth; and hardwood taken from the Mazandaran forests.

On a nearby mountain there is a shrine dedicated to Shahr Banu, a Sasanid princess and

mother of the fourth Shi'i imam. Legend has it that the princess was swallowed by the mountain rather than allow her enemies to kill her. For centuries before there had been a shrine here dedicated to Anahita, the Mazdean yazata of water and fertility. The spring at the shrine is a source of Aquam vis; if the water is collected when Venus is in the sky.

Savah

The people of Savah are camel-drivers and herders, but the great mosque of Savah contains a magical library unequalled in Persia. Attached to the town's mosque is a hospital and a tall domed tower, which houses the library on its lower floors and an observatory at its top. The tower is staffed by Savah's House of Wisdom, all of whom are members of the Ashab al-Najm (see XREF Order of Suleiman). The observatory of Savah is world-renown, containing innumerable star maps ranging from ancient Babylonia to the current day, and the state-of-the-art in astronomical instruments. In addition to having a Magic aura of 5, the observatory grants a +3 bonus to any astrology rolls, including use of Solomonic Astrology.

The current Asala of the Ashab al-Najm hails from Savah, a wizened old man named Meriq al-Asala al-Qalani al-Safar al-Najm. He is mostly known for wearing a strange hat that looks like it is inside-out, and joking that his hat does not sit on his head, but rather that his head sits on his hat. After the previous Asala left in 1186 (see XREF Jazira: Nasibin), Meriq stepped forward to represent the family, to general acceptance by the other astrologer-viziers at the Majlis, who consulted the heavens. Many of them now think he does not take the responsibility seriously enough, but do not feel they should ask him to step down. He does not have The Gift, but is nonetheless a gifted communicator and has written many excellent books on Artes Liberales and Solomonic Astrology, among other subjects.

Takht-i-Suleiman

The 'Throne of Solomon' is located in a semi-circular valley in the mountains of Jibal. At the summit of a small, flat-topped hill is a small but deep lake fed by an underwater spring. On its shores is a remarkably well-preserved Mazdean fire temple, whose walls are co-terminal with a terrestrial Divine regio of aura 8. The regio is the resting place of Adur Gushnasp, one of the three Royal Fires of Zoroastrian belief (see Mount Kavarvand earlier for more details of the Royal Fires). Adur Gushnasp is particularly attuned to warriors and nobles, and a weapon made in a forge lit from Adur Gushnasp and quenched in the waters of the lake receives a +4 bonus to invoking God's aid in battle (*Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 41) whenever the warrior for whom it was made uses that weapon. This bonus lasts for a number of years equal to the wielder's Theology: Mazdean Ability. The weapon loses all power permanently if used by another.

Khuzistan

Khuzistan is the most ancient inhabited area in Persia, once known as Elam in the days of old Babylon. Khuzistan occupies the watershed of the great Karun river, which starts in the Zagros mountains, and Khuzistan's well-watered plains are used to grow sugar cane. Its many rivers have been canalized to serve the fields and the towns, and all are navigable by boat. The northern reaches of the province are home to the semi-nomadic Lurs (who also occupy southern Jibal). Khuzistan is ruled by a Ghuzz atabeg of the Hazarasp family who has sworn loyalty to the Khwarazm-shah.

Ahwaz

The capital of the province of Khuzistan, Ahwaz is plagued by jinn who cause it to be unbearably hot during the day, and swarming with biting flies at night. The crashing of the water-bound jinn over Ahwaz's weir keeps those not used to it up at night, and the fields around the city are plagued with all manner of snakes and scorpions.

The Alchemist of Ahwaz

There is an alchemist who claims to be able to turn base metals into gold who lives in Ahwaz. He needs a few magical ingredients to effect this change, and promises to share his yield with characters if they help him get the supplies he needs. Key amongst these ingredients is the wood collected by the gryphons that live in the Zagros mountains for their nests. However, he intends to abandon his helpers to the mercy of the gryphons, so to safeguard his secret recipe.

Gundeshapur

The city of Gundeshapur is home to the great medical school and hospital known as the House of Healing. It was founded by the sahir Bakhtyshu, a Nestorian Christian and one of members of the wise council of Harun that reformed the Suhhar Sulayman. His descendents still run the school, which was funded by the Seljuk Sultans and has remained in high regard with the Khwarazm-shah. Unsurprisingly, the House of Healing is also Gundeshapur's largest bayt al-hikma. It is a palatial building near the center of town, with doors open to every direction and covered porches of canvas held up by wooden columns on all four sides. It has many windows depicting the stories of the members of the First Council, though many locals mistakenly believe them to depict Christian legends, and a great hall surrounded by an outer corridor (much like a cloister). The whole house is inside a Divine aura, which the sahirs must work around by digging out laboratories deep beneath the ground where there are many buried pockets of Magic power, and these rooms are connected with the common area by long, narrow ladders.

The vizier currently representing the bayt at Gundeshapur is Nil al-Wazir al-Salih al-Yad, a sahir of Christian descent who converted to Islam after joining the Suhhar. Many believe that he maintains a dangerously close association with the sahir sect called the Nizaris (see The Nizari Isma'ili State, later), members of which have occasionally visited him at the famous House of Healing. The Ashab al-Yad have always had a poor reputation in the Suhhar, however, and Nil has never seemed particularly troubled by these accusations at

Majlis. He is said to be a great historian, very knowledgeable of past events of the Middle East, and also well-versed in European history. He is not especially skilled at Solomonic Medicine, as others of his family might expect him to be, but instead seems to prefer the art of Solomonic Storytelling, and is said to have an enchanting singing voice.

Ramhurmuz

A rich town that makes its living from silk and perfume; Ramhurmuz also boasts a modest library. The sahirs of Ramhurmuz in the past made contact with one of the fabled sorcerers of Soqotra (see *Rival Magic*). For several years the exotic wizard studied with them and they exchanged ideas; but in his naivety he gave away many of the secrets of his island, including the recipes for many perfumes which the sahirs made into a commercial success. When he realized that he had been duped, the sorcerer left, but not before laying a fearful curse on the district; which every year is inundated with gnats and biting midges.

District of the Zutt

The Zutt are a tribe that dwells to the south-east of Ramhurmuz, close to the border with Fars. They are a semi-nomadic people that claims origin from beyond Al-Sind, and they travel in wagons richly painted with vibrant designs. The Zutt themselves favor flamboyant colors in their dress, utilizing delicate silks and heavily-dyed linen. The Zutt have a poor reputation for larceny, and the Khuzistani are usually hostile to them when they arrive in town to trade. Zutt women are known for being powerful Folk Witches (*Hedge Magic Revised Edition*, Chapter 3).

Occasionally the Zutt wander further afield; and have been encountered Egypt and in Samarkand. Furthermore, some of the covenfolk of Atsingani (see *The Lion and the Lily*, page 76) bear a close resemblance to the Zutt.

Kirman

Kirman, although technically part of Persia, has a history of remaining virtually independent. The Ghuzz ruled the region since invading across the desert fifty years ago, but their authority has disintegrated under their notorious inability to be themselves ruled, and the Ghuzz have entered the ranks of the Khwarazm-shah's army which now occupies Kirman.

Kirman is mostly steppe and semi-desert; and is famous for its oranges, dates, and pistachios. It is the home to several secretive communities of Mazdeans, who try to not draw attention to themselves; for they have been heavily persecuted in the past. A quarter of the province is taken up by the Jabal Kufs, mountains found to the south of the Dasht-i Lut.

The Balu Tribesmen

The Jabal Kufs are occupied by Balu tribesmen who are greatly feared by the Persians. Travelers' tales recount that they use rocks to stone their victims to death in order not to needlessly blunt their swords. They are rumored to need neither food nor drink, and have the tireless nature of their war-camels. The Balu detest the Ghuzz, but consider them worthy enemies to use their swords upon.

The Balu have a strong dose of Jinni Blood (XREF Jinni Chapter), and very often have the Greater Immunity to Thirst Virtue. They are usually accompanied by their jinn kinsmen on their raids, and they have wise men who possess Faerie Summoning and Bonding (see *Realms of Power: Faerie*, pages 131–133). Their war leaders are occasionally bonded to desert or mountain jinni, allowing them access to their faerie powers.

Bardasir

The city of Bardasir is an important trading center, set between the west of Persia and Khurasan. Outside the town on a very tall hill is the provincial governor's palace, set amid lush gardens. The city is guarded by a second fortress at the gate, and a third castle overlooks the houses from the center of the city. Despite all this military might, Bardasir was still sacked during the Ghuzz invasion, and its importance has been taken over by Sirjan.

Jiruft

This city lies on the Div Rud — the Demon River — that thunders with such force that waterwheels throughout the city supply power to the processing of indigo, cotton, and grain. The forests around Jiruft are home to lions, and the city is under siege from the fierce creatures. Anyone approaching the city must brave the deep-shadowed forests, and trade with the outside has dried to a trickle in recent years. The lions of Jiruft are ruled by a jinni, who took over the pride about a decade ago. Since he extended his glamour over the forest of Jiruft it has acquired a Faerie aura, and the lions have become mildly warped in the process.

Story Seed: The Lion-Shah

When the lion-shah hears that the lions of Kamfiruz in Fars (see Istakhr, earlier) are being persecuted by the local emir, he asks the characters to protect them, and if possible, bring them to Jiruft so that they may be safe. In return, he offers his gratitude and that of the lions; this could prove a valuable commodity to a sahir or an animal trainer.

Mazandaran

This is the collective name given to the provinces between the Caspian Sea and the Alborz mountains. Gilan is the easternmost province (see XREF Iraq & NW Frontier), with Daylam to its south, then Tabaristan further east (whose chief city is Amul), then Gurgan in the west (whose capital is also called Gurgan). During the Muslim conquest of Persia, Mazandaran

was never taken, partly due to its protection by the Alborz mountains to the south and partly due to the strong resistance put forth by its aristocratic Mazdean families. The Bavand family remained in control of Mazandaran for two hundred years, before they were eventually brought down by the Nizari Isma'ilis (see later) in 1125, who are now dominant in the region.

Mazandaran was known to the ancient world as Hyrcania, a land famous for its tigers (statistics for the Hyrcanian Tiger can be found in the Bestiary, XREF). The region is exceptionally fertile with a tropical climate, and the Zoroastrians believed that it was especially blessed by Ahura Mazda. Unlike most of Persia, houses in Mazandaran are usually built of wood rather than brick, and it is particularly famed for an exotic hardwood called *khalarj*.

Mazandaran is a magical battleground between three factions of magicians. Firstly, in the south-west is Daylam, which is one of the few strongholds of Zoroastrianism remaining in Persia. Second there are the Nizari Isma'ili, who have strongholds in the Alborz mountains and dominate the political scene in Mazandaran. Finally, there are the yatus of Mount Damavand. The members of these three groups clash regularly. All three groups have deep religious convictions that they will never agree upon; and Isma'ilism in particular is a proselytizing faith which seeks to unite all men under its banner, and remove those who refuse to convert. Furthermore, the yatus and the Nizaris fight over vis sources; the mobeds and Nizari fight to influence or control the local rulers, and the mobeds detest the yatus for their paganism and presumed diabolism.

Hyrcanian Vis

Vis is plentiful in the lush and fertile lands of Mazandaran. The yatus attribute this to Mount Damavand, believing it to be the source of all vis in the world, whereas the Daylami mobeds consider it part of Ahura Mazda's bounty. Vis commonly accumulates in the unique or unusual in Mazandaran; if a chicken lays three brown eggs and one white, the white one contains vis. In a field of wheat, it is the ear that has thirteen grains that has the vis. The furthest piece of driftwood on the Caspian shore might also contain vis. Characters can spend time searching for vis by following up on rumors gleaned from locals, and the hunter can expect to follow blind alleys or find that the vis has already gone. Searching for vis takes a base time of one season. Make a Perception + Mazandaran Lore roll against an Ease Factor of 9. Success indicates a pawn of vis. For every point in excess of the Ease Factor, either another pawn of vis is found, or the time taken is halved. These can be combined in the case of a good roll; for example, a character who makes the roll by eight may take eleven days (halving four times) to find five pawns of vis.

Search for Vis : Per + Mazandaran Lore + Modifiers + simple die against an Ease Factor of 9

Modifiers

Formula or spell that detects vis* + magnitude of highest formula

Magic Sensitivity* + Ability

(Realm) Lore** + Ability

Searched this area in the last season -15

Searched this area in the last six months -9

Searched this area in the last year -3

*only one of these bonuses can be used

** Cannot grant a bonus greater than the character's Mazandaran Lore. Further, if Magic Lore is not used,

half of the vis found (rounded up) is tainted by the Realm applicable to the Lore used.

At the storyguide's option, this mechanic can be used to find vis in other regions (with the appropriate Area Lore), although the yield is typically lower. The Ease Factor would be 12 for a typical wilderness region, 15 in a settled area, and 18 in a city.

Most sahirs living in the region — whether of yatu or Nizari training — either discover or are granted a Personal Vis Source (as per the Virtue) early in their career.

Daylam

This highland region resides in Gilan and Mazandaran, but may as well be a country in its own right. At the height of its power in the tenth century, Daylam encompassed all of Gilan, Tabaristan, Gurgan, and Qumis; now all of these provinces are under separate rule, and Daylam is identified culturally rather than geographically or politically. The Alborz mountains isolates Daylam from the Persian plateau, and it is inhabited by a fiercely independent people who resisted the rule of the Sasanids and the Arabs. The Daylami were one of the last peoples in Persia to accept Islam, and Zoroastrianism is still relatively strong here; existing uncomfortably alongside Isma'ili Islam. The Nizari Isma'ilis hold fifty castles in Daylam, of which the chief is Alamut (see later), the strongest is Maimun-Diz, and the most remote is Lamasar.

Qumis

The province of Qumis lies at the eastern Alborz mountains south of Tabaristan. Its chief settlement is the city of Damghan, which is virtually the only non-Isma'ili settlement in the province. The emir of Qumis is under siege in his own land, and he treads very carefully so as to not upset his subjects, never knowing which of them is a Nizari. Isma'ili efforts in Qumis are coordinated from the great mountain stronghold of Girdkuh. Girdkuh charges a toll on all travelers through Qumis, since it is the only route between western Persia and Khurasan that does not cross the Great Desert.

The Caspian Gates

Through the province of Qumis runs the road from Rayy to Nishapur. This road passes through the Caspian Gates, or Sirdara to the Persians. The 'gates' are an interminable narrow gorge cutting through the mountains; carts can only advance in single file between the vertical cliff faces, and progress is hindered further by the water pouring down the rocks and the swarms of serpents that haunt the area. Merchants still risk the road in preference to taking the route across the Great Desert.

Mount Damavand

This distinctive mountain dominates the whole of Tabaristan, and its snow-capped summit is visible for hundreds of miles across the plains of Persia. Damavand is the home of the Simurgh (see The Persian Bestiary, later), and evil tyrant Zahhak is believed to be

imprisoned below the mountain. There are seven settlements on the lower slopes of the mountain, each one with its own bayt al-hikma comprised of mostly yatu-descended sahirs (see Insert).

The Simurgh

An immense bird that lives on Mount Damavand, although she makes expeditions to all corners of Persia and most of its inhabitants have seen the Simurgh at some point. The people of Persia are oddly comforted by her presence, as she is a bringer of fertility as well as a symbol of national pride. The Simurgh is so old that she claims to have seen the destruction of the world three times over. During her exceptionally long life she has accumulated wisdom, and she is an authority on many subjects. In her most famous legend, the simurgh adopts the albino Zal (the father of Rostam), when he was abandoned by his father in the Alborz Mountains. Zal learnt much from the Simurgh, and when he left her she gave him three of her feathers, with which he could summon her in need. Statistics for the Simurgh can be found in the Bestiary (XREF).

The Great Wall of Gurgan

This immense fortification stretches from the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea and heads eastwards and north to end in the Pishkamar Mountains. The wall is over 120 miles in length, with 35 forts placed approximately every 30 miles. The wall is 25 feet wide, about 20 feet tall, and has a central canal carrying water throughout its entire length. It is made of red bricks, reinforced by steel and adamantite — an unbreakable metal made from diamonds by certain magicians. There is a Magic aura of 5 along the length of the wall. Legend holds that the wall was built on the order of Alexander the Great (and thus is sometimes called *Sadd-i-Iksandar*, the dam of Alexander) to keep the descendents of Gog and Magog from entering Persia. In this purpose it seems to have failed, for the Ghuzz (see earlier) entered Persia a century ago, and were invited to stay.

One of the reasons it might have failed to repel the Ghuzz is a breach in the wall, at the closest fort to the Gates of Alexander, which mark the western terminus of the wall close to the Caspian shore. No-one knows how recent the breach is, but since its discovery the local sahirs have noted the lack of the aura alignment (*Realms of Power: Magic*, page 16) that used to mark the Wall of Gurgan; in that spells directed against giants used to receive twice the normal aura bonus. It is obvious to anyone who inspects it that the breach was intentional, and there is evidence of non-Solomonic magic used to enforce the gap in the wall's protection. The sahirs of Mazandaran have showed little interest in repairing the breach since the Ghuzz are of no current threat to them.

Story Seed: Sealing the Breach

The characters are aware of a threat to Persia's security; whether it is from the Mongols, from a Zahhak, or from an enemy yet to reveal itself. They learn that the yatus of Damavand are guardians of an initiation script that grant the Major Magical Focus of 'Enemies of Persia'; but it can only be performed in the aligned aura of the Wall of Gurgan. The characters must try to repair the breach in the wall, which might involve going head-to-head with whatever supernatural foe caused it.

The Great Desert

Although referred to as a single desert — the Great Desert, or Al-Mafazah ('The Wilderness') — Persia's central dry lands are composed of two distinct regions, called Dasht-i Kavir in the north and Dasht-i Lut in the south. The Great Desert belongs to no province; it is a no-man's land where outlaws find shelter and there are no permanent villages except for the three oases. The roads that join towns on opposite sides of the Great Desert have water tanks and domes built every three to four leagues, and it is in the best interests of merchants to keep these tanks full. Both deserts are the haunt of jinn.

Dasht-i Kavir

This salt desert is found to the north of Persia's central plateau, and is about 500 miles west to east, and about 200 miles north to south. Although the center receives virtually no rainfall, there are marshes, wadis, and steppe-like regions within the Dasht-i Kavir, and in the west, a great salt lake. Unlike the Dasht-i Lut (see below), the Dasht-i Kavir is home to many birds such as the ubiquitous sand grouse and the impressively large bustard; as well as the fabled Persian gazelle and the Hyrcanian tigers who hunt it.

Garmah

In the center of the Dasht-i Kavir, half way between Isfahan and Tabas is one of the three oases of the Great Desert. It consists of three hamlets camped around a small fort, palm trees, and some pasture where cattle forage. The emir of the fort is charged with keeping the desert routes clear for merchants and travelers.

Naband

The middle of the three oases, Naband sits between Kirman and Quhistan. Despite possessing a guard house, the domed water tanks of Naband are notorious hiding places for desert raiders.

The Rig-i Jinn

An area of sand dunes in the central Dasht-i Kavir that is home to a tribe of jinn. The Rig-i Jinn is avoided by the traders who cross the desert; but the jinn, while mischievous, are not malicious. The Rig-i Jinn is found within a Faerie Aura of 3, but it is an extension of the glamour of the tribe, and moves when they do. Travelers encountering the jinn spy a lush oasis where there should be none. They may encounter either hospitality or hostility depending on the mood of the jinn, but whether they are given food and drink or wounds, the oasis will have moved during the encounter, and when the faeries retreat, the characters could be tens of leagues away from where they started.

Dasht-i Lut

The 'emptiness desert' is approximately 300 miles along its northwest to southeast axis and 200 miles wide. The eastern part of the Dasht-i Lut is a low plateau of salt flats. The south east is principally sandy. Unlike the Dasht-i Kavir, animal and plant life is much more scarce in the southern desert.

Gandom Beriyan

The central portion of the Dasht-i Lut is called Gandom Beriyan ('the toasted wheat'). It is a volcanic wasteland covered in black lava. It is the most treacherous of terrains, riddled with ravines and sinkholes; and blasted by a terrifically strong wind. The Gandom Beriyan is the hottest place in Persia, and is completely devoid of animal or plant life. It is, however, the home of the most malicious and evil of the jinn tribes, since an Infernal Aura of 4 flourishes here. The aura is corrupted with a Debauched aura of exhaustion (*Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 14), that prevents anyone from spending confidence points whilst here. At the heart of the Gandom Beriyan is the entrance to a Tartaran regio with an Aura of 7 where the air itself burns, and the rock is molten. One of the most powerful corrupt jinn in Persia lurks in this regio.

Why Go to Hell?

It is difficult to see why characters would ever come to Gandom Beriyan. However, there are a few reasons why they might. It is a place of infernal pilgrimage; and a group of characters might chase a villain here before he can dedicate himself more fully to the path of hell. Characters might accidentally stumble upon it whilst fleeing from the Balu tribesman; if this occurs, they may find themselves being rescued by their pursuers who are loathe to allow the land more victims than is necessary. Alternatively, as the hottest place on earth, the Gandom Beriyan might be important in a mystery initiation, or as a place to forge or destroy an item of power.

Sanij

The southernmost oasis of the Great Desert, Sanij links Kirman with Seistan. The Balu tribesmen (see Kirman, earlier) know this valley oasis well, and are a constant threat to the sizeable population which lives here.

Makran

A coastal province which gets its name from *mahi khoran*, meaning 'eaters of fish' in Parsi. It is sparsely populated, with most of the population concentrated in small fishing villages. The capital of the province is Fannazbur, but it is a poor town compared to the mighty cities of other provinces. The port of Tiz is a stopping point between Al-Sind in the east and Fars

in the west. In the past, Makran was the battleground in the past between the Arab caliphs and the kings of Al-Sind, and war elephants captured from the latter in battle were integrated into the Persian army. Bands of Ghuzz roam through Makran, having once been part of the invasion force that occupied Kirman.

The Gedrosian Desert

O Commander of the faithful! It's a land where the plains are stony; Where water is scanty; Where the fruits are unsavory Where men are known for treachery; Where plenty is unknown; Where virtue is held of little account; And where evil is dominant; A large army is less for there; And a less army is use less there; The land beyond it, is even worse... ~Messenger to Caliph Umar, 644 AD

Famous for its impassability, the desert of Makran has fought at least three great ancient armies in the past: that of Cyrus the Great, the legions of Queen Semiramis and lastly the previously unconquered veterans of Alexander the Great. Known as Gedrosia to the ancients, the arid coastal region is inhabited by scattered fisher folk.

The region contains an incredibly large numbers of pagan ghosts, soldiers from the armies that have died since antiquity attempting to cross its arid expanse. As restless dead, these spirits are readily susceptible to the summons of necromancers and other summoners, although most are overwhelmed with the emotions of despair and memories of deprivation and are unable to provide much useful information about their past.

Seistan

Seistan is a lowland country lying around and to the east of Lake Zarah, into which several major rivers drain. Like Quhistan and Ghur, Seistan is a dependency of Khurasan rather than a separate province in its own right. In the *Shahnameh*, Seistan is called Zabulistan, and famous as the home of Zal and his son Rostam, a man of both heroic proportions and heroic reputation. Seistan is home to many Ghuzz families.

Rostam

Rostam is the legendary hero of the Persian race. He was a giant; so big that his mother struggled to give birth, and his father had to be taught how to perform a caesarian section by the Simurgh (see Persian Bestiary, later). His constant companion was Rakhsh, a stallion big enough to bear his weight, fierce enough to kill a lion, and twice as swift as any other horse. The best known tales of Rostam are *Haft Khan-e Rostam* and *Rostam and Sohrab*. In *Haft Khan-e Rostam* (Rostam's Seven Quests), he journeys to rescue his king from the clutches of the demons of Mazandaran. The story ends with an epic battle between Rostam and the *Div-e Sepid* ("White Demon"). In *Rostam and Sohrab*, Rostam mistakenly kills his own son Sohrab in battle. Rostam was eventually killed through treachery of the king he served.

The legend of Rostam can be integrated into a saga in a number of ways; and some ideas are given below. So famous is it that any Persian character is likely to know the story of Rostam without an appropriate Ability roll, but precise details should be left to those with an appropriate Area Lore.

Mythic Blood: Rostam

A magus who hails from the line of Rostam has great physical prowess. You can grant yourself a +3 bonus to any one type of physical action that is a specialty of the Athletics, Ride, or Swim Ability (e.g. climbing, running, riding at speed, diving, swimming long distances, etc.). Each time this power is used, a different physical action can be selected; the bonus lasts for two minutes, and cannot be used again until the previous bonus's duration has expired (ReCo 25: base 10, +1 Diam, +2 flexibility). The Minor Magical Focus that accompanies this bloodline is Damaging Supernatural Creatures, and the Personality Flaw is Reckless (born mostly from stubbornness rather than heroism). It is likely that you have either the Large or Giant Blood Virtue.

Rostam's Tiger Skin and Mace

Rostam's Tiger Skin was worn over his armor, and he used it as a blanket when adventuring. It grants a Soak bonus of +5 that is cumulative with any other armor, and it has a Load of 1. It makes its possessor a very deep sleeper; the character can always recover Long Term Fatigue levels from a night's sleep, even if it is on hard ground or unpleasantly cold. However, a Stamina roll of Ease Factor 9 is required to rouse the character from sleep at all, and when woken the character has a -1 penalty to all actions until the sun rises. These effects can be thrown off by spending a confidence point. The tiger skin is currently in the possession of the emir of Ghur.

Rostam's Mace is a two-handed mace (treat as a warhammer, ArM5 page 176) of superlative craftsmanship, and grants a +3 to both Attack and Defense Totals. While held, the mace grants the wielder the effects of the Inspirational Virtue. It was taken to Turan (Transoxiana) by Rostam's enemies after his death, and is currently in Samarkand, lying forgotten in one of the tombs in the Shahr-i-Zindah.

It is said that reuniting the mace and the tiger skin with the body of Rostam will rouse the hero from his deathlike sleep — albeit temporarily — and cause him to stride afresh to Persia's defense. Once the threat from the east becomes apparent (see XREF Genghis Khan), Persian sahir's may well consider that the resurrection of their greatest hero is worth the trouble. A quest in the story of Rostam in Elysium (*Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 34) may grant clues to the location of the two items.

Dartal

The city of Dartal is located in the Zamin-Dawar, the 'Land of Gates', referring to the passes into the mountains of Ghur. Dartal is heavily garrisoned with horse guards as protection against the warlike Ghurs on the other side of the mountains. The Zamin-Dawar is the source of much of Persia's wool.

The Idol of Zur

At the time of the Muslim conquest a fabulous idol was taken as booty from the Zur Mountain near Dartal. It was made of solid gold, and had rubies for eyes. For the last few hundred years it has been owned by a succession of notables, but is now in the possession of a Zutt family (see Khuzistan, earlier). Whether through its own power or that of the Zutt matriarch, the idol has the ability to move, and has been walking in the direction of Zur for the last few years. The characters encounter the Zutt family following the two foot idol as it slowly makes its way to Zur. What will happen if it is permitted to return to its shrine is unknown, but could either be very good, or very very bad.

Zaranj

The capital of Seistan is Zaranj, built on a branch of the great Helmund river; during flood time the city is perilously close to the shores of Lake Zarah as it swells dramatically in size. The city has an inner town surrounded by a wall, beyond which is the suburbs of the outer town. All the houses have running water thanks to above-ground channels, and they nearly all have cellars in which the inhabitants live in the oppressive heat of the summer. Within Zaranj is a fluted tower with no doors, stairs, or visible means of approach. On top of the tower are believed to be the bones of Rostam and his horse Rakhsh; their bodies were exposed to the sun and the vultures in the Zoroastrian manner, but their bones were never retrieved; instead the tower was sealed to serve as a monument.

Around the city are salt marshes; these are inundated when the level of the lake rises every year. Beyond the marshes are the desert sands. The Zaranj area is famous for its *baad sad va bist rooz*, the "120-day wind" which blows north to south from the beginning of summer until the autumn. As it blows, it whips up a cloud of dust that clothes the whole region in dirt. Some believe the wind to be the home of jinn, but in fact it is a host of migrating air elementals (see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 138) who cavort through the area once a year.

Lake Zarah and Mount Khajeh

According to Nestorian Christianity, the three magi started their trip to Bethlehem from Lake Zarah. According to Mazdean legend, the lake is the keeper of Zoroaster's seed; when the final renovation of the world is near three virgins will enter the lake and thence give birth to the saviors of mankind. The waters of the lake have a Divine Aura of 2.

A flat-topped black hill called Mount Khajeh emerges from the waters of Lake Zarah. It bears an ancient fire temple and two abandoned forts collectively called Qal'a-e Sam — the 'fort of Saum' — named after Rostam's grandfather.

Khurasan

The largest province of Persia, Khurasan is named after *khora*, the sun, indicating that for many Persians, the sun rises over Khurasan. The region has long operated as an independent sultanate, but is now firmly part of the Empire of the Khwarazm-shah. Seistan, Quhistan, and Ghur are all districts of Khurasan rather than provinces in their own right.

Rishtah

A disease that is particularly common in Khurasan thanks to the malign influence of Mars is *rishtah*, known as *dracunculus* (little dragon) in Latin. Worms form in the flesh of the limbs of the victim; and their hot venom causes severe inflammation and paralysis of the infected limb. Most often the legs are affected (causing the

Lame Flaw until cured), but rishtah occasionally afflicts the arms or eyes (simulated with the Missing Hand or Missing Eye Flaws, respectively). Rishtah is difficult to contract, but also difficult to eliminate without medical assistance. It is a Serious Choleric disease of Severity 12; with a Stable Ease Factor of 4 and a Recovery Ease Factor of 18. The interval time is one month (for more details of diseases, see *Art & Academe*, page 45).

A cure used by the Ghuzz is to bury the afflicted limb in hot sand from dawn until dusk. The worm then migrates from the limb and into the sand. The problem with this cure is that sometimes the rishtah survives in the sand and can grow to be five feet long (and some report even bigger ones). The Ghuzz call such a worm the *olgoi khorkhoi*, and report that it has been known to attack travelers and livestock with its fiery venom. Statistics for the *olgoi khorkhoi* can be found in the Bestiary (XREF).

Herat

Known as the Pearl of Khurasan, Herat is dominated by the remains of a citadel built by Alexander the Great. Like many of the cities in this area, Herat has changed hands many times in the last century; nevertheless during this time it has managed to develop a reputation for brassworking, which remains its chief export.

Herat boasts a Zoroastrian fire temple called Sirishk just two leagues to the north atop a hill; unusually, this temple is still inhabited by a mobbed and attracts worshipers from the nearby hills. The presence of Shamiran castle directly behind the temple may have contributed to its longevity. There is also a Nestorian church between Sirishk and Herat. To the south of the city is a lush land like a garden, profusely irrigated by numerous canals.

Story Seed: The Riddles

The Emir of Herat has made a strange announcement. "One must come to me, neither clothed nor naked, neither afoot nor on horse, and speak to me neither indoors nor out. If this person does not come, then Herat shall be destroyed!" The emir is in the control of a horrible ghoul, and the only way to free him is to answer its three riddles, and the emir reckons anyone clever enough to answer his own riddle is also smart enough to answer those of the ghoul. Unfortunately, the ghoul also has a powerful Death Prophecy: it can only be killed by someone who is neither man nor beast, by someone who does it neither by day or by night, someone who offers it a present that is not a gift, neither by metal nor rope nor poison nor stone nor fire nor water, and by someone who is neither fasting nor eating at the time.

Karakum Desert

This "black sand" desert, also called the Desert of the Ghuzz, lies between the Caspian Sea to the west and the Aral sea to the north. It is bounded on its north eastern border by the Oxus River which flows into the Aral Sea in Khwarazm.

Merv

An important oasis-city on the Silk Road, Merv has been named "the rendezvous of the great and the small" as a testament to its immense market; where, if accounts are true, it is

possible to buy anything. Merv once boasted to be the largest city in the world, but in 1153 it was pillaged by the Ghuzz nomads, and since then has changed hands between the Khwarazmians, the Ghuzz, and the Ghurids, and has lost importance in Khurasan in favor of Nishapur. The last of the great Seljuks, Sultan Sanjar, is buried in Merv, under a great dome covered in blue tiles which is so high that it can be seen from a day's march away.

The libraries of Merv are greatly celebrated; the Great Mosque has two: the 'Aziziyah with over 12000 books; and the Kamaliyah library, with slightly less. Also stored here are the libraries of the colleges of Samanidiyah, 'Umaydiyyah, and Khatuniya. The Dumayriyah library is perhaps one of the smallest, but many of its 200 books are unique, and all are priceless. Of most interest to the Suhhar Sulayman, the library of the grand vizier Nizam al-Mulk is part of the greater collection of Merv, and its House of Wisdom is the keeper of these great tomes of magic.

Merv is home to a group of faeries who dwell in the market, running stalls next to the locals. These faeries help fulfill Merv's reputation for a place where anything can be purchased. They gain vitality from making exchanges with mortals; although they themselves do not supply any goods; they simply arrange a deal with a different mortal who can provide the desired goods. The result is an intricate web of favors and exchanges that might involve several tiers of mortal involvement.

If the characters need a particularly exotic ingredient or item, then Merv is a good place to find it, but the price might be equally difficult to obtain. The answer is to visit a different faerie merchant to obtain *that* thing, hoping he will ask in return for something easier to get. The trick is knowing when to stop; you might end up needing to find a pebble with a white spot on it, but you are equally likely to be asked for the crown of the Sasanid king!

Story Seeds: Save the Books

The invasion of the Ghuzz have taught the sahirs of Merv a lesson. An even bigger threat, in the shape of Genghis Khan, looms to the east, and Merv is home to thousands of books that can never be replaced. Unable to impress on the colleges and madrasas the importance of moving their books to a safer location, the sahirs are doing their best to copy as many as they can. This frantic attempt to preserve these irreplaceable texts can lead to any number of stories:

A forgotten secret is uncovered when a book is copied. *Example: the location of Solomon's Seal.*

Theft of books to which clerics deny access. *Example: A daring raid into the Dumayriyah to liberate a tome of Isma'ili theology.*

Transport of books to a safe place. *Example: some of Nizam al-Mulk's most prominent tomes are moved further west, but a group of hostile magicians are aware of the opportunity to steal magical power for themselves.*

Mashhad

The city of Mashhad is perhaps best known for its luxurious shrine to Imam Reza, the eighth Shi'i imam. Reza was unexpectedly appointed by the Sunni Caliph Mamun to be his successor to the Abbasid caliphate. Following violent uprisings from the Sunni Muslims after hearing this announcement, Reza suddenly died before he could take his post; leading the Shi'a to accuse Mamun of regretting his decision and solving the tense political situation with murder.

Mashhad ar-Rizawi ('the place of the martyrdom of Reza) was built on the site of his death, and a tradition arose that a pilgrimage to Mashhad was worth 70,000 pilgrimages to Mecca, and the tomb of the imam became a holy place to which people flocked from all over Persia. The shrine has a Divine aura of 6.

The Footsteps of Imam Reza

All along the road between Nishapur and Mashhad are imprints on the rocky road which are locally believed to be the footprints of Imam Reza left as he made his fateful journey towards his death in Mashhad. It is said that a person who retraces every footprint and matches his own to them will be especially blessed in the next venture he undertakes. However, several of the footsteps are difficult to locate thanks to erosion and the actions of malicious jinn, who sometimes create false trails to lead petitioners astray. Completing the pilgrimage should involve a short story where the character's faith is tested; but if completed successfully, the character gains the Intuition Virtue for the duration of his next venture.

Nishapur

On a strategic site controlling access to the east, Nishapur is named after the first Sasanian King, Shapur I, who made it his capitol for a brief time. Like most of Khurasan's cities, Nishapur is dominated by its market. Its market streets have many hostels for the merchants, and almost every trade is represented here. Virtually all the turquoise and malachite that makes its way into the Middle East and Europe originates from mines near to Nishapur.

'Umar Khayyam

This famous astronomer, poet, and sahir lived and taught in Nishapur until his death in 1123. He was trained in the Solomonic Arts at Nishapur's House of Wisdom — a House he later went on to lead — and was an apprentice with both Hasan-i Sabbah and Nizam al-Mulk (see The Nizari Isma'ilis State, later). Nizam al-Mulk later provided him with a yearly pension to continue his studies. 'Umar Khayyam wrote several influential books on mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy; but he is best known for his poetry.

Treatise on Demonstration of Problems of Algebra; written in Arabic; Summa on Artes Liberales (Level 5, Quality 9)

Explanations of the Difficulties in the Postulates of Euclid; written in Arabic; Tractatus on Artes Liberales (Quality 10)

Map of the Stars; written in Arabic; a Tractatus on Artes Liberales and a Tractatus on Solomonic Astrology (both Quality 11; includes a +1 from the beautiful illustrations of the original)

Rubaiyat (collection of poems); written in Parsi; Summa on Philosophiae (Level 4, Quality 9)

Mihr

This unprepossessing village on the road to Nishapur is the home to one of the three Royal Fires of Zoroastrianism (see Mount Kavarvand, earlier, for more information on the Royal

Fires). The ruins of a fire temple hide the entrance to a terrestrial Divine regio of aura 8. Within, the fire temple is intact, and inside it burns Adur Burzen-Mihr, the holy flame. This fire is specifically tied to farmers and craftsmen, just as the other two fires are tied to royalty and the priesthood. An tool left in the regio for a year will be purified by the holy flame, and henceforth grant a +4 bonus to any Craft or Profession Ability rolls made using it. This bonus lasts for a number of years equal to the Theology: Mazdean Ability of its owner. Only the owner of the tool can benefit from this bonus; should another even touch the tool, it loses its purity forever.

Quhistan

This "land of the mountains" is on the east of the Great Desert, bounded by Khurasan and Seistan. It is mostly a highland district with a corresponding cool climate, unlike the surrounding lands. Whilst technically a dependency of Khurasan, Quhistan is part of the shadow Isma'ili state (see later), and they control the mountain fortresses of Turshiz, Qa'in, Birjand, Muminabad, Dara, Tabas and Nih.

The Cypress of Kishmar

In Kishmar near Turshiz, Zoroaster planted a cypress tree that had sprung from a branch he had brought from Paradise. It grew taller than any cypress ever had, a monument to the conversion of King Goshtasp to Zoroastrianism. It was uprooted in 861 by Caliph Mutawakkil and transported across Persia to be used for beams in his new palace, although the caliph was killed on the very day it reached its destination.

There are several cypresses in Quhistan that are claimed to have grown from a seed of the Kishmar tree, and in some cases, this is even true. The trees themselves radiate a Divine aura of 1 within five paces, and this aura is automatically tempered with the Calm virtue (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, pages 38–39). Wood from the fallen branches of these trees and fed into the sacred fire of a Zoroastrian temple increases the Divine aura of the temple by one point until the wood has been burnt. Wood chopped from the trees lack this property.

Ghur

When the Shansabani (see insert) were driven from Ghur by the Khwarazm-shah, they unfortunately left their familiar demons and evil spirits behind. As a consequence, Ghur is a dangerous land, and many of its roads are haunted by malicious jinn. The towns are home to demons that walk in human form, and the Ghurs live in permanent suspicion of their neighbors, and even members of their own family should they start to act in an unusual manner. In some towns, the demons have taken over and rule openly, and the humans are powerless to stop them.

The people of Ghur are more closely related to the Baluchi and the people of Bactria and Badakhshan than they are to Persians.

The Shansabani

The ruling family of Ghur have long been the Shansabani family, who claim Zahhak (see earlier) as their first ancestor. Sultan Ala'uddin Hussain, known as Jahansoz ('World Burner'), took Ghur from the Ghaznavids with the help of his demonic patrons, and he and his kin ruled over Ghur (and later, Khurasan) with an iron fist. The Shansabani brooked no dissent or disaffection, and any political troublemakers simply disappeared mysteriously. The sultans of Ghur pursued an aggressive policy with their neighbors, but fortunately for Persia, their attentions were drawn to the fabled east rather than west or south. They were divided into three branches; one ruled Bactria and Badakhshan from Bamiyan, another ruled Khurasan from Ghazni, and the main branch ruled Ghur from Firuzkuh.

The last Shansabani sultan was Mohammed al-Ghuri, and he was a host to Zahhak. The Shansabani never capitulated the province and have not been officially replaced, but they have all vanished. Some claim they have left Persia for Mythic Hind; others claim they have gone into hiding. One persistent rumor places the Shansabani heir at the court of Genghis Khan.

Bamiyan

A rich, yet unfortified city in the east of the Ghur district; Bamiyan was recently one of the three capitals of the Shansabani. Its people are infidels and pay respect to two great idols high up on the mountainside. In a chamber supported on columns are two statues cut into the living rock; the locals call these *Surkh* and *Khing* ('Red' and 'Gray', respectively) and in the convoluted religion of Bamiyan they are twin aspects of a single god. The chamber in which these idols are found is richly decorated with carvings of birds, which have been covered in beaten gold. The two idols wander occasionally from their mountainside nook, bringing a Faerie aura with them as they come. When Khing walks, the people of Bamiyan hold feasts in its honor and bedeck it with flowers, but when Surkh fares abroad they hide within their houses and tremble.

Firuzkuh

The summer capital of the Ghurids, Firuzkuh means 'turquoise mountain' in the local dialect due to the preponderance of that mineral, and silver, in the surrounding hills. Firuzkuh was a retreat used by the Shansabani to keep their wicked activities hidden. Many of their political enemies were brought in secret to Firuzkuh, and drowned in the Hari river. Some claim that Firuzkuh was the center of devil-worship by the Shansabani. The palace is now empty, although the ghosts of the family's victims still stalk its halls.

The Minaret

Located on a bend in the Hari river, the Minaret of Firuzkuh stands over 200 feet high, and is made of baked bricks. It is intricately decorated with glazed tiles bearing alternating bands of Qur'anic verses, geometric patterns, and calligraphy in multiple scripts. The verses from the Qur'an are taken from the surat Maryam, which relate to Mary, the mother of Jesus. The minaret has been under assault from the jinn of the Hari, and just recently the mosque to which the minaret was attached was destroyed in a flash flood. The minaret

stands firm against their attacks, for it is powerfully warded against supernatural creatures. Sahirs have spend long years trying to figure out the means by which it is protected, but the minaret's secrets have so far eluded them, other than to determine it is of Divine origin.

Ghazni

Formerly the capital of the mamluk of Ghur, but now abandoned by the Shansabani, Ghazni is famous for the Bahramshah mosque, which has minarets with a star-shaped cross-section, and covered in geometric patterns. It is also well-known as a fabulously rich city, with ornate decorations on the lowliest of buildings, and ostentatious displays of gold and jewels from its inhabitants. Even the lowliest peasant has a gold necklace or bracelet, and higher status individuals drip with precious gems. These riches derive from the *Wealth of Nations* power of a False God (*Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 37) worshiped in secret by the Ghaznians.

Kabul

A city greatly frequented by merchants, who travel up the single fortified road to the market to trade with the exotic merchants who also come here from Mythic Hind. Of most interest to the Persians is indigo, which can raise a rich price further west. However, a more sinister substance is also sought out: a substance called *myrobalan*, a greasy speckled powder with a spicy nature akin to pepper or cardamom. Myrobalan is of great interest to physicians, since when properly prepared it can have potent curative properties. However, it can induce hallucinations that can be pleasurable (if the myrobalan is prepared with wine) or horrific (if prepared with water). Either sensation proves devastatingly addictive, and the markets of Kabul are littered by myrobalan addicts with their distinctive vacant expressions and dark-stained teeth. Kabul is ruled by a demon known only as "The Shadowed One", who is somehow connected to the trade in myrobalan. None have seen him in person; his four lieutenants control the people on his behalf with their demon-granted powers.

The Nizari Isma'ili State

The Isma'ili state is unlike others in the Mythic Middle East, in that it does not exist on maps, or in terms of military might, but rather lies in the hearts of men. It is a small state and widely scattered, nevertheless it is united under a strong devotion to its beliefs and goals, and has successfully resisted all threats aimed against it since its foundation over a hundred years ago. The Nizaris exercise political dominance in Persia, not through their meager territorial successes but through the point of a knife and through magical murder. Rather than meeting their enemies in battle they use subterfuge and deception to eliminate the leaders.

History

In the middle of the eleventh century, three apprentice sahiris at the same House of Wisdom in Nishapur — Abu 'Ali al-Tusi, Hasan-i Sabbah, and 'Umar Khayyam — became the closest of friends. They swore a pact of brotherhood that if any one of them achieves fame and greatness, he would share it with his friends. Abu 'Ali al-Tusi was the rising star of the trio, and became vizier to the Seljuk Sultanate (where he gained the laqab of Nizam al-Mulk), and also grand vizier of the Suhhar Sulayman. He offered positions to his friends; 'Umar refused, asking instead for the means to continue his studies. Hasan accepted, but only to get close to the vizier, for he had secretly become a member of the Isma'ili sect of Islam, and at their instigation, murdered his childhood friend. The Suhhar Sulayman was outraged, but true to the dying wishes of their grand vizier they held forth on their vengeance. Reconciliation between Hasan and the Suhhar Sulayman soon became impossible after a schism within the Isma'ilis caused Prince Nizar — Hasan's superior — to flee to the mountain fortress of Alamut in Persia.

Hasan-i Sabbah continued to train his devoted followers in the arts of Solomonic magic; and, it is rumored, to command sentient spirits. The Nizari Isma'ilis became feared for their single-minded devotion, using magic to walk in secret, ensorcel minds, kill through poison, and travel vast distances in the blink of an eye. These tactics proved to be shockingly effective, and the Seljuk governor of Persia — despite help from the Suhhar Sulayman — proved incapable of mounting an effective response. They were successful in taking key towns, but their strategy merely caused the populace to fear Isma'ilism, rather than embrace it. The Nizaris and the Suhhar Sulayman settled into a pattern of attempting to wipe each other out, but losses on both sides have been roughly equal. The Isma'ili sect have also established a branch in Syria, also based in mountain castles. The most famous member of this branch was Rashid al-Din Sinan (who died in 1193), who became well-known to the crusaders as "the Old Man of the Mountains".

A Sect of Assassins

The sect is divided into seven ranks. The lowest ranks are those of the *fida'i* (devoted one) and *lasiq* (adherent), neither of whom are properly initiated into the cult. These ranks perform the assassinations that give the sect its notoriety and political pressure. The first initiated rank is the *mustajib* (respondent) who know some of the mysteries of the cult, but have none of the authority of the next three grades, *da'i* ('missionary'), *hujja* ('proof') and *dai'd-duat* ('chief missionary'). The seventh and final rank is that of the *imam-qa'im*, the mystical teacher and spiritual leader of the sect.

The Nizaris are organized into *jaziras* ('islands'), each representing a geographical territory, and under the control of a *hujja*. The *da'is* within each *jazira* are responsible for preaching the doctrines of the sect and spreading the Isma'ili faith. Each *hujja* reports directly to the *dai'd-duat*, who is the head of the sect and grand master of Alamut. Members of the sect commonly refer to each other as *rafiq*, 'comrade'.

The *Da'wa*

The *da'wa* (mission) is the philosophy and organization of the Nizaris. A core doctrine is that of *taqiyya*, the concealment of one's beliefs in the face of danger. Islam stresses the

importance of truth and honesty, and yet *taqiyya* allows the Isma'ilis to deny their adherence to its precepts and live in secret amongst others. It permits them to use subterfuges and disguises without betraying their faith in God.

Nizaris believe in the inner meaning, or *batin*, of the Qur'an; holding that it contains the very secrets of the universe if the layers of symbolism and numerical correspondence can be understood. They live an ascetic life according to the 51 epistles of Isma'ilism, called the *Rasa'il*. They believe that shari'a law no longer applies to those who embrace the *batin*; and consequentially, they reject the five Pillars of Islam (*Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 106), dietary restrictions, the authority of the caliph, and so forth.

According to the *da'wa*, ever since the creation of the world, human history has been characterized by alternating cycles, each begun by a 'speaking' imam or prophet (the imam-qa'im), followed by a succession of 'silent' imams. They hold that the imam represents God's will in the world at all times; that he is constantly under divine guidance since the *batin* flows through him, and his commands demand absolute obedience. Nizar was a member of the true line of silent imams, followed by Hasan-i Sabbah and the other dai'd-duats of Alamut.

The imam-qa'im is an immortal being of unlimited wisdom, who has been, in the past, Elijah, Enoch, Khidr, and 'Ali (the first Shi'i imam). It is believed that the current cycle is the *qiyama* ('resurrection'); and that the souls of those who follow the *da'wa* are already in heaven; whereas the souls of all other Muslims — plus those of a non-Muslim faith — have already been judged and suffer in hell.

An Assassin by Another Name

In Syria, the Nizari Isma'ilis have been slandered with the name of 'hashishiyyin' (smokers of hashish); this sobriquet was adopted by the Crusaders as 'assassin', and is the origin of the modern term. The rigidly ascetic Nizaris do not use drugs of any kind, and in any case they would likely interfere with the concentration and planning required for executing their public murders. The name stems instead from the contempt felt for the wild beliefs and extravagant behavior displayed by the Isma'ilis; and in any case is not used to describe the main Persian sect.

In Persia, the Isma'ilis are principally known as the Batiniyya (men of the *batin*), suggesting that they place too much meaning on the inner meaning of the Qur'an; or the Malahida (heretics), referring to their rejection of shari'a law.

The Nizaris Today

The current *dai'd-duat* of the Nizari Isma'ilis is Jalal al-Din Hasan, who succeeded in 1210. During his rule, Jalal al-Din has done the unthinkable — publicly converted the sect to Sunni Islam. The Nizaris recognize this as an exercise in *taqiyya* and have obeyed without question. Jalal al-Din expects to garner support from the enemies of the Khwarazm-shah, namely the Caliph of Baghdad in the west and Genghis Khan in the east. He has already made alliances with the rulers of Arran and Azerbaijan, and married the four daughters of the emir of Gilan. Since he has ushered in a new era of outward law, many of Isma'ilis believe Jalal al-Din to be the imam-qa'im.

Relations with the Suhhar Sulayman are hostile; the Suhhar still holds the Nizaris as traitors and refuses to treat with them. Many sahirs attempt to slay or drive off known Nizaris, most often using the fear and hatred of the populace against them. The Nizaris on the other hand have no specific enmity towards the Suhhar Sulayman, but treat them like any other powerful individual — if they stand in the way of the imam's coming, then they die.

In addition to Daylam, Quhistan, and Qumis (mentioned earlier), the Nizaris have significant hidden communities in the south of the Zagros Mountains in Fars (including the fortress of Shardiz), and scattered cells in most of the important cities in the Mythic Middle East. The Syrian Assassins have their base at Masyaf in the Holy Land, with a further stronghold near Aleppo.

Alamut

Alamut was built by one of the kings of Daylam; he was out hunting one day and his eagle alighted on a rock. He immediately saw the strategic potential of the site, and built a castle there that he called *aluh-amut*, which in the Daylami language means 'the eagle's lesson'. Since then, Alamut has become more than just a castle; it is a fortified village in Rudbar, the valley of the Shahrud.

Alamut is physically an immense, towering rock, with unapproachable slopes on all sides; and yet a flat top on which extensive buildings have been built. It has vast storerooms hollowed out from the very bedrock, and possesses its own spring. A notable feature amid the dust and rock is a luxurious garden; this is the source of the fortress's Magic aura of 3, and it contains a vestige to the Magic Realm important in the initiatory rituals of the Nizaris (see later).

Nizari Characters

The rank of fida'i is suitable for grog and companion characters, who should take the Dutybound Flaw (or, for companion characters, the Oath of Fealty Flaw) to represent the vows of obedience taken to the grand master of the sect. If a fida'i proves himself to be capable, he can expect to be elevated to the rank of lasiq, and command a squad of men. Only a fraction of the Nizaris become Initiated into the magical traditions of the sect, and become mustajibs. The rank of da'i (which is not represented by a Social Status Virtue) is awarded to mustajibs who have Initiated at least two Solomonic Arts other than Solomonic Sihr; all Gifted mustajibs are automatically da'is. A da'i is expected to lead a community of Isma'ilis and to convert others to the cause. The ranks of hujja and dai'd-duat are available to player characters through roleplaying. Apart from as noted below, mustajibs (and da'is) should be created using the rules for sahirs (see XREF Order of Suleiman).

New Virtue: Fida'i

Social Status, Minor

You are an assassin of the Nizari Isma'ilis. You are a devout member of the sect who is prepared to die on its orders, and as such you should consider the Oath of Fealty or Dutybound Flaw. When not on a mission you wear white, with a red girdle, cap, or boots. You have been trained in precise placement of daggers and blades, as well as disguise.

You may take Martial Abilities at character creation. You can expect to become a lasiq if you prove your loyalty to the sect.

New Virtue: Lasiq

Social Status, Major

You are an experienced assassin of the Nizari Isma'ilis, having successfully completed seven murders at the orders of your grand master, and command a small band of up to six fida'is. You may take Martial Abilities at character creation.

New Virtue: Mustajib

Social Status, Minor

You have been initiated into the magical traditions of the Nizaris, and must take Solomonian Sihr as your Summoning Power. If you have The Gift you have been Opened to all of the Solomonian Arts (and you get this Virtue at no cost); if you are unGifted then you must buy the Solomonian Arts as Virtues or else be Initiated into them after character creation. UnGifted characters should also take the Necessary Condition and Dutybound Flaws to represent your Initiation by the Nizaris. Most mustajibs started their careers as fida'is, and you should also take this Virtue (or the Lasiq Virtue) to represent your social status amongst non-magical folk. However, if you joined the sect later in life you may choose different Social Status Virtue.

New Virtue: Trained Assassin

General, Minor

This Virtue is only available to characters with one of the three Social Status Virtues of the Nizaris. You have completed several missions on behalf of your masters, giving you 50 additional experience points that you may spend on any Martial Abilities as well as Athletics, Guile, or Stealth.

Initiation Scripts of the Nizaris

Two example Initiation Scripts are given here. Nizaris are almost always Initiated into Solomonian Storytelling in preference to other Solomonian Arts.

Initiation of Solomonian Sihr and the Rank of Mustajib

Ease Factor: 21

Script Bonus: +18

Details: this rite takes place at Alamut during Ramadan (+3); the Initiate is taken to the garden and magically transported to the Magic Realm by his mystagogue (using Solomonian Travel). He finds himself on an insula (see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 19) of intense paradise, populated with beautiful maidens to cater to his every need. He must quest to find himself a companion spirit through which he will work his magic (+3), and in the process of this quest his magic is bound very closely to a weapon that represents that spirit; imposing the Necessary Condition (brandishing a weapon) onto all of the character's magic (+9). When he returns to the mundane world with the vision of paradise still filling his head, he is told that the master of Alamut can return him to paradise at any time, and he is promised a place in paradise permanently if he dies in his service. In return he swears a magically-enforced oath to never betray the

secrets of the sect, else be damned to eternal fire (the Prohibition Flaw, +3).

The ritual that Opens the Arts of a Gifted Nizari has similar elements to this Initiation, although it does not impose any Flaws.

Initiation of Solomonic Storytelling

Ease Factor: 21

Script Bonus: +15

Details: The initiate is asked to surrender all contact with the outside world and devote himself to the sect. He must donate all his possessions and land to the Nizaris, and cut off all ties with family and friends. Even his name is changed to a cultic name (+2). His initiatory rite takes place at Alamut when Sirius rises (+3); the initiate is taken once more to the paradise insula in the Magic Realm. He must quest on at least three different insulae (thus navigating the Void that separates them); and obtain three objects that resonate with three different emotions (+6). Upon returning to the mundane world he must spend a season composing an encoded poem which tells of his journey whilst appearing to be about an entirely different subject, demonstrating his mastery over the batin (+1). After this second visit to paradise, the mustajib discovers that any use of his magic briefly transports him mentally back there (simulated by the Disorientating Magic Flaw, +3).

Chapter 9: Transoxiana and Beyond

On the Silk Road

The fabled route to distant Serica, the land of Silk, is beginning to coalesce again at the beginning of the thirteenth century as the Mongol invasion paradoxically creates a degree of safety for traveling merchants and missionaries by controlling the almost incessant brigandage of the area. Later to become known as the Silk Road, the route has existed throughout antiquity in various states of accessibility. It consists of not one road but many — a network of caravan stages marked by resting places known caravanserais that branches and reforms through the deserts, steppes and mountains as the caravans travel northeastward from Baghdad. Through Khurasan and into the Eastern Provinces of Transoxiana, Bandakhshan, and Wakhan the trade routes delve past the borders of Mythic Middle East and even into the supernatural Realms beyond...

Transoxiana

Beyond the great river known to the ancients as the Oxus lay the borderlands of Mawara'n-nahr, "the Lands Beyond the River". Known first as Turan to the Persians, then later as Transoxiana to the Greeks and Romans, these lands have always been at the edge of civilization. Nominally ruled by the Khwarazmshah, the region includes the ancient oases of Farghana, Sogdia and Bactria, the estuarine province of Khwarazm, and the *jinn*-infested desert of Kyzylkum ("red desert") - all bordered by the

endless northeastern steppes and the harsh eastern mountain arc of the Pamir and Paromisiae.

Invaded by the triumphant Arabs under Qutayba in the seventh century, Transoxiana was washed over by the Islamic empire until its wave of conquest broke on the shores of the vast inland steppe. Islam itself changed and adapted as it flowed into the steppe — orthodox Sunni practices found little hold but the ecstatic brand of Sufi mysticism, with its similarities to the shamanism of the Turkish nomads and focus on highly charismatic holy men, was more successful. Many of the inhabitants profess Islam but cling onto many pagan beliefs and folk traditions linked to the local Faerie and Magic spirits.

The region has a history of loose pastoralist domination and local dynasties centered on riverine oases. No single authority has ruled the borderlands between the pastoralist nomads and the urban settlers since the ancient Turk Empire, although this is about to change as a new nomad empire descends from the east.

Genghis Khan and the fall of Transoxiana

"O people, know that you have committed great sins, and that the great ones among you have committed these sins. If you ask me what proof I have of these words, I say it is because I am the punishment of God. If you had not committed great sins, God would not have sent a punishment like me upon you."

— Temujin (Genghis Khan), Po-i-Kaylan mosque, Bukhara 1220. Juvaini, "History of the World Conqueror".

At the beginning of a canonical *Ars Magica* saga set at the start of 1220, Genghis Khan and a large detachment of his horde are encamped outside the besieged town of Bukhara. If history follows its usual course, the town will have fallen within 2 weeks, the surviving defenders put to death without exception. All the civilians are ordered from the town; artisans were sent as slaves to Mongolia, young men forced to follow the army and the women suffered far worse fates. A great fire breaks out and almost entirely destroys the mostly wooden buildings and by the end of Winter, there is little but smoking ruins left standing. Due to the atrocities committed in Bukhara, the whole area becomes overlaid by a Malevolent Infernal aura of strength 3 (see *Realms of Power: the Infernal*, page 15) apart from the small area surrounding the Kalyan minaret. Many of the slain are not given proper burial, allowing their anguished ghosts to roam free throughout the ruins or vulnerable to summoning by necromantic magic.

Throughout 1220, the Mongol armies, reinforced by Turkish recruits and deserters, ravage along the Jaxartes all the way to Khojend in Farghana, destroying the oasis towns of Signak, Jand, Yanikent and Banakat. By the end of Autumn 1220, when the horde settles down along the Vaksh river, his armies have captured the twin capitals of the shah's realm: Samarkand and Gurganj and chased the Sultan himself across Khurasan to his death at the shore of the Caspian sea. Within another year, the Mongol juggernaut has penetrated into Persia, sacked Balkh, Merv, Nishapur and Herat and routed the Sultan's son Jalal al-Din across the Indus while the two great generals, Jebe and Subadei, have commenced their great raid into Russia. Abandoned and never resettled, the original sites of the sacked cities may become home to similar Infernal auras, tarnished with the Personality Trait of Wrath. Such places attract lesser demons of destruction, dark faeries, ghul and malevolent jinn to the Mongol wake and add to the human misery.

Saga Seeds: Of Mongols and Magi...

Exactly how these events affect your Saga depend on the role the main characters intend to play within the region. For natives of Transoxiana, the Mongol invasion is devastating, resulting in a large loss of life and culture but can be used as a stimulus for introducing existing Hermetic characters to the Mythic Middle East. The massive tumult in the area may provide rich backgrounds for the introduction of wandering Mythic Middle Eastern Companion characters to be introduced into western-based Sagas, similar to the diaspora following the fall of Constantinople to the Latins in 1204. Conventional Hermetic characters or their Companions traveling in the area may alternatively become caught up in one of the sieges or escape from the sacking of a town and be forced to cooperate with native characters in order to escape back to Christendom, bearing news of the "hurricane from the east" to the disbelieving Order. *Trianomae magi*

seeking to assess the Order of Suleiman may become embroiled in the fight against the Mongol juggernaut. Tytalan magi may be attracted to the conflict engendered, whereas House Tremere's reconnaissance may lead them to become involved in assessing the degree of threat posed by the invaders. Both Jerbiton magi and Redcaps may have links through trade or travel and be drawn into stories involving their mundane connections or family. Necromancers within the Order may be attracted to the sites of the massacres at Otrar, Bukhara and other Transoxanian cities and be willing to risk their souls amidst the Infernal ruins.

A Saga set primarily in the Mythic Middle East could be focused on rebuilding amidst the ruins of Khwarazmshah's state under the foreign yoke of the Mongol Empire. The breakdown of mundane power structures and the scattering of local wizards could tempt Seekers and young Hermetic magi to mount expeditions to explore and perhaps settle in covenants within the fractured polities of the former lands of Alexander's great empire. Stories may run with the usual Spring covenant founding aim but could involve the complexities of dealing with both the foreign mundane civilians and unusual magical natives of the area while interacting with the Mongol aristocracy and its accompanying bureaucracy.

The Great Rivers

Transoxiana is bordered and defined by the two great rivers that flow through it — a liminal zone of cultural transition and trade, bordering the deserts south of the Aral Sea and forming a barrier between wild nomad steppes to the north beyond the Jaxartes and the urban settlements of the south across the Oxus. A third lesser river, the Zeravshan ("the golden"), courses past the great cities of Samarkand and Bukhara only to choke into dust in the deserts before reaching one of the inland seas.

Story Seed: A River runs through it...

In winter, both the lower Oxus and the Jaxartes freeze over, allowing merchant caravans (and lately nomad armies) to cross with ease. The cause of this phenomenon is an ongoing struggle between the Faerie and Magic jinn that claim dominance of the lands on either side of the great rivers. In Winter, the local Faerie spirits hold sway and the rivers freeze over, allowing nomads and their stories to cross between the steppe and settled lands, engendering conflict and vitality for the faeries to feed off. In summer, the ancient Magic spirits resume their dominance, allowing the waters to flow their natural course and providing irrigation to the towns of their lower reaches.

The Oxus

Mistakenly associated with the Hebrew Gihon, one of the four rivers that flows into Eden, the great waterway known as the Jahyun to the Arabs, the Amu Darya to the Turks, and the Oxus of the classical Greeks has always been considered one of the frontiers of the classical world. Locals of the high Pamir village of Qarabolaq claim it is birthed from the eerie Lake Zorkul nearby, but the classic geographers claim it begins its journey as it melts from a great ice cave beneath a glacier high up in the fabled Wakhan corridor.

The original bed of the Oxus runs westwards across the desert for six days march before reaching the shores of the distant Bahr Khazar (Caspian Sea) near the fishing town of Khalkhal. This former stretch of the river is devoid of magical spirits as they have all been bound into the structures and canals near Gurganj but nevertheless retains a fading Magic Aura of 2 along its dusty length. On cool nights, when the constellation of Aquarius is ascending, small clear pools of water can be found along the dry bed and can be harvested for Aquam vis.

Story Seed: Spirits of the Oxus Delta

Once a single mighty Magic Spirit, the clash of cultures along its lower banks has split the great spirit into a multitude of lesser entities like the river splits into numerous waterways and canal as it approaches the Aral Sea. Just short of this lake, the river is prevented from following its natural course by the great dykes of Gurganj, solid structures magically reinforced with captive *jinn* enslaved by the ancient sahir of pre-Islamic times. The sequence of dams that disrupt the natural course of the river allow irrigation of the rich province via many canals.

Faerie, Infernal, and Magic (perhaps even Divine) lesser river spirits can be found along the river's fragmented lower course, bound to its network of canals. Each spirit has its own unique name and cultural allegiance, although shifting alliances and swirling courts appear to collect from time to time.

One such lesser captive Magic spirit, Ahurani or Anahit, represents the vestige of a pre-Zoroastrian fertility spirit or *yazata* adopted by the Sogdians, now yoked to supply the harvests of the Khwarazmshah. The greater Faerie nobles known locally as Old Jahyun and the Son of the Oxus are known to be the most capricious and most powerful, although a clever magus or sahir may be able to bargain with one at the expense of the other.

The Jaxartes

Also known as the Sayhun or the Nahr-ash-Shash ("the river of Shash"), the Jaxartes forms from numerous mountain streams in the valley of Farghana, flowing through this province past the homeland deserts of the Ghuzz Turks via many channels into the northeastern part of the Buhayrah Khwarazm (Aral Sea). More so than its greater sibling to the south, the Jaxartes forms the true border between Iran and Turan, Persian and Turk, civilized agrarian and barbaric nomad.

Story Seed: The Jaxartes River Spirit

Unlike the Oxus, the Jaxartes is dominated by a single Faerie entity that involves itself in stories of nomad incursions. The ancient Jaxartes spirit feeds on the fear of the urban oasis dwellers of the rapacious barbarians of the steppes, orchestrating an invasion every few centuries by summoning a Faerie host with a new name through the gateway to Arcadia that lies just outside of Talas. See "the Endless Nomad Cycle" Story Seed below.

The Sea of Khazar

The Bahr Khazar (Khazar or Caspian Sea) forms the northwestern boundary of Transoxiana. Beyond its expanse to the northwest once ruled the mythical Khazars, a powerful kingdom of nomads that converted to Judaism in the ninth and tenth centuries. This lost kingdom held back the Islamic expansion in the ninth century only to fade back into the steppes from where it arose. Stories about their far realm continue filter all the way back into Mythic Europe, even to the court of the popes.

Although the Khazars have long since dispersed, the stories they engendered have spawned Faerie *jinn* that imitate their culture and kingdom. Those seeking the far northwestern shores of the sea past the Caucasus range, either by land or by water may encounter the secret isle of the Amazons (see *Rival Magic* for details). Brave travelers that push further find themselves in the magical lands of the *jinn* and beyond, having delved into those outer parts of Jinnistan that lie in either the Faerie or Magic Realms...

The Aral Sea

Also known as the Lake of Khwarazm, this shallow and reedy lake is known for its excellent fishing in its southern part, although it is not considered navigable.

In the southeastern corner of the sea lies a small island, Jabal Jaghrahaz, that has a Magic Aura of 4. The water surrounding the island is perpetually frozen – local folk swear it must be the dwelling of powerful water *jinn*, the marid Jaghrahaz, but none are brave enough to venture across the frozen water to investigate the small hill it contains.

Kyzylkum Desert

The "red sands" lie between the two great rivers, forming the southeastern border of the estuarine province of Khwarazm and the northwestern border of Sogdiana. Despite its tracts of crescent shaped dunes, much wildlife can be found at its less arid eastern edge: gazelles, golden eagles, deer and *koulan* (onagers or wild asses).

The northern reaches are the domain of wingless drakes known as *waral* or the varanus –remarkably intelligent, their leaders are able to walk on their hind legs and converse in the local language but appear to have only rudimentary magics.

Bactria

Once known as Bactriana and more recently referred to as Tokharistan, the lands cradled by the Oxus and the Caucasus Indicus have long been a melting pot of culture and a cauldron of rebellion. Although annexed as a satrapy by Cyrus the Great, the region resisted the attempts of Alexander to incorporate it into his empire, only to form the centre of first the Seleucid Empire and then an independent Graeco-Bactrian kingdom.

Despite being conquered by successive waves of nomads: the Sakas, the Kushans, the Sassanids, the Hephthalites and most recently the Arab forces, the hinterland of the region retains many of its classical monuments and links to the Faerie powers of Greek myth. Outside of the Theban Tribunal, it contains more classical Greek structures than anywhere else in the Mythic Middle East.

Balkh

For a long time the large and ancient city of Balkh was the home of Zoroastrianism, since Zoroaster was born here, and is buried within its walls. At the time of the Islamic invasion of Persia, Balkh provided a refuge to the Persian emperor Yezdgird, but in the current era it has thoroughly embraced Islam. The Greek name for Balkh was Bactra, and gave its name to the whole region of Bactria.

Story Seed: Naw Bahar

A fire temple by the name of Naw Bahar in one of Balkh's suburbs was built in the Sassanian days as a rival to the Ka'ba of Mecca. Its walls are adorned with precious stones, and brocaded curtains are hung everywhere. The walls and floor emit a sweet smell of perfume from centuries of application of unguents. The main building is surmounted

by a great cupola 375 feet high, and around this central building there are 360 chambers to host the mobeds.

Although no longer active as a temple it retains a Divine aura of 5. Naw Bahar remains unmolested by time or treasure seekers, and its floors are clean of detritus and vermin. Those intrepid enough to go inside — and few are — report that a fire burns at the center of the temple, although no-one is ever seen within. The inside of the temple leads to a Terrestrial Divine regio that shelters a small Zoroastrian community within its higher levels.

The Ruins at Ai Khanoum

Once an important centre for Hellenism in the centuries before Christ, these eastern ruins lie at the confluence of the Jahyun and its tributary, the Nahr Dirgham. Originally founded by Alexander the Great as Alexandria on the Oxus, it was later developed into the important Seleucid city of Eucratidia.

Partial remains of several structures, including a gymnasium, a theatre almost the size of the legendary structure at Epidauros and several temples to pagan Greek gods, most notably Zeus and Dionysius give the area an overall Magic Aura of 4. The gymnasium is the best preserved building and lies within a level 7 Magic aura, centered upon a pillar engraved with a dedication to both Hermes and Hercules.

Story Seed: Altars of Alexander

Of further interest to Hermetic Seekers, an altar of Alexander is hidden within one of the temples at the outskirts of the city. As detailed in *Ancient Magic*, p125, the altars of Alexander have powerful mystical connections to each other, and link to over 70 different sites. A magus, casting a spell using the Arcane Connection Range while touching such an altar, is considered to have an Arcane Connection with a +4 multiplier to the other shrines, cities, or temples so connected. This site may either provide an entry point into the Mythic Middle East for Seekers investigating other sites or a potential lifeline back to Europe for Hermetic colonists deep within enemy territory.

Sogdian Rock

This landmark marks the site of an ancient battle between the forces of Alexander and the rebellious satrap of Sogdia, Oxyartes of Balkh, father of the legendary beauty Roxane. It can only be accessed by little known mountain paths and its exact location is known to only a handful of local tribesmen. The ancient spirits of the 30 men that fell during the ascent continue to haunt the site but bear no love for the successors of their Persian adversaries.

Story Seed: A Covenant on the Rock?

Sogdian Rock is a superb natural fortress, riddled with natural caves and carved cisterns capable of holding large reserves of food and water in case of siege. The site is enveloped by a Magic aura of strength 3, although higher auras may exist within the deeper caves. Although isolated, it is a potential base for Hermetic magi wishing to explore the mysteries of the Mythic Middle East.

Sogdiana

Since ancient times a land of merchant and middlemen, Sogdia remains a land of crossroads and caravans. The major trails from Baghdad cut through the province, passing through Samarkand and onto

the Turkish lands beyond. Once the heartland of the Manichean heresy, it remains a mixture of mercantile religious communities, counting Sunni Muslims, Nestorian Christians and Jews among its transient population.

Story Seed: Caravans

An immense variety of goods pass through Transoxiana in the thirteenth century laden on the packs of asses, camels, horses and mules depending on the terrain. Huge caravans return from the northern lands, carrying goods from the steppes of the Volga Bulgars or the northern forests, pass through the towns of Merv, Baghdad, Samarkand or Khojend and thence further west to Europe via Venetian merchants or east via Sogdian merchants to fabled Serica. Caravanserais, stone staging posts with water supplies and a small garrison, were maintained by local rulers at distances of a day's journey (10 to 15 miles) to supply the merchant trains. Some resembled miniature towns on the move, one of the largest ones being noted by the geographer Ibn-Fadlan consisted of up to 3000 pack animals and 5000 men.

Such a caravan may become an interesting cover for a covenant of peregrinary Hermetic magi or provide protection for a group of native Mythic Middle Eastern characters. Either scenario may be a source of varied stories based around trade and exploration.

Statistics for camels, mules and steppe ponies used in such caravans are given in the Bestiary XREF.

Samarkand

"Everything I have heard about Marakanda is true, except that its more beautiful than I ever imagined". - Alexander the Great

Known as Marakanda to the Greeks, the ancient capital of Sogdia on the upper Zeravshan river has been conquered by various conquerors throughout its history but remains one of the most populous and cosmopolitan cities of the region. It is the eastern the capital of the Khwarazmshah's empire.

If your Saga follows history, in Spring of 1220 the armies of Genghis Khan besiege the town. Despite its recent fortification, the city falls to the nomad hordes after only five days. The surrendering garrison is executed in batches with ruthless efficiency. The population are moved out of the city to facilitate the sacking and divided up like the unfortunates of Bukhara (see the insert: "Genghis Khan and the Fall of Transoxiana" above).

Shahr-i-Zindah

To the east of the old city of Marakanda lies Shahr-i-Zindah ("tomb of the living king"), a street of tombs named after its central shrine, the grave of Qusam ibn-Abbas. The remainder of the tombs are entrances to a city of dark Faerie *jinn* and *ghul*, giving the street a malevolent Faerie aura of 5 during the day alternating with an equivalent Infernal aura during the night. The shrine forms a forlorn sanctuary amid the darkness, retaining a small Divine aura of strength 2.

Bukhara

An ancient trading centre since ancient times, Bukhara lies on the Zeravshan River downstream of Samarkand in the middle of the Kyzylkum Desert. In the ninth and tenth centuries it was the centre of the

Samanid state and was considered the centre of Islamic culture and religious thought, producing such notables from its hinterland as the Persian poets Firdausi and Ridauki. Ibn Sina used the famous library here and its book bazaars were said by al-Biruni to be beyond compare. In the thirteenth century, Bukhara is home to a large Jewish community – one of the largest non-Hebrew speaking branches of the Diaspora.

The half-buried tomb of Isma'il Samanid (r. 893-907), the founder of the Samanid dynasty, lies just outside the town. Long forgotten by the debauched inhabitants, if your saga follows history, this building will escape the Mongol devastation as the dust of disuse hides it from the horde. A circle in nested squares, a Zoroastrian symbol, is carved above the main door. The building retains a Magic aura of 3 during the night that alternates with a similar strength Divine aura during the day due to its former use by Zoroastrian mobeds.

The Mongols sack Bukhara at the beginning of 1220 but several sites survive. See the sidebar on "Genghis Khan and the Fall of Transoxiana" for further details.

Story Seed: Job's Spring

At the edge of the farmer's market lies a small mausoleum, the Chashma-Ayyub, recently built over a small strength 3 Faerie aura containing a small spring. Unlike other mausoleums, no one is buried within its walls. Local folklore attributes it as the place where Job struck his staff to the ground and called forth water, but perhaps the legend just represents the adoption of an older pagan tradition. Visited annually by one of the sahir of the local *bayt al-hikma* who sponsored the recent construction, the resident Faerie *jinn* can be bargained with for the faerie-tainted Terram and Aquam vis produced by re-enacting the ancient story within its walls.

Kasri Orifon

A small village just east of Bukhara, this site is known for its "wishing tree". The dead trunk of an ancient mulberry tree forms a twisted arch in the main square. Barren women crawl beneath its trunk in the hope of becoming with child. The tree is home to a Faerie *jinn* with powers over fertility – passing beneath the wood of the arch leads to a small strength 2 Faerie regio just large enough for an adult human to enter.

Story Seed: The Lost Books of Bukhara

After the Mongol's raze the town in early 1220, several rumors circulate as to the fate of the various book collections and libraries. Much poetry is written lamenting the loss of this great collection of scholarly works, comparing it to the burning of the Great Library of Alexandria. Such tales, woven over the years by gifted poets and the Merinitia magi of the Keepers of Tales Mystery Cult attract faeries to the story. Eventually, the collective lamentation may provide enough vitality to reproduce a Faerie replica of the library. Access to such a place would be greatly sought after by mundane, Hermetic and sahir scholars searching for lost secrets and classical knowledge.

The faeries associated with the library take the form of rare books, appearing unexpectedly in market stalls run by eccentric merchants or being found serendipitously in the disused sections of old mundane libraries. The books themselves are Faerie creatures and act as Threshold Guardians — by reading the Faerie text and wishing to rediscover the lost library, the readers find themselves in Arcadia. Such stories are always tinged with tragedy and sadness, for a reader may only visit the library once and leave with only a small token of his travel and memories to

spread the legend of the Lost Library further within the hearts of scholars throughout Mythic Europe. Such loss and longing provides further vitality to the faeries of the library, as its story weaves into similar tales and creates a lasting motif through the centuries...

The Minaret and the Khan

This Kalyan minaret is one of the few structures to survive the Mongol invasion of Transoxiana, being spared by Genghis Khan himself in 1219. A folk story tells of how the great nomad stopped to look at the minaret and a gust of wind knocked his hat from his head. He stooped to pick up his hat and then said: "This minaret is the first thing I have ever bowed to". He spared the minaret but not the sheikhs, slaying 200 holy men and having their heads thrown down the nearby well before ring to the pulpit and uttering his famous speech.

From the top rotunda with 16 arched fenestrations, the muezzin summoned the city's faithful to prayer or warriors kept lookout for enemies. An ornamental frieze of diagonal brickwork covered with Arabic inscriptions encircles the tower's base.

The minaret was once part of the larger Po-i-Kalyan mosque complex — the immediate ruins retain a Divine aura of 5 amid the Infernal aura that comes to cover most of the city ruins after the sacking. The minaret itself contains a Divine aura of 7. By climbing the spiral staircase just prior to dawn, a devout Muslim can access a small Terrestrial divine regio of strength 8 that appears as a round chamber above the rotunda section.

Story Seed: The Sheikhs Beneath the Well

The mosque's well lies beneath an octagonal platform nearby. If uncovered, explorers can climb down the dry shaft to the base, that contains a pile of loosely stacked skulls within a small Magic aura of strength 3. Each skull acts as an Arcane Connection to the sheikh it once belonged to and can be used to summon the restless spirit of the particular holy man. Beneath the base of the minaret itself lays the grave of an imam ritually slain by the tower's builder, Arslan Khan.

Otrar

In 1218, a Mongol ambassador arrived at the head of a richly laden caravan to this town on the eastern bank of the Jaxartes carrying a message to the Khwarazmshah. Governor Inalchuq, a cousin of the Khwarazmshah, imprisoned and executed the entire caravan of 450 men, including the ambassador, on the basis that he believed they were spies or perhaps merely out of greed for their valuable wares. The execution of ambassadors was considered a grave insult to the Mongol leader — one underlined by the subsequent humiliation of the Mongols sent in a second embassy. Through this gross insult from a minor official, the Mongol horde descended with devastating effect on the Mawara'n-Nahr.

Inalchuq's Legacy

If your saga follows history, Otrar lasts for five months under siege in the first half of 1220 before succumbing to the Mongol forces. Inalchuq is captured alive but executed by having molten silver poured into his eyes and ears. The town is reduced to rubble and its population slain or enslaved, a prelude to the fate of the other towns in the region. Its ruins contain a Perfidious Infernal aura of strength 6, tarnished with the sin of Deceit. Lies told within the ruins seem more believable — attempts to spot a lie have their Ease Factor increased by the aura strength.

Story Seed: Uqana, the Ghostly Ambassador

The ambassador of the first embassy to the Khwarazmshah was Uqana, a Muslim merchant trusted with a personal message of friendship from the great Khan. His execution at the hands of a fellow Muslim has resulted in a restless spirit, trapped as an apparition after death (see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 115 for details of this class of ghost). Although the great Khan has avenged his murder, Uqana is unable to rest, as his spirit feels he failed in his duty to deliver his message. Convincing the traumatized ghost to depart to his proper rest will be difficult, given the wake of destruction that the Mongols have left since their affront at Otrar. If compelled by magical means, Uqana may provide valuable information about the intentions and plans of the Mongol leaders. Attempting such magical coercion or lying convincingly to gain the former ambassador's trust may have grave consequences within the Infernal aura that encompasses his haunt.

Khwarazm

A province of canals and gardens, Khwarazm is the agricultural heart of Transoxiana and the home to the bellicose Khwarazmshah whose actions brought down the wrath of the Mongol hordes, Sultan Mohammed II Iskander. It produces large crops of cotton, sustains large flocks of sheep for wool and pastures great herds of cattle in the marshlands between its multitude of canals. Its main industry is trade, including expensive furs from the lands of the Bulgars to the north. Khwarazm is particularly known for its Turkish slaves however and is the centre of the slave trade in Transoxiana. Young nomads are bought or stolen from the steppes, given an Islamic education and then dispatched to the far corners of the Islamic Empire.

Gurganj

A foremost town along the trade routes, the town of Gurganj or Al-Jurjaniyah has shifted its site on the western bank of the river over the years to accommodate the vagaries of the floodwaters of the Oxus and the vengeance of the native river spirits.

If your saga follows history, the Mongols besiege Gurganj in 1220, breaking the massive dyke in frustration after five months and unleashing the pent up waters of the Oxus. Once again, the city falls to the onrushing waters and the great river resumes its flow into the Caspian Sea, releasing the enslaved magical spirits upon their former Khwarazmian captors (see the sidebar on *Spirits of the Oxus Delta* above). All that will remain after the Mongols march away are sundry corpses and the ruined walls that sketch the outline of the once great city.

Kath

Former capital of Khwarazm and original home of the native Khwarazmshah dynasty, this once magnificent city on the eastern bank of the Oxus has suffered repeated flooding throughout its history, washing it into secondary rank.

Overlooking a great necropolis to the north stands the mausoleum of Il-Arslan.

The Gutluk-Temir Minaret

The tallest brick minaret of the Mythic Middle East, this structure rises to over 180 feet, providing a dominating view of the surrounding irrigated province. Despite its religious style, it is surrounded by a Magic aura of 7 and forms the focus of the magical network of fetters and wards that bind the various Oxus river spirits to the dykes noted above. The protective magics of the minaret are maintained by the local community of sahir, who use the structure as their meeting place and ensure the canals continue to support the province's famed fertility. The sahir community lies directly in the path of the onrushing horde – the few survivors may be some of the first Solomonic magi to bear news to their brethren in the west.

Farghana

To the northeast of Sogdia lie the open plains of the vast valley of Farghana, the most eastern point reached by the initial wave of expansion sparked by Islam. Famous for its metal goods and particularly its weapons, it is also known for its fine oil and bitumen — clay pipes filled with oil being used as incendiaries in sieges by the Arab armies and later their Mongol conquerors.

Khojend

Framed at the mouth of the Farghana valley, this small trade town is built near the ruins of Alexandria Eschate; the furthest settlement established by Alexander the Great in his campaign of conquests. Another Altar of Alexander lies hidden beneath the city or within the adjacent ruins (see Ruins at Ai Khanoum above for details).

Osh

Located just downstream from the source of the Jaxartes in the Pamir mountains, Osh is the easternmost settlement in the Farghana valley and the northernmost town of the Islamic Caliphate, making it the end of certainty and the starting point for stories of exploration past the edges of the map.

As the last caravan stop on the Great Khurasan Road from Baghdad, merchants follow tales and legends rather than tracks as they climb into the eastern mountains on their way to the fabled Faerie city of Khashgar and thence by the dreaded desert route to legendary Serica...

Story Seed: The Heavenly Horses of Farghana

The valley at the headwaters of the Jaxartes has been known for its excellent horses since antiquity. According to legend, the horses of Farghana are the offspring of mundane horses and either mountain river dragons or other seemingly divine steeds that visited the wild steppe herds in the past. Such "Heavenly Horses" appear similar to the Arabian descended horses of the European nobility but are slightly larger. These Faerie animals are particularly sought after by magi and Gifted sahir due to their suitability as mounts for Gifted magicians and local tales tell of representatives from Serica traveling vast distances to procure even one of these amazing mounts. See the Bestiary for details of these mounts. See the Bestiary XREF for details.

Badakhshan

Fabled for its rubies, sapphires and other jewels, this mountainous region rises upwards into the Caucasus Indicus south of a great northern loop of the Oxus, transected by its main tributary, the Nahr Dirgham (Badakhshan or Kokchka river). Known in antiquity as Balascia, classical geographers place it on the north face of the southeastern slopes of legendary Mount Imeon. Now free from the demonic yoke of the Shansabani of Maiyan to the south, it is one of the borderlands of the ancient world known to the traders who traverse it from northwest to southeast.

Wakhan

This narrow territory follows the Oxus river from lower Bandakhshan back to its mythical source. It is inhabited by reclusive pastoralists known as the Vakhi who speak an almost unintelligible dialect of Farsi (-3 penalty to Ability score). Since antiquity, a trade route has wound its way up this valley and on to the mythical land of Serica, although no merchant yet claims to have traveled the whole journey there and back again. On occasion, exotic travelers and pilgrims have appeared in the Mythic Middle East, claiming to have traversed the corridor westwards, reciting tales of their adventures in the mountains and stories about the fabled cities of their homelands in the desolate Taklimakan desert beyond.

Story Seed: The Faerie Road to Serica

Unlike the lower reaches, the whole upper valley of the Oxus past its junction with the Bandakhshan river is covered by a extremely lengthy but narrow Faerie aura bounded by the sharp mountain crest lines to the north and south. Beginning with a weak aura of only 2 at the outskirts of Ai Khanoum, the aura increases gradually as a traveler climbs further eastward. At the level of the Wakhan valley proper, the aura has reached a strength of 6 and the Warping it induces is partly responsible for the taciturn nature of the nomads (Reclusive Minor Flaw). Multiple Faerie regioes can be accessed from the path, depending on the traveler's mood, goals and particular Faerie Sympathies (see *Realms of Power: Faerie* for further details). Some of these regioes lead only to blind canyons and certain death, while others contain whole lost kingdoms and cities built on the shores of a great encroaching desert. The most sought after paths provide portals into the various worlds of Faerie. Those leading to Arcadia are commonest although a solitary traveler is more likely to be drawn into Eudokia to resolve the crisis that has led them to flee beyond the bounds of Hermetic knowledge.

Story Seed: Intineris Serica

Cartophilus of Mercere has always been regarded as eccentric, even among Mercere magi. His father, Geographicus, was one of the founders of a similar traveling covenant, so it is perhaps unsurprising that he has proposed the formation of another mobile gathering of magi at the recent Normandy Tribunal meeting. The covenant's mundane cover as a merchant caravan is nothing new, but his intent to seek funding as a dedicated research covenant surprised even the archmagi who had known his parents.

Cartophilus intends nothing less than to find the true source of silk by traveling eastward to mythical Serica.

Several members argued against his plan, stating no precedent for such a Seeker covenant exists, but surprisingly, the Exarch of House Tremere guaranteed full support of such an expedition and volunteered two experienced Tremere magi to accompany the Mercere's venture. Whether the Exarch's motives were out of true support or just a pragmatic solution to finding an outlet for the more enthusiastic members of the Burning Acorn Vexillation remain in doubt...

This covenant may provide an interesting high fantasy or high Faerie diversion from the usual "castle on the hill by the Faerie wood" trope that is the default of many Ars Magica Sagas. Possible covenant magi might include a Nestorian Trianomae spy, a Turkish Criamon Sufi master, and a Levantine Merinitia *jinn* specialist.

The Mines of Lahzvard

The limestone deposits along the Bandakhshankshan river at Lahzvard are the only known source of *lapis lazuli* and so-called "balas rubies" in Mythic Europe. The greedy *jinn* of Zubaydah, a fort named after the favored wife of Caliph Haroun al-Rashid, oversee the main mine works. From here, strongly guarded shipments of lapis lazuli travel westwards to supply European artists and magi or are sent eastwards into the fabled lands of Hind, Serica and perhaps even the adjoining mountainous regions of Faerie.

Blue and Red Stones of Mythic Europe

Fabled for its brilliant blue color, lapis lazuli is widely known throughout antiquity and Hermetic circles for its magical properties. Commonly mistaken for sapphire in period, its name derives from the Latin lapis ("stone") and a corruption of the Persian name of its town of origin, Lahzvard (Latin: lazulum, "from Lahzvard). Its use in amulets, scarabs and even seals is documented in various Egyptian and Babylonian magical texts. It is an essential ingredient in the pigment ultramarine. Such pure pigment greatly valued for the illumination of Hermetic texts as a highly resonant material, although a lesser pigment made from locally available mineral referred to as kuanos or cerulean (azurite) is often substituted. Pliny's description of sapphiros is believed by many Hermetic lapidary specialists to refer to lapis rather than the stone that becomes known as sapphire (blue corundum). He specifically notes the flecks of gold characteristic of lapis. Similarly, the majority of red and pink "balas rubies" found in Mythic Europe are in fact varieties of spinel, a red-colored mineral mined from Lahzvard, although occasional "true" rubies are discovered in the limestone beds – these represent prized Rubies of Virtue. Their Shape and Material bonuses remain unchanged (see later).

Lapis lazuli has the following shape and material bonuses: +3 aphrodisiac (when ground as a powder), +5 keep limbs healthy, +5 cure boils and ulcers, +6 versus the Obsession power of demons. At the Troupe's discretion, given the confusion between the two stones, lapis lazuli may provide the same material bonuses as sapphire: +2 knowledge, +2 Perdo Vim against spirits, +2 versus malign Corpus, +3 healing, +3 reducing anger. A Lapis Lazuli of Virtue contains 2 pawns of Corpus vis. When Enriched by carving it the shape of an eye set in gold and placed as an offering on the last day of the month on an altar dedicated to the Egyptian deity Ra, it confers the Minor Supernatural Virtue Lesser Immunity (obsession power of demons)(ArM5, page 45). Alternatively, it can be smelted in a crucible with lead to remove its gold flecks. When the resulting product is ground into a fine powder and applied to the eyelids, it acts as a potent aphrodisiac, equivalent to the wearer possessing the Venus' Blessing Minor General Virtue (ArM5, page 50).

"Balas rubies" have the usual shape and material bonuses of rubies: +2 courage, +3 battle wounds, +3 affect blood, +4 leadership in war, +6 fire-related effect. A Ruby of Virtue confers the Minor General Virtue Self-Confident (ArM5, page 48). The enrichment process requires that the stone be bathed in the flames of a fire lit in anger or in the course of war for three days. Before Enrichment it contains 2 pawns of Ignem vis.

At the Troupe's discretion, only blue gems from beyond the bounds of Mythic Europe may provide the proper "sapphire" bonuses — a potential Story idea is that such blue stones may have to be discovered in dreams, Faerie, the Magic realm or as the result of looting dragon hoards. Details for Sapphires of Virtue are given in *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 127.

Story Seed: No, I need real Sapphiros, you fool!

It is common for magi, alchemists and lapidaries to use the word *sapphiros* in period to refer to any blue stone of value. These lesser blue stones provide no magical bonuses, although inexperienced magi and Redcaps may be swindled into accepting such products from unscrupulous traders.

A senior magus known to the characters has a delicate problem. His attempts to stabilize his new longevity potion

seems to require the use of unblemished sapphires as a component, but his stocks of blue stone appear to contain only worthless cerulean due to a "misunderstanding" with the local gem merchant. Attempts to recreate the ritual without the rare component have failed. Citing Pliny as an authority, he has determined that what he requires is in fact neither cheap blue stones nor true sapphire but classical *sapphiros*. Unfortunately, any lump of *lapis lazuli* will not do, as his investigations have revealed that the stone must be freshly born, at least human sized and remain untouched by human hands. Magical manipulation is out too as the resonance will be affected if enchanted prior to the actual longevity ritual. As he is busy with other projects and does not wish to trust such an important matter to mundanes, he seeks the characters help.

Those chosen must travel to the great mines of Lahzvard and locate a freshly grown stone of the correct shape and size. Mining the stone using indirect magic may not represent a great problem, but delivering such a rock to the magus presents a problem since it cannot be magically disguised or transported without spoiling it for the longevity enchantment. The only guaranteed option is traveling by mundane means through the eastern Caliphate. Given the tumult of the area in the aftermath of the Mongol incursion, such an expedition is bound to present several challenges, not least the risk from bandits or nomads seeking to haul off what is a rather difficult to conceal small fortune.

The Roof of the World

The *Bam-i-Dunya* or "Roof of the World" refers to the high plateaus of the Pamir knot, the northwestern Caucasus Indicus and the ranges that extend southward and eastward into lands outside the *Dar al-Islam* ("House of Islam"). The civilizations spawned in the valleys cradled below the peaks have traditionally been the middlemen in interactions between the Roman and Persian Empires to the west and the mysterious land of Serica in the east.

Islamic mythology claims this chain of stone as part of the Mountains of Qaf and thus one of the homelands of the *jinn*. Valleys strewn with fist-sized diamonds are the roost of the great *ruq*, massive eagles that can lift a man in one of its claws and carry him away as if a small mouse.

In classical texts, the crests of this region are the lesser flanks of Mount Imeon, the mountain at the centre of the world, considered by some Criamon magi as the possible original location of the Axis Magica prior to Criamon's ascendance into Twilight.

The whole area is covered by a unspoilt Magic Aura of at least 4, although areas with higher auras and regions from other Realms punctuate its icy expanses.

Turrus Lapidarum, the Stone Tower

Ptolemy's *Geography* mentions the small mountain kingdom of Sarikol as the stopping point for caravans heading eastwards towards the fabled Sera Metropolis, the capital of the Seres. Some say the overlooking fort marks the halfway point between Europe and the lands of the east, others claim it is a town half in the mundane world, half in the Faerie Realm that provides a gateway into Arcadia. Descriptions stem from the merchant traveler, Maes Titanos, although his report is considered circumspect by Ptolemy's source, the pre-Hermetic magus, Marinus of Tyre who regards the figure of Titanos as a fabrication, Faerie or infernalist.

In the Mythic world, this sizable town marks the extent of classical travel to the east and is thus one of the mundane geographical limits of the Order's knowledge of the world. No Redcap or Mercere magus claims to have yet visited this mythical site or entered the fabled tower, leading some Merinitia magi to speculate that while it still lies within the mundane world, it can only be reached by passing along the Arcadian paths known to House Merinitia...

Story Seed: Janaindar, the City Above the Clouds

Local nomad legends speak of a lost city built at the edge of the Magic Realm, seen rising above the clouds atop a great mountain peak on a clear day and all but inaccessible except for magic or being carried to its aerie by one of the great *rukhs*. The stories say its alien inhabitants claim descent from an ancient magical race that once ruled over the earth although they appear human in guise.

Is this a lost Nephilim settlement? The true location of Hyperborea in Turkistan? A reclusive covenant of reclusive archmagi? The descendents of a rival magical tradition founded by Trianoma's sister, Veia? The last refuge of the Zoroastrian mobeds? A potential site for a high-fantasy Hermetic covenant above the clouds? The last sanctum of the Diedne?

Beyond the Roof of the World

Traveler's tales tell of fantastical creatures found just beyond the eastern peaks. After the mountains comes the desert, studded by prosperous oasis towns and ruins of lost civilizations. Searing heat, cruel winds and malicious demons populate these stories and all contribute to luring travelers from their caravans into lingering deaths from starvation and hunger.

Khashgar

Of all the legendary cities associated with the eastern journey, Khashgar is perhaps the most widely known in the thirteenth century. Routes from north and south converge on this mythical oasis city before branching around the dreaded Taklimakan desert on their way eastward to the Land of Silk. Scholars debate its origin and exact location but all agree its streets teem with humans, *jinn* and other eastern faeries mixing shoulder to shoulder with angels, demons and non-Hermetic sorcerers.

Nominally Muslim since the late ninth century, Khashgar suffered a bout of repression and intolerance under the eastern Faeries of the Qara Khitai dynasty but has recently fallen under the Mongol yoke without resistance. The inhabitants, both mundane and magical, appear to have taken the change in overlords without much concern.

Famous for the *Yekshenbar bazaar* ("Sunday market"), the city is a place where all manner of exotic goods can be bought or sold. Desert brigands mix with worn merchants; exotic silks, knives and jewelry are displayed alongside more magical wares. Slaves, both mundane and magical can be found here, for a price.

Some Merinitia magi claim to have visited the Khashgar market in their travels through Arcadia and suggest that several versions of the city may exist at once or that the whole town may lie within a regio accessed from several different mundane sites within Mythic Europe.

Ignoring the scholars and their musings, life and commerce goes on in Khashgar.

The Taklimakan

This magical desert is a place of death – its name translates as "those who go in, never come out". A pair of geographically shifting auras of constant strength 7 (one Infernal, one Magical) swirl and intertwine across the sands as opposing storms. The two spiral shaped auras are constantly enveloping and then revealing ancient Faerie regios in their wake that either contain the ruins of long deserted cities or thriving oases populated by *jinn* from before the coming of Islam.

Story Seed: the Black and the Blue

The dunes off the main track are feared as the abode of the *qara buran* ("black hurricanes"), bloodthirsty wind spirits that assail caravans as mighty sandstorms, separating travelers from their camels and companions. These untamable *buran* closely resemble elemental *jinn* in nature but some creatures appear more akin to Infernal Aerial Powers than Magical spirits (see Chapter 3: The Jinn and their Lands). The storm spirits divide their loyalty between the great Gök Buran, a frighteningly powerful Daimon that dwells within an even stronger Magic regio deep within the centre of the sands or its rival, a Duke of Hell known as Great Lop.

The Mythic Steppe

The Great Steppe

Even at its height, the Eastern Roman Empire reached only the fringes of the vast ocean of grassland that stretches the breadth of the continent of Asia, from the Sea of Azov and the great gulf of grass forming the Hungarian plain in the west to the Ordos and extending to the limitless horizon in the east. Herodotus refers to the littoral of this grass lake as Scythia but speaks of its endless and timeless nature — no continuous landscape feature encountered by Hermetic magi is on the same scale.

Tashkent

The Turkish "City of Stone", once the greatest Arab town beyond the Jaxartes, was laid to waste by the vengeful Mongol hordes in 1219, although the Khwarazmshah had sacked much of it in 1214 already. Like other towns in the area, it was a city of canals, famous for its vineyards. It formed a trade centre between the latter day Sogdians and their nomadic Turkic neighbor until the recent Mongol incursion. It is already beginning to be resettled and recover its trade position under Mongol lordship and marks the frontier between civilization and the barbarian wilderness.

Talas

In July 751 CE the Muslim armies led by Ziya ben Salih met a strange expeditionary force from beyond the eastern steppes. Although less significant than the Battle of Poitiers in 732 in the west, this confrontation marked the easternmost expansion of the Arab armies.

Many exotic artisans were captured in this campaign. The technology of paper-making passed into the Islamic world from such captives, with the first paper-mill being built in Samarkand shortly after. Nearly five centuries later, the last Khwarazmshah, Muhammad II, defeated the Faerie forces of the mysterious Kara-Khitai nomad dynasty in 1218 to consolidate his rule over Transoxiana. The town was razed completely in 1219 by the Mongol armies on their way to Otrar.

Story Seed: the Endless Nomad Cycle

The ruins of an old nomad fortress lie near the old town of Talas. Just outside is the terminus of a road from Arcadia that leads to a Faerie reflection of the Mythic Steppe. Throughout history since before the time of Alexander, waves of Faerie nomads summoned by the great Jaxartes River spirit have descended upon the lands of Transoxiana in an eternal cycle of destruction that echoes in the memories and folk tales of the people who dwell in the lands beyond the Oxus. Each successive wave carries a slightly different name but brings new terror – the recurring story they enact breaking upon the shores of civilization through eternity. The Mongols may merely represent the latest retelling of the ancient story – see “Gog and Magog” in the sidebar below for further ideas.

Great Tengri

The nomadic peoples of the Mythic Steppe share a belief in a common ancestor and overpower, Khan Tengri, "the Great Sky". Like the original spirit of the Hercynian Forest to the north (see *Guardians of the Forest*, Chapter 3: The Forest, pages 30-40) to the far west, its cousin spirits of the Tien Shan Mountains to the south and the Taklimakan Desert to the east, the Great Tengri of the Steppe is a powerful supernatural entity that draws its power from the Magic Realm. To Hermetic understanding, this primal spirit is similar to a Kosmokrator of the Steppe and the Sky, an Elder Daimon that governs the vast grass sea of the Mythic Steppe.

Story Seed: the Final Work of the Founder

Aloof, distant and uncaring, the Great Tengri would seem to present no current threat to the western based Order. Unlike the fractured remnants of the Hercynian Forest Spirit, Mercurian rituals have not weakened this primal magical force, the settlement of the mundane nor the miracles of the Dominion. Its lands are largely untamed, except at its fringes where the lesser steppe touches on urbanized cultures. Quiet and alien, it remains as powerful as ever, a vast reservoir of magical power waiting to be studied and unlocked by a Hermetic magus dedicated to completing the final work of Hercynius filius Bonisagus, the integration of Merinitia's original nature magic into Hermetic theory.

Lesser Steppe Spirits

Magic Might: 30-45 (Auram, Terram or rarely Aquam or Herbam).

All are considered lesser Daimons of their particular steppe.

Typical Powers: Creator of Winds or Earth, Guide, Manifestation, Presence, Ruler of Winds or Earth. All Steppe Spirits possess the Ways of the Steppe Virtue and some have the ability to Grant Major Supernatural Virtues to their chosen messengers.

At its settled fringes, where the Great Steppe has begun to fray under the advance of settled communities, the Great Tengri has engendered lesser spirits at the cost of some of its own power. These lesser spirits are considered *genii loci* of a particular region, stretches of grassland that can range in size from a small valley, to the size of a large European kingdom. Three possible fates await such lesser fragment spirits.

Survival: the genius locus of the local steppe is strong enough to hold its own against the encroachment of the mundanes and the Dominion. These spirits give rise to magical steppes, such as the southeast plains of Russia around the Sea of Azov, the Dzungarian depression and the distant eastern plains of

Mongolia. Between such peripheries, the Great Steppe spirit rules unchecked, only slightly diminished in power. Beyond these buffers, only lesser nature spirits and faeries are found.

Dissolution: the genius locus of the steppe is too small to maintain its control over the steppe, or else its neighbors on more powerful areas that sap its strength until nothing remains. These spirits leave behind a mundane steppe. Examples include Pannonia, where the effects of the nearby Dominion of the Byzantine Empire have forced the lesser steppe spirits to flee into the deeper steppe. Likewise, the Hungarian plain, hemmed in by the arc of the Carpathians, where the formerly nomadic Magyars have settled and integrated into the Holy Roman Empire, has also been sapped of its remaining strength, becoming an isolated promontory of Divine pasture.

Replacement: the genius locus has dwindled and been replaced by another supernatural being. This most commonly gives rise to a Faerie steppe at the edges of settlement and pastoralists. The power of the original spirit is subsumed by a Faerie incarnation that feeds off the folk tales told by the descendants of nomads. The towns along the Jaxartes border along a Faerie steppe.

Story Seed: the Ride of the Shaman

Led by visions of an unending sea of grass beneath the clearest of blue skies, one of the characters wanders out into the steppe alone. After surviving a harrowing night of severe exposure on the Steppe, the character successfully achieves communion with the Steppe spirit and is ordained a shaman of the Great Tengri.

The resulting Ordeal inflicts an effect similar to a premature gain in enough Aging Points (in any Characteristic) to achieve the next level in Decrepitude, automatically forcing a Crisis (see ArM5 p169-170) and the gain enough Warping Points to raise his Warping score by 2.

In return, the character gains the equivalent of the Nightwalker Virtue and the ability to enter *ekstasis* and generate a spirit body referred to as a *phantasticum* in return for the Pagan Flaw - the great spirit, while tolerant, demands its messengers respect its divinity (see *Hedge Magic*, pages 103-119 for examples of Nightwalker traditions capable of spirit traveling).

Mythic Mongols

The exact nature of Genghis Khan and his Mongol hordes is best left to the individual Troupes to determine based on the needs of their saga and the resources available. The simplest approach is to treat the Mongols as mundane barbarians under a brilliantly talented mundane general and let history unfold as usual. Details for mundane Mongol troops are given in the Bestiary. Further details of the nomad horde's activities in the Mythic Middle East in the immediate canonical future are given in Chapter 2 of *Ancient Magic*, pages 15-18. The bibliography in the Appendix provides further reading and resources available on the web that may aid Sagas with a strong Mongol Story element.

More Mythic variants based loosely in historical fact include casting the Mongol leader and even his more famous generals as powerful Blood of Heroes Mythic Companions as detailed in *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, pages 103-104. In this option, the Mongol leaders are scions of Ares (Mars) or perhaps Attila, the most famous nomad raider of the near past.

Alternatively, Genghis Khan himself may be invested as a Spirit Votary of the Great Tengri spirit of the Mythic Steppe, having bargained with the sky spirit on the slopes of the sacred Mongolian mountain of Burkhan Khaldun (see above for details on this *Kosmokrator* level Magic Spirit). This version of Genghis Khan may be able to call upon elemental Magic powers staggering enough to require the fractured Order of Hermes to unite against his campaign or risk annihilation. Rules for Spirit Votaries are detailed in *Realms of Power: Magic*, pages 88-89.

Story Seed: Dark Angels of Punishment

The possibility of an Infernal Mongol horde may appeal to some Troupes. Perhaps the nomad leader and his generals are the mortal incarnations of powerful Angels of Punishment, demons of the Order of Avengers of Evil posing as Divine retribution (*Realms of Power: the Infernal*, pages 39-40). The accompanying shamans may be Infernally aligned human summoners or even fully-fledged diabolists but the majority of the horde may still be composed of mundane nomads. Instead of an Angel of Punishment, Genghis Khan may be a startling incarnation of the new Zahhak, possessed by the ancient demonic foe of Persia, Azi Dahak (see Chapter 5: Persia).

For more high fantasy Sagas with a strong Infernal theme, the horde may contain true demons of destruction and other Infernal creatures. This latter option is recommended only for high-powered Troupes who are willing to explore a heavily Infernal themed Saga.

Story Seed: Spawn of Gog and Magog

Another alternative is that the Mongol horde has ridden out of Arcadia, the latest incarnation of a recurring story that manifests the fears of nomad brutality and avarice held by the agrarian settlers along the steppe frontier since ancient times. From the biblical hordes of Gog and Magog, then Goths, then the Huns and the Avars, the recent Magyars and now the Mongols, such cyclic dark Faerie incursions are repeated throughout the history of the region.

In this scenario Genghis Khan may be the latest role played by a dark Faerie Monarch, with his generals and other officials being represented by the other powerful court faeries (see *Realms of Power: Faerie*, pages 80-83). The rank and file of the Mongol Horde may contain variants of lesser Faerie Knights; Faerie touched humans and mundane human nomads in varying degrees. In a high fantasy Saga, the horse archers of the horde may be led by Faerie centaurs or contain whole troops of such faeries rather than the mundane Mongol Trooper detailed later. The shamans and varied tributary magicians accompanying the horde would be represented by Faerie Wizards skilled in the Artes Fabulosa or perhaps true Faeries with powers that can equal, and in some cases even exceed, the power of Hermetic magic.

Story Seed: Prester John I Presume?

A more positive take on the Faerie horde may involve the nomads as the soldiers of Prester John, the Christian King of the East, born out of the legends of the Crusades. The exact source of the legend is unclear, but may relate to corrupted rumors of Sultan Sanjar's defeat in 1141 by the forces of the Qara Khitai at the Qatwan steppes near Samarkand. This far eastern confederation of nomad tribes contained several Nestorian Christian elements under the rule of a mysterious nomad dynasty. Regardless of the legend's origins, the story is popular throughout Mythic Europe, perhaps even popular enough to have drawn a troupe of powerful Faeries styling themselves as the legions of the lost Christian monarch. Although posing as Divine agents, such creatures may best be presented as Faeries playing a pious role and feeding off the Vitality loosened by the powerful emotions created by the effect of their arrival on the Islamic Caliphate and the consequences the news of its devastation has on the embattled Crusaders and the rest of Christian Europe.

Story Seed: The Vengeance of God

A final interpretation of the Mongols is as a Divine host of punishment, although this is the most difficult to realize within the historical framework. Reconciling the massacres of the Transoxanian towns may be problematic, but even within the Dominion, the manipulations of demons and the Infernal attempt to divert the righteous into temptation and sin. The Crusades of the Levant provide a precedent for the paradox of holy war. Of all the scenarios this may be the most challenging to Hermetic magi, as the power of the Divine is the only force that can trump the otherwise unassailable in-game position of the Order of Hermes as the most powerful magic in Mythic Europe. In a Divine horde Saga, the Mongol shamans may be holy companions following a monotheistic vision of the Great Tengri. Their holy powers are duly feared by the sahirs and hedge magicians of the Mythic Middle East.

Magus Level Shamans?

Troupes with access to *Hedge Magic: Revised Edition* may wish to consider using magus level shamans in their Sagas, either as worthy non-Hermetic adversaries or perhaps even as potential recruits of the Order via House Criamon or Ex-Miscellanea. In either of the historically rooted scenarios detailed above, a powerful shaman might best be represented as Gifted Companion or Mythic Companion variants of Nightwalkers, able to travel by *phantasticum* or spirit-body, similar to the Magyar Taltos. Such Magic-aligned nomad magicians may have access to the Goetic Art of Summoning, the Major Virtue Mythic Herbalism and perhaps some minor powers (Flight, Healing, Premonitions, Skinchanger) commonly attributed to the Folk Witches found in other parts of Mythic Europe (see *Hedge Magic*, pages 33-54 for details of Folk Witches and pages 103-119 for examples of Nightwalker traditions capable of spirit traveling).

Story Seed: The Lost Line of Aquila

At the Rhine Tribunal of 1018, the two remaining members of the Lineage of Hercynius renounced their membership of House Bonisagus and were accepted into House Ex-Miscellanea. Aschlaranda, formerly of Waldherz, reappeared in 1048 with her apprentice Shadrit but was soon declared orbs, founding the covenant of Dankmar in 1052. The fate of the other surviving descendant of Bonisagus' penultimate apprentice is less well known. Even his name is subject to conjecture, although most tales refer to him simply as the Aquila. Legend states he abandoned the fracturing forests, declared himself a Seeker and traveled eastwards in search of untouched magical wilderness to continue his ancestor's project. House Tremere lost contact with him in the littoral steppes north of the Crimea after tracking him through Pannonia as he followed back his Magyar ancestry.

On the third day of the Tribunal held at Durenmar in 1228, a strange apparition appears in the council chamber. The spirit materializes next to the Praeco, as her address is to begin. Witnesses variously describe seeing a translucent man carrying what appears to be a legionary standard, a large eagle or a blurred image of a summation of both forms. The Perdo Vim magics of even Phillipus Niger appear to have little effect on the supposed spirit. Curiously, the Aegis of Durenmar does not appear to have been breached. The apparition merely looks around at the gathering of magic, says nothing and then quickly fades away. Only the elderly Archivist, Xavier of Mercere, seems to recognize the apparition's likeness, later stating the figure resembles the long lost magus, Aquila the Orbus...

Is the apparition Aquila himself or merely a shamanic descendant spirit traveling by *phantasticum*? Is there now a Nightwalker tradition strong enough to challenge the Order of Hermes somewhere out in the Mythic Steppe? Could the lineage of Hercynius have survived? Lost from Hermetic contact for nearly two centuries, would the magic of Aquila's descendants even be recognizable as Hermetic? Where would their allegiance lie — to the Order who abandoned them or to the encroaching nomads of the great grass sea? What ramifications for the Order would ensue if the secret of Parma Magica has been handed down and shared with the hedge magicians of the encroaching hordes?

Appendices

Appendix A: Languages and Names

Given the immense area covered by this book, it is not surprising that a wide range of languages are spoken throughout the region; none of which are particularly related to one another. Each consists of

several distinct regional dialects, which are given in parentheses; most characters should take the appropriate one as a specialty. Educated or well-traveled speakers will have tried hard to rid themselves of their dialect, and may have standard specialties (see ArM5, page 66). When two characters converse in different dialects of the same language they must both subtract one from their Language Ability scores.

Arabic (Egyptian, Khaliji, Levantine, Maghrebi, Maslawi)

Oghuz (Azerbaijani, Ghuzz, Turkish)

Parsi (Bactrian, Baloch, Kurdish, Luri, Pashto, Persian, Sogdian, Tabari)

***Avestan**

*Dead Language

Arabic is the most important of these, as the language of the *Qur'an* and religion, of scholarship, and of the administration in most of the Muslim world, as well as the language most commonly spoken in the western Middle East. The Khaliji dialect is spoken principally in Arabia, whereas the Maslawi dialect is spoken in Iraq and Jibal. The Maghrebi dialect is spoken throughout North Africa. The Arabic language uses the Arabic script.

Parsi is also widely used, especially in the eastern regions, with Persian (Parsik) as its 'court' dialect, and various distinct dialects for Kirman and Makran (Baloch), Mazandaran (Tabari), Khuzistan (Luri), Jibal (Kurdish), and Ghur (Pashto). The Sogdian dialect is spoken in most of Transoxiana and Khwarazm, except for Bactria, where they have their own dialect. Parsi uses an extension of the Arabic script to permit Persian sounds such as 'p' and 'ch'; although ancient texts use the Pahlavi script. Sogdian uses its own Sogdian alphabet. Avestan is the liturgical language of Zoroastrianism, and uses either the older Pahlavi or the more recent Avestan script.

Throughout the Muslim world variants of Oghuz are also spoken by many members of the nobility; Turkish is the dialect most commonly heard in Seljuk-influenced areas, although the Azerbaijani and Ghuzz dialects of Oghuz are sufficiently different from the Turkish dialect to cause some difficulties in understanding. Historically, Oghuz was transliterated in Turkic 'runes', but only the Ghuzz retain this tradition; Turkish is written using the Arabic script.

Other languages that characters may encounter include Hebrew (among Jews), Latin and Greek (especially among scholars), Mongolian, Aramaic (among some Christians of the Jazira and north-west provinces), Ge'ez (among Ethiopian Christians), Georgian, and Armenian. One language that is written and used liturgically but not commonly spoken is Syriac, used by Nestorian and Jacobite Christians.

Muslim Names: Structure

Traditional Muslim names consist of some or all of a number of elements:

1. *Ism*: The name given at birth. This may be an Arabic name, the Qur'anic form of a biblical name, a compound name consisting of "Abd" (servant of) plus one of the names of God (among men; women might use "Amat" in place of "Abd," but this is much less common), or a non-Arabic name.
2. *Nasab*: Pedigree. The *nasab* in Arabic consists of "ibn" (son of) or "bint" (daughter of), followed by either the father's *ism* or a family *ism*.
3. *Kunya*: This is the term "abu" (father of) or "umm" (mother of), prefixed to either the name of

a child or an attribute, acquired either upon becoming a parent or as an epithet. This may appear before the *ism* or after the *nasab*.

4. *Laqab*: An honorific or descriptive title, or occasionally a nickname, often held by nobility, religious notables or other important figures. Many *laqabs* consist of a compound term ending in "al-Din" (of the faith) or "al-Dawla" (of the state), while another common form is to start with "al-Malik" (the king), followed by a descriptive term. Individuals may have more than one *laqab*.

5. *Nisba*: A broad term denoting profession, place of origin or birth, or tribe or family. It can also be a descriptive element. *Nisbas* often begin with the definite article "al-" and end in "i," in the case of men, or "iyya," in the case of women. An individual may have several *nisbas*.

As an example, the full name of Saladin is:

Al-Malik al-Nasir Salah al-Din Abu'l-Muzaffar Yusuf ibn Ayyub ibn Shadhi al-Kurdi

This breaks down into:

- a) Al-Malik al-Nasir (the King who Aids - *laqab*)
- b) Salah al-Din (Righteousness of the Faith - *laqab*)
- c) Abu'l-Muzaffar (father of al-Muzaffar - *kunya*)
- d) Yusuf (Joseph - *ism*)
- e) ibn Ayyub (son of Job - *nasab*)
- f) ibn Shadhi (son of Shadhi - *nasab*)
- g) al-Kurdi (the Kurd - *nisba*)

Persian Names

Muslim name structures are used by Persians; with a few differences. Traditional Persian *isms* tend to replace the Arabic components. The *nasab* is indicated with either "i" rather than "ibn", or else using the suffixes "-pur" or "-zade". *Laqabs* and *nisbas* tend to follow the Muslim model, although often use their Parsi equivalents.

Seljuk Names

The Seljuks have adopted Muslim names, by and large, although traditional Turkic *isms* are used. Either "-oghlu" or "-zade" is suffixed to the father's or family name to form the *nasab*. Sometimes several forbears are given.

Sample Names

A number of sample *isms*, *laqabs* and *nisbas* are given below. Other Muslim names may be found both in this book and in many history books about the Middle East.

Sample Muslim *Isms*

Men's *isms*: 'Abd Allah, 'Abd al-Rahman, Ahmad, 'Ali, Asad, Ayyub, Bakr, Badar, Dawud, Dirgham, Fadl, Ghassan, Ghazi, Harith, Harun, al-Hasan, al-Husayn, Ibrahim, 'Isa, Ishaq, Isma'il, Ja'far, Jamil, Kathir, Khalid, Khalil, Labid, Mahmud, Muhammad, Nu'man, Qasim, Rashid, Ridwan, Salih, Salim, Shibl, Sulayman, Tahir, Tamim, Tariq, Thabit, 'Umar, Usama, 'Uthman, Wahhab, Yahya, Yusuf, Zayd, Zibyan, Zubayr.

Women's *isms*: 'A'isha, Amina, Anisa, Bilqis, Busra, Dhakira, Duba'a, Dujaja, Durra, Fadila, Fatima, Ghazala, Ghaytha, Habiba, Hajir, Hakima, Hind, Jamila, Jumana, Kabira, Kabsha, Khadija, Khalila, Layla, Lubaba, Maryam, Maymuna, Nasiba, Nawal, Nawar, Qamra', Rabi'a, Rahima, Sa'da, Safiyya, Salma, al-Shafa', Shayma', Sumayta, Taliha, Tarifa, Tayma, Thubayta, 'Unayza, Walida, Yasira, Yasmina, Zahira, Zahra, Zaynab.

Sample Persian *Isms*

Men's *isms*: Alborz, Arash, Arastoo, Ardashir, Babak, Bahadur, Bahman, Bahram, Baraz, Behnam, Behram, Behruz, Dariush, Daryush, Delshad, Ebrahim, Esmail, Faridoon, Firdaus, Firuz, Gulzar, Heydar, Jahan, Jahangir, Jamshad, Javid, Khodadad, Khorshid, Khwaja, Kianoush, Massoud, Mehrdad, Mirza, Navid, Omid, Papak, Parvaiz, Payam, Rashne, Roshan, Rustam, Shahin, Shahjahan, Shahpur, Shahriar, Shahrivar, Shahriyar, Shahrokh, Shahzad, Sher, Siavush, Sohrab, Urvakhsha, Zhubin

Women's *isms*: Arzu, Atefeh, Azar, Bahar, Banu, Elaheh, Firuza, Ghoncheh, Gul, Gulbahar, Gulistan, Jaleh, Laleh, Mahin, Mahine, Mahtab, Mahvash, Minoo, Minu, Mojgan, Morvarid, Naheed, Nahid, Nasrin, Nilofar, Nousha, Paniz, Parastu, Pari, Parisa, Parvana, Parvin, Roshanak, Roshanara, Roshni, Sahar, Sanaz, Shabnam, Shahnaz, Shahrazad, Shideh, Shirin, Shohreh, Shokufeh, Simin, Tahirih, Yasamin, Zareen, Ziba

Sample Seljuk *Isms*

Men's *isms*: Adem, Ahmed, Ahmet, Alp, Altan, Asil, Aslan, Aydin, Baris, Berk, Berkant, Berker, Bulut, Bünyamin, Burak, Çağatay, Can, Coskun, Direnç, Ediz, Emin, Emir, Emre, Ender, Engin, Erdem, Eren, Erol, Firat, Göker, Hakan, Hikmet, Ibrahim, İlhami, İlker, İlkin, Kadri, Koray, Kudret, Levent, Mehmed, Mehmet, Metin, Muhammet, Murat, Musa, Ömer, Onur, Osman, Ozan, Özgür, Savas, Selim, Serhan, Serhat, Serkan, Soner, Temel, Tolga, Tunç, Turgay, Ufuk, Umut, Volkan, Yakup, Yavuz, Zeki

Women's *isms*: Asli, Aygül, Aylın, Ayşe, Aysel, Aysu, Aysun, Basak, Belgin, Berna, Bilge, Burcu, Canan, Ceren, Deniz, Derya, Dilara, Dilek, Ebru, Ece, Eda, Ekin, Elif, Elmas, Emel, Emine, Esen, Esin, Fidan, Filiz, Gizem, Gonca, Gözde, Gül, Gülay, Gülbahar, Gülistan, Hande, Havva, Hazan, Ipek, Irmak, Kelebek, Kiraz, Meryem, Müge, Nergis, Nesrin, Nilüfer, Nuray, Özge, Özlem, Pembe, Pinar, Şebnem, Sevda, Sevgi, Simge, Tülay, Tutku, Yağmur, Yeter, Yıldız, Yonca, Zeynep

Sample Laqabs

Given their predominance in government, *laqabs* are most commonly used by men.

Men's *laqabs*: 'Imad al-Din (Support of the Faith), 'Izz al-Din (Power of the Faith), Nur al-Din (Light of the Faith), Salah al-Din (Righteousness of the Faith), Sharaf al-Din (Honor of the Faith), Baha' al-Dawla (Beauty of the State), Majd al-Dawla (Glory of the State), Nasir al-Dawla (Aid of the State), Sayf al-Dawla (Sword of the State), Shams al-Dawla (Sun of the State), Nizam al-Mulk (Order of the Kingdom), Fakhr al-Mulk (Pride of the Kingdom), Taj al-Muluk (Crown of Kings), al-Malik al-'Adil (the Just King), al-Malik al-Afdal (the Most Excellent King), al-Malik al-Kamil (the Perfect King), al-Malik al-Nasir (the King who Aids), al-Malik al-Salih (the Righteous King).

Women's *laqabs*: Walidat Khalil (Mother of Khalil — used by the Mamluk *sultana* Shajar al-Durr (r. 1250), indicating her being mother to the son of al-Salih II Ayyub), Radiyyat al-Din (Approval of the Faith).

Sample *Nisbas*

Men's *nisbas*: al-Kufi (of Kufa), al-Makki (of Mecca), al-Isfahani (of Isfahan), al-Farisi (of Persia), al-Khwarizmi (of Khwarizm), al-Kalbi (of the tribe of Kalb), al-Khazraji (of the tribe of Khazraj), al-Qaysi (of the tribe of Qays), al-Shaybani (of the tribe of Shayban), al-Ayyubi (of the family of Ayyub), al-Kutubi (the bookseller), al-Qalanisi (the hat-maker), al-Suyufi (the swordmaker), al-Shafi'i (follower of the Shafi'i school of law), al-Mutanabbi (claiming to be a prophet).

Women's *nisbas* appear in the masculine or feminine forms in historical sources, depending on whether the author regards them as being part of the woman's name or the patrilineal genealogy. Generally if the *kunya* is placed after the *nasabs*, the *nisbas* will be in the feminine. The feminine forms of the above are: al-Kufiyya, al-Makkiyya, al-Isfahaniyya, al-Farisiyya, al-Khwarizmiyya, al-Kalbiyya, al-Khazrajiyya, al-Qaysiyya, al-Shaybaniyya, al-Ayyubiyya, al-Kutubiyya, al-Qalanisiyya, al-Suyufiyya, al-Shafi'iyya, al-Mutanabbiyya.

Appendix B: Timeline

B.C.

c. 950 Suleiman first practices his Art in the Middle East

650 Birth of Zoroaster.

550–330 The Achaemenid Empire, founded by Cyrus The Great and ended by Alexander the Great; at its height it encompasses Anatolia, Mythic Persia, the Levant, as well as Transoxiana and Egypt, and also engages in significant territorial disputes with the Greek City States.

539 Destruction of Babylon by Persians under Cyrus the Great.

c. 500 Cult of Hermes at its height.

323 Death of Alexander the Great.

312–61 The Seleucid Empire of Persia, one of the successor states of the empire established by Alexander the Great.

A.D.

224 Ardeshir I defeats the Parthian king and becomes the first ruler of the Sasanid dynasty of Persia.

412 Cult of Mercury disbanded.

c. 570 Birth of Muhammad.

610 Muhammad receives first revelation.

622 Muhammad emigrates from Mecca to Medina. Date of start of Muslim calendar.

630 Muhammad takes Mecca.

632 Death of Muhammad. Abu Bakr caliph.

632–644 Muslims take Syria, the Holy Land and Egypt.

634 Death of Abu Bakr. 'Umar caliph.

637–651 The Islamic Conquest of Persia, leading to the end of both Sasanid rule and Zoroastrian dominance.

644 Death of 'Umar. 'Uthman caliph.

644–671 Muslims take Khurasan.

656 Death of 'Uthman. 'Ali caliph.

661 Death of 'Ali. Mu'awiya first caliph of Umayyad dynasty.

680 Battle of Karbala', death of al-Husayn.

c. 700: The first Solomonic summoners swear service to the Umayyad caliphs

707 Muslims take North Africa.

712 Muslims invade Spain.

717 Muslims cross Pyrenees into France.

c. 720: Umayyad summoners and jinn at war

732 Muslims defeated by Franks under Charles Martel at Poitiers.

746: Jinn lay siege to Damascus

750 Fall of Umayyad caliphate. Al-Saffah first 'Abbasid caliph.

762 Foundation of Baghdad.

767 Order of Hermes founded.

786–809 Reign of Harun al-Rashid.

786: Harun al-Rashid becomes caliph, invites scholars to serve as viziers on his "Solomonic" council.

787: First Council of Harun al-Rashid established.

789: Grand vizier Al-Khayzuran dies. Yahya ibn Khalid retires, Ja'far ibn Yahya becomes grand vizier.

802 Foundation of the first Hermetic covenant in the Levant.

803: Grand Vizier Ja'far beheaded, Yahya imprisoned

848 Sundering of House Tremere.

805: The Suhhar Sulayman established in Baghdad with the first meeting of the Majlis al-Sulayman.

865 Foundation of the Eastern (later Levant) Tribunal.

925: Iberian sahors split from the Suhhar Sulayman.

945 Persian Buyids take control of Baghdad and the caliphate.

961 Execution of Tasgillia.

1003–1012 Schism War.

1009 Ferdowsi finishes the *Shahnameh*, the Persian "Book of Kings."

1037 The Seljuk Togril Beg unites the Turkomen tribes of the Great Steppe and invades Persia. In 1055 he takes Baghdad, and assumes control over the caliph and the armies of the 'Abbasid caliphate. His successor Alp Arslan extends the sultanate to Anatolia, Armenia, and Georgia.

1090 Hasan-i Sabbah takes Alamut.

1092 Death of Malik Shah and partial fragmentation of the Seljuk Sultanate between his sons.

1095–1109 First Crusade; soldiers from Europe take much of Levantine coast and establish states at Antioch, Edessa, Tripoli and Jerusalem.

1131 Ahmed Sanjar, son of Malik Shah, consolidates control over the western Seljuk Empire.

1144 Zangi takes Edessa.

1147–1148 Second Crusade fails to take Damascus.

1149 Shansabani coup in Khurasan lead by Ala'uddin Hussain, also called Jahansoz — 'World Burner'.

1151 Ghuzz invade south-eastern Persia, capture Sultan Ahmed Sanjar and hold him captive for three years

1157 'Abbasid caliph al-Muqtafi (r. 1136–1160) successfully defends Baghdad from Seljuks, securing independence of the caliphate.

1174–1187 Saladin unites Muslim Levant, takes Jerusalem and much of coast from crusaders.

1180–1225 Reign of the 'Abbasid caliph al-Nasir.

1189–1192 Third Crusade secures territory on coast but fails to take Jerusalem.

1194 Tekish, the ruler of Khwarazm, defeats Togril III, ending Seljuk rule of Persia.

1195 Most recent Grand Tribunal held.

1202–1204 Fourth Crusade takes Constantinople.

1205 Ala al-Din (son of Tekish) conquers Persia and proclaims himself *shah* (emperor).

1206 Shansabani Sultan Mohammed al-Ghuri assassinated on the banks of the River Sind by a Nizari; the Khwarazm-shah forces the Shansabani to concede control of Khurasan.

1212 Ala al-Din adds Transoxanian territories to his empire and now rules all the land from the Jaxartes to the Tigris.

1218–1221 Crusaders temporarily hold territory in Egypt.

1219–1227 Mongols under Genghis Khan take eastern Persia.

1230–1240 Mongols take western Persia, Georgia, Armenia and northern Iraq.

- 1243 Mongols overwhelm Seljuk sultan of Asia Minor.
- 1248–1250 Crusaders under St Louis temporarily hold territory in Egypt.
- 1256 Mongols destroy strongholds of Persian Assassins.
- 1258 Mongols take Baghdad, put caliph to death.
- 1260 Mamluks halt Mongol advance in Syria.
- 1261 Byzantines retake Constantinople. 'Abbasid caliphate re-established in Cairo.
- 1265 Mongols establish protectorate over Seljuk Asia Minor.
- 1268–1291 Mamluks gradually re-conquer coast from crusaders.
- 1273 Mamluks destroy last of Assassins' strongholds in Syria.
- 1281 Mamluks defeat renewed Mongol invasion in Syria.
- 1295 Mongol khan of Persia becomes Muslim.

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Beasts of the East

This bestiary complements *The Cradle and the Crescent: the Mythic Middle East* and adds to the

creatures presented in the online PDF *The Book of Mundane Beasts* that are also found in the Appendix of *Realms of Power: Magic*, pages 140-144.

Ass (Donkey)

A common site in the Mythic Middle East, the ass is used as a beast of burden within cities and near more populated areas as it is ill suited to desert crossings. The sterile mule or hinny, cross-bred with the Arabian horse, is commonly used as a pack animal or mount and more resilient to long journeys.

Ass (Donkey)

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

Size: +2

Confidence Score: 1(3)

Virtues and Flaws: Ferocity (consumed by lust), Improved Characteristics, Long-Winded; Noncombatant

Qualities: Defensive Fighter, Domesticated, Hardy

Personality Traits: Lustful +3, Meek +2

Reputations: Brutish (local) 2

Combat:

Hooves: Init +0, Attack +5, Defense +4, Damage +5.

Soak: +4

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-7), -3 (8-14), -5 (16-21), Incapacitated (22-28), Dead (29+)

Abilities: Athletics (climb) 3, Awareness 3 (predators), Brawl (dodge) 4

Appearance: These statistics describe a typical domesticated ass or donkey.

Rare Bjornaer magi born in the Levant have been noted with a donkey Heartbeast of melancholic humor with a choleric aspect, but such individuals always take the wild versions of these animals, the *onager*, known as the *koulan* in the Mythic Middle East (see below), as noted in *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, "The Heartbeast", pages 18-24.

Koulan (Onager or Wild Ass): lose the Domesticated Quality and Noncombatant Flaw. Add the Herd Animal Quality. Change the Personality traits to: Jealous +4 and Wild +3. Add the Envious (Minor) Flaw. Add Survival (desert) 5. The koulan's hooves have the following combat statistics: Init +0, Attack +5, Defense +4, Damage +5.

Mule: add Improved Characteristics x2, increase Strength and Stamina to +5, decrease Dexterity and Quickness by one each. Add the Tireless Quality and an extra Fatigue Level. Gain the Great Bearer and Tough Virtues and suffer the Pack Mentality / Follower Flaw. Change Personality Traits to Stubborn +3 and Plodding +2. Reputation changes to Hardy 2 (throughout Mythic Middle East). Soak is increased to +8 and a mule's kick has the following combat statistics: Init -1, Attack +4, Defense +3, Damage +6.

Camel, Bactrian (Ship of the Desert)

The two-humped Bactrian camel predominates throughout the wider Mythic Middle east and differs

slightly from its cousin, the single humped dromedary, which is more common in north Africa, Egypt, Arabia and the Levant. Wild camels are rare, although wild Bactrian camels can be found in the far eastern reaches.

Camel, Bactrian (Ship of the Desert)

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

Size: +2

Confidence Score: 0 (0)

Virtues and Flaws: Long-Winded; Feral Scent

Qualities: Hardy, Herd Animal

Reputations: Ill-tempered beast +3 (throughout Mythic Middle East)

Combat:

Kick (hooves): Init +0, Attack +3, Defense +2, Damage +4

Soak: +4

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

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

Abilities: Athletics 4 (running), Awareness 3 (predators), Brawl 2 (dodging), Survival 5 (home terrain).

Powers:

Smell Water, 0 points, Init 0, all camels can smell drinkable water for a distance up to two miles.

Survive Without Water, 0 points, Init 0: all camels can survive without water for up to two weeks.

Appearance: These statistics are for a typical Bactrian riding camel. Known for their stubbornness, resilience and pungent odor, these otherwise docile animals can become very aggressive during mating times. Their ability to last without water for weeks on end and locate buried water makes them the preferred beast of burden for desert crossings.

Camels have been bred, like horses, to have differing traits:

Bactrian Pack Camel: add the Domesticated Quality and gain the Great Bearer Minor Heroic Virtue (*Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, page 105) which allows the camel to carry twice as much on its back before becoming weighed down and to travel twice as far before becoming fatigued by a journey. Lose the Survival Ability. Most Bactrian camels found in the great caravans are pack camels.

Wild Bactrian Camel: add the Wilderness Sense Virtue and the Greater Immunity: Thirst Virtue. Reduce Communication to -6. Add Defensive Fighter (and therefore an extra Fatigue level), Fast Runner and Herd Animal Qualities. Increase Brawl (dodging) to 4 and add Wilderness Sense (sense sandstorms) 3. A wild Bactrian camel's kick has the following statistics: Init +0 Attack +5 Defense +3 Damage +4.

War Camel (variant): add the Aggressive and Pack Animal Qualities and the Ferocity (when ridden in battle) Virtue. Increase Brawl (hooves) to 5. A war camel's kick has the following modifications to the basic combat statistics given for either the Bactrian camel or a dromedary camel: Init +0 Attack +4 Defense +3 Damage +0. It can be trained to attack as part of a Trained Group with its rider.

Dromedary Camel: decrease above Strength to +1, Stamina to +3 and increase Dex to 0. Lose the Long-Winded Virtue and the Feral Scent Flaw. Lose the Hardy Quality and decrease Fatigue Levels by one. Reputation is Cranky +1 (much of Arabia). Change combat statistics to: Init 0, Attack +4, Defense +2, Damage +2 and Soak +3. Change to Survival 3 (home terrain). Full statistics for dromedary camels are given in *Magi of Hermes*, pages 10-11.

Rare Bjornaer magi born in the southeastern peripheries of Mythic Europe have been noted with a dromedary or even

wild Bactrian camel Heartbeast. Camels are considered to have a melancholic humor with a choleric aspect.

Elephant

The elephant was considered a prize war animal by the Persian armies of antiquity. Small numbers are still found throughout the eastern reaches in the possession of nobles or the Khwarazm military, the former as curiosities and the latter as part of shock troops. Elephants are legendary opponents of dragons and fearlessly attack serpents at any opportunity but are deathly afraid of the squeal of a sow or boar and will flee this sound without restraint.

Elephant

Characteristics: Cun 0, Per +1, Pre -4, Com -5, Str +10, Sta +3, Dex 0, Qik -2

Size: +4

Confidence Score: 0 (0)

Virtues and Flaws: Improved Characteristics x3, Tough; Fear (the squeal of a pig).

Qualities: Amphibious, Crafty, Defensive Fighter, Grapple, Herd Animal, Sharp Ears, Thick Skin, Tough Hide.

Personality Traits: Lustful -3, Wise +2

Combat:

Stomp: Init -2, Attack +4, Defense +2, Damage +13

Trunk (grapple): Init -1, Attack +4, Defense +2, Damage n/a

Soak: +9

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

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

Abilities: Athletics 3 (running), Awareness 3 (food), Brawl 4 (dodge), Survival 3 (forests or plains), Swimming 4 (rivers).

Powers:

Trunk, 0 points, constant, Animal: the elephant's trunk can be used to manipulate objects like a human hand, although tasks requiring two hands suffer a -3 penalty.

Natural Weapons: an elephant's stomp has the following combat characteristics: Init -1, Attack 0, Defense -1, Damage +3. Their trunk is only effective as a grapple.

Appearance: the elephant found throughout the Mythic Middle East is the Asian variety. It stands up to 10 feet tall, measures 20 feet long and weighs up to 8,000 pounds. Only the male elephant has significantly sized tusks to use in combat.

Elephants have excellent hearing and vibration sense through its trunk, gaining a +3 on all rolls involving hearing. An average elephant inflicts +15 damage when dropped onto a human-sized character from on high.

Bull elephant (dominant male): add Aggressive and change to Brawl 5 (tusks). Add the Extra Natural Weapons, Imposing Appearance x2 and Large Horns (Tusks), and Herd Leader Qualities and the Ferocity (defending herd) Virtue. Increase Presence to +1 and Communication to -4. Add Leadership 5 (elephants). A bull elephant's Tusk attack has the following combat statistics: Init +1, Attack +9, Defense +5, Damage +13.

War elephant: add the Aggressive and Pack Animal Qualities. Change to Brawl 5 (stomp) and increase the elephant's Stomp attack: Init -2, Attack +6, Defense +3, Damage +13. Persian war elephants are usually clad in the equivalent of leather or metal scale (add Protection of 3 or more to Soak) and carry a platform known as a howdah which can accommodate up to six soldiers armed with javelins, pole arms or bows. They can be trained to fight as part of a Trained Group with their squad of accompanying soldiers under the direction of their mahout or driver.

Story Seed: Elephants of Alexander and Hannibal

The ghosts of ancient war elephants can be summoned at the battles sites of antiquity throughout Arabia, Persia, and Transoxiana, using their bones to call them back to unearthly service. Such sites are of particular interest to House Tremere, who seek to expand the versatility and power of their ghostly forces.

Faerie war elephants from the land of Hind, as used in the armies of Alexander the Great, appear even larger and more fearsome than their mundane kin. Such creatures sport multiple large curved tusk and have been trained to wield spiked balls on chains with their trunks. They prompt panic in lesser creatures and are capable of deafening opponents with their trumpeting. The remains of these giant creatures are found primarily in the far mountains of the eastern provinces and the southern deserts of Persia.

Examples of the elephants once used by the Carthaginians can still be found occasionally in Egypt and North Africa but are rarely encountered in the Hijaz and Yemen provinces of Arabia. Both sexes sport large curved tusks and large ears, standing taller than their more common eastern brethren, being typically Size +5 or larger.

Falcon, Saqr

Similar to its European cousin the gyrfalcon, detailed in *The Book of Mundane Beasts, Realms of Power* page 142 or *Lords of Men* XREF, the hawk most commonly used by Arabian falconers is the *saqr*. Known for its endurance rather than its speed, the *saqr* is reflected by the following modifications: add the Tireless Quality and the Long-Winded Virtue. Exceptional *saqr*, especially prized by the nomad sheikhs possess the Puissant Hunt Virtue and the Imposing Appearance x2 Quality.

Shahin: these smaller hawks are equivalent to the peregrine falcons of Europe. These Size -4 raptors are the fastest falcons but have much less endurance. They excel in catching smaller birds on the wing but are less suited for desert hawking. Increase the basic falcon's Quickness by 1 but subtract 2 from Strength, change to Ambush Predator, add Stealth 3 (ambush prey), decrease to Flight 3 (climbing flight) and modify their combat statistics accordingly.

Golden Eagles: used by the eastern Turks and Mongols, the large *burkit* (Size -2) are used to hunt foxes and can even be trained to attack wolves. Such eagles have the additional Qualities: Grapple and Imposing Appearance x2. Over-sized eagles (up to Size 0) are sometimes used by the Ghuzz magic-kin and have their characteristics modified accordingly for their size (see Chapter 8: Persia).

Flying Serpent (Iaculus)

The flying serpents known to Pliny as *syrenii* are found in great numbers in southern Arabia and even on the legendary island of Soqotra to the far south of Yemen. The Arabian snakes are typically white in coloration with bat-like wings, an individual *syrenus* may sport a pair of short legs. These snakes perch in the incense trees of Hadramawt and are known for the darting attack, leaping out of trees onto passing prey. Flocks of *syrenii* attempt to migrate into Egypt each year, only to be destroyed by their natural enemies, the ibises. See Chapter 6: Arabia for further details of these creatures.

Hermetic magi refer to these snakes as *iaculii* but most mundanes call them “javelin-snakes” or “darters” due to their unusually rapid and lethal method of attack. As the ibis is linked to Thoth and therefore Hermes, most Hermetic magi consider an *iaculus* an ill-omened creature but at least one Quaesitor uses them as aids to his investigations. Exceptional *syrenii* are believed to have additional powers allowing them to ignore wards and other protection magic in order to deliver their venom but these claims have yet to be investigated by Hermetic magi. Their exact relationship to the magical Olibanum Serpents of Soqotra is unclear but the Arabian serpents are much less sociable than their kin and appear resistant to being tamed short of magical means. It is not known whether the *syrenii* originated on Soqotra or the more aggressive variety represents a more primitive species that was then imported from the mainland.

Syrenii use the base statistics for Adders listed in The Book of Mundane Beasts or Realms of Power: Magic, page 141, modified accordingly: increase Quickness to +4; gain ability to fly; add Ferocity (when leaping) and Improved Characteristics Virtues; add the Fast Flyer and Good Jumper Qualities; add Athletics 4 (jumping). Any character that makes a Intelligence + Magic Lore or Intelligence + Arabia Lore roll against an Ease Factor of 9 will recall that these creatures can be scattered by burning the resin of the storax tree.

Gazelle, Persian

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

Size: -1

Virtues and Flaws: Improved Abilities, Long Winded, Well-Traveled; Compassionate

Qualities: Defensive Fighter, Fast Runner, Herd Leader*, Keen Eyesight, Large Horns*, Herd Animal, Tireless

* males only

Personality Traits: Gentle +3

Combat:

Horns: Init +5, Attack +8, Defense +9, Damage +1

Dodge: Init +3, Attack n/a, Defense +10, Damage n/a

Soak: +4

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

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

Abilities: Athletics 4 (running), Awareness 3 (predators), Brawl 4 (dodging), Dasht-i Kavir Lore 4 (finding water), Leadership 5 (gazelles)*, Survival 3 (semi-desert)

* males only

Appearance: a small, delicate antelope with fawn hide; its flanks are marked with a dark stripe. The male has horns that it uses to defend itself.

The gazelle (Arabic *ghazal*), is called 'dorcas' in the western bestiaries. It has exceptionally sharp sight (+3 to vision-related rolls) and swift (+3 to running-related rolls). Only the male gazelle engages in combat; when forced to do so he temporarily gains the Ferocity Virtue (grants 3 temporary Confidence Points). It is common in the Dasht-i Kavir of Persia.

Giant of 'Ad

Descendants of Great 'Ad, the giants of southern Arabia are colossal magical creatures from pre-Islamic times. Descended from Noah's third son, they dwell within magic regiones deep within the deserts of Oman since the loss of their greatest creation, the fabled City of a Thousand Pillars. Unlike many magical creatures, the 'Adites are not immortal and weaken if they spend too much time outside strong desert Magic auras.

Giant of 'Ad

Magic Might: 20 (Corpus)

Season: Autumn

Characteristics: Int 0, Per +2, Pre -1, Com -1, Str +13, Sta 0, Dex +1, Qik -4.

Size: +7

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Human; Improved Characteristics, Magical Champion, Ways of the Desert; Pagan; Anchored to the Desert; (Magical) Animal Companion, Offensive to Spirits.

Magic Qualities and Inferiorities: Gigantic x6; Focus Power, 3 points; Monstrous Appearance (free); Acclimation Prone; Susceptible to Deprivation.

Personality Traits: Proud +2, Focused -1

Combat:

Chisel (as knife): Init -4, Attack +3, Defense -2, Damage +15

Stomp (kick): Init -5, Attack +4, Defense -1, Damage +16

Soak: +3

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-12), -3 (13-24), -5 (25-36), Incapacitated (37-48), Dead (49+)

Abilities: Animal Handling 2 (falconry), Arabia Lore 6 (cities), 'Adid 5 (ancient), Bargain 3 (payment for services), Brawl 2 (stomp), Craft (stonemason) 6, Magic Lore 4 (Arabia), Survival 3 (desert).

Powers:

Stonesmith, 1-4 points, Init -4, Terram; duplicates any non-Ritual Creo Terram, Intellego Terram or Muto Terram spell less than or equal to 20th level that affects stone at a cost of 1 Might point per magnitude of effect.

Equipment: mason's tools, sand-colored Bedouin robes

Vis: 1 pawn of Corpus vis in heart, 1 pawn of Terram vis in each hand.

Appearance: towering above the average human, a giant of 'Ad stands over 30 feet tall but appears much more civilized than the primitive giants of Europe. They have an affinity for falcons and other birds of prey and are usually found accompanied by at least one nesting within their long hair or beard. Lone giants emerge from the deep desert to offer their building skills to sorcerers and emirs in return for insights into the secrets of eternal life.

A giant of 'Ad is balanced as a starting character, albeit a powerful initial Companion option. This character guide has 295 Experience Points available to spend on Abilities and 5 Virtue points free (to be balanced with 5 points of Flaws).

His falcon companion may be either mundane or magical, although proportionately larger (up to Size +3) and has its statistics adjusted accordingly.

Heavenly Horse of Farghana

Faerie Might: 5 (Animal)

Characteristics: Cun -2, Per 0, Pre +2, Com -4, Str +5, Sta +4, Dex +1, Qik +3

Size: +2

Confidence Score: 0

Virtues and Flaws: External Vis (minor, bloody sweat), Faerie Beast, Ferocity (when ridden in battle), Long Winded, Improved Characteristic x3, Positive Reputation, Unaffected by the Gift; Incognizant, Proud (minor), Susceptible to Deprivation.

Qualities: Amphibious, Domesticated, Fast Runner, Good Jumper, Herd Animal, Imposing Appearance x3, Tireless.

Personality Traits: Spirited +3, Loyal +2

Reputations: Dragon-steed 2 (local)

Combat:

Hooves: Init +4, Attack +2, Defense +6, Damage +6

Soak: +4

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

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

Pretenses: Athletics 4 (long-distance running), Awareness 3 (noises), Brawl 2 (hooves), Swim 4 (rivers).

Powers:

Heavenly Hooves (2 points, Constant, Animal, R: Per, Dur: Sun, T: Ind). This power allows the animal to move at its maximum speed, unimpeded by poor terrain, achieving up to 30 miles per day. It may even do this across open water or chasms without needing to slow its pace. (ReAn 25 (Base 10, Sun +2, +1 Constant): Personal Power (25 levels)).

Appearance: these horses appear similar to other mid-sized breeds of charger, although even an experienced horse trainer will find it difficult to ascertain its origin. Usual specimens stand just under 16 hands (62 inches) high but appear more refined than even the finest mundane horse.

Prized for their use as steeds for Gifted wizards, these Faerie mounts are believed to be descended from river dragons east of the valley of Farghana (See Chapter 9: Transoxiana and Beyond XREF). Unlike mundane horses, they are not affected by the negative effects of The Gift or Magical Air of their riders. Even a Blatant Gift does not especially bother the animal.

These Faerie horses are also renowned for their unusual trait of sweating blood. The crimson sweat is produced by any significant physical exertion but does no harm to the creature. If properly collected over the course of a year, such sweat acts as a Vis Source and provides 1 pawn of faerie-tainted Animal vis per year. As a faerie, it does not suffer from fatigue or age, although it does suffer the usual consequences if it lacks air, food, and water in its role as a magical steed.

Like all horses, a Heavenly Horse gets a +3 to all rolls involving running or jumping.

These creatures are not balanced to be used as a player characters.

Horse, Steppe Pony (Turpanus)

The majority of horses used in the Eastern Provinces are the small but hardy steppe ponies of the nomad tribes of the Steppe. They are notably different to the larger breeds commonly used in Europe, Arabia and southern Persia presented in the *Book of Mundane Beasts* and *Lords of Men*, Chapter 5: Leisure XREF.

Horse, Steppe Pony (Turpanus)

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

Size: +1

Confidence Score: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Enduring Constitution, Long Winded, Improved Characteristic; Simple-Minded

Personality Traits: Brave +2

Reputations: Hardy 1 (local)

Combat:

Kick: Init +5, Attack 0, Defense +5, Damage +3

Soak: +4

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

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

Abilities: Athletics 4 (long-distance running), Survival 3 (steppe)

Appearance: slightly smaller than their European cousins, these hardy ponies range in coloration from light grey through to dappled brown.

Steppe ponies are bred from the wild horses of the Steppe by the various nomad tribes that range across it. Exceptional Steppe ponies with the Minor Heroic Virtues Great Bearer and Sure Traveler (see *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, pages 105-107) are highly prized by the Steppe nomads. Like all light horses, a Steppe pony is a fast runner and gets a +3 to rolls involving running or jumping.

Hyrceanian Tiger

Magic Might: 10 (Animal)

Season: Spring

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

Size: 0

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Animal; Affinity with Athletics, Improved Characteristics, Puissant Athletics; Proud

Magical Qualities and Inferiorities: No Fatigue; Improved Abilities (x3), Improved Attack (trip), Minor Virtue (Great Quickness) (x2), Personal Power

Qualities: Crafty, Fast Runner, Pursuit Predator, Tireless*

*a magical Hyrcanian tiger suffers no fatigue, but a mundane tiger has this Quality

Personality Traits: Vain +5, Swift* +3, Brave +1

*this is an Essential Trait; see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 54

Combat:

Bite: Init +5, Attack +11, Defense +12, Damage +1

Trip: Init +4, Attack +11, Defense +13, Damage n/a*

*if the tiger exceeds its opponent's Defense Total by 3; it is knocked prone

Soak: +2

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

Abilities: Athletics 6+2 (running), Awareness 3 (gazelle), 5 (bite), Dasht-i Kavir Lore 3 (oases), Hunt 4 (gazelle), Survival 3 (semi-desert)

Powers:

Swiftness of Thought, 1 point, Init +4, Animal: A Hyrcanian tiger can naturally move at incredible speeds, but by spending a Might point it moves an extra 500 paces for a single round. ReAn 20 (base 20, by analogy with ReCo) Personal Power (20 levels, -1 Might cost)

Vis: 2 pawns Animal, in feet.

Appearance: the Hyrcanian tiger is a long-legged tawny cat, about seven feet long (including a three foot tail), and weighing about 150 pounds. Tigers in Mythic Europe have spots rather than stripes, although naturally you can have striped tigers in your saga if you prefer.

Hyrcanian Tigers are found in Mazandaran and Persia's northern desert. The tiger is named after its swift flight (coming from a word meaning 'arrow'), and gives its name to the Tigris River. The ancient Persian kings loved keeping Hyrcanian tigers as pets, and used to set hunters to steal cubs. The pursuing mother could be distracted by glass spheres; seeing her own reflection she would think it was her cub and be cheated from her revenge. The tiger receives a +3 to all rolls involving running.

For a mundane version of this creature, remove the Might score, Magical Qualities, Powers, and vis from the above description. A Hyrcanian tiger is normally more swift than the fastest horse even without magical powers; approximately 92 paces in a single round. Its prey's only hope to escape is to dodge and weave, since the Hyrcanian tiger cannot make sharp turns when traveling at full speed. It is in the magical tiger's nature to hunt, and it consumes its prey — principally gazelles — even though, as a magic animal, it doesn't need this to survive.

Mundane Mongols

The following statistics represent the mundane historical versions of the Mongol forces invading Transoxiana and Eastern Persia and first appeared in *Ancient Magic*, pages 15-18. For alternate ideas on the nomad horde see Chapter 9: Transoxiana and Beyond.

Mongol Trooper

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

Size: 0

Age: 30

Virtues and Flaws: Puissant Ability (Ride), Puissant Ability (Bows), Warrior; Reckless; Disfigured (scars), Infamous

Personality Traits: Brave +3, Reckless +3, Loyal +3

Reputations: Murderous 4 (local)

Combat:

Dagger: Init +0, Attack +7, Defense +6, Damage +4

Composite Bow (mounted): Init +0, Attack +16, Defense +13, Damage +8

Composite Bow (on foot): Init -2, Attack +13, Defense +10, Damage +8

Saber (mounted): Init +4, Attack +14, Defense +12, Damage +7

Saber (on foot): Init +2, Attack +11, Defense +9, Damage +7

Spear (mounted): Init +4, Attack +11, Defense +10, Damage +6

Spear (on foot): Init +2, Attack +8, Defense +7, Damage +6

Soak: +4 (armor and Stamina)

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

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

Abilities: Animal Handling 3 (horses), Area Lore (Mythic Steppe) 3 (geography), Area Lore (Transoxiana) 2 (geography), Area Lore (Persia) 2 (geography), Athletics 3 (running), Awareness 2 (in combat), Bargain 2 (livestock), Bows 5+2 (composite), Brawl 3 (dagger), Craft Bows 3, Hunt 3 (tracking), Mongolian 5 (military communication), Ride 3+2 (battle), Single Weapon 5 (saber), Survival 3 (steppe)

Equipment: composite bow (Load +2), metal reinforced leather half-armor (Load +2), saber (Load +1), daggers, spear (Load +1)

Encumbrance: 2 (3)

Appearance: A fierce-looking eastern warrior on horseback, his upper body lightly covered by fur-lined leather armor, with an acorn-like metal helmet also fringed with fur. He carries a bow in a quiver on his saddle, a saber, and a short spear with a small hook at the base of the blade.

While there are younger soldiers in the Mongol army, this trooper represents the finest specimen that the characters are likely to encounter, the sort of character who would fight in the van during a group engagement or who might be found singly acting as a scout or guard.

Experienced generals, usually regular warriors with exceptional talent rather than blood relatives of the Mongol royal family or hereditary chieftains, lead such troopers. The Mongolian generals are experts in strategy and tactics, and most of their successes may be attributed to their superior military intelligence and their ability to quickly assess the nature of the battlefield. Many of their enemies are fooled by a carefully staged organized retreat, their finest maneuver, wherein they seem to pull back and draw their opponents out behind them in a long pursuit to exhaust them, before suddenly turning around and attacking.

An *orlock* (Mongol general) can be created as an older Companion level character based on the Mongol trooper template above, with the following changes as an example. Adjust the characteristics to Int 0, Per +1, Pre +2 (1), Com +1, Str 0, Sta +2, Dex +1, Qik 0 due to possession of the Improved Characteristics Virtue. An example orlock might have the following additional Virtues and Flaws: Affinity with Leadership, Clear Thinker, Improved Characteristics, Inspirational, Puissant Ability (Leadership), Self-Confident, Strong-Willed; Enemies (Mythic Middle East), Outsider, Vow (loyalty to Genghis Khan). They lack the Puissant Ability (Bows) Virtue and Reckless Flaw of their troops. Their Confidence score is increased to 2(5) and they have the following Personality Traits: Resolute +3, Ruthless +5, Cunning +4. The average age of an orlock is 40 and they have the following additional Abilities: Artes Liberales 1 (military communication), Craft Siege Equipment 3 (catapults), Folk Ken 2 (nobles), Guile 3 (elaborate lies), Intrigue 3 (alliances), Leadership 6+2 (7)(battlefield), Persian 3 (negotiations). They lack the Bargain ability of the common trooper and have their Bows score reduced to only 5. Their Soak, Fatigue Levels, Wound Penalties, Equipment and

Encumbrance remain unchanged but their combat statistics will need to be appropriately adjusted. Individual generals encountered may have slightly different Virtues, Flaws and Abilities.

Mongol Shaman

These hedge wizards differ somewhat from the original shamans presented in *Ancient Magic*, page 18.

Mongol Spirit Shaman

Characteristics: Int +1 (1), Per -1 (1), Pre +2 (1), Com +1, Str -2 (1), Sta +2 (1), Dex -1 (1), Qik +1 (1)

Size: 0

Age: 55

Decrepitude: 1 (5)

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Wise One; Summoning (see *Realms of Power: The Infernal*); Ghostly Warder (homeland spirit); Puissant Ability (Ride), Warrior; Enemies (Mythic Middle East); Outsider; Disfigured (scars), Infamous, Vow (loyalty Genghis Khan)

Personality Traits: Resolute +3, Ruthless +5, Discerning +4

Reputations: Murderous 4 (local), Spirit-worshipper 3 (Infernal)

Combat:

Dagger: Init +1, Attack +4, Defense +4, Damage +1

Composite Bow (mounted): Init -1, Attack +12, Defense +10, Damage +5

Composite Bow (on foot): Init -3, Attack +9, Defense +7, Damage +5

Saber (mounted): Init +3, Attack +10, Defense +9, Damage +4

Saber (on foot): Init +1, Attack +7, Defense +6, Damage +4

Spear (mounted): Init +3, Attack +7, Defense +7, Damage +3

Spear (on foot): Init +1, Attack +4, Defense +4, Damage +3

Soak: +4 (armor and Stamina)

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

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

Abilities: Animal Handling 3 (horses), Area Lore (Mythic Steppe) 3 (geography), Area Lore (Persia) 2 (geography), Area Lore (Transoxiana) 2 (geography), Athletics 3 (running), Awareness 3 (in combat), Bargain 3 (spirits), Bows 5 (composite), Craft Bows 2, Brawl 2 (dagger), Faerie Lore 2 (spirits), Guile 2 (elaborate lies), Hunt 2 (tracking), Infernal Lore 3 (spirits), Leadership 2 (battlefield), Magic Lore 3 (spirits), Mongolian 5 (negotiations), Penetration 4 (spirits), Persian 3 (negotiations), Ride 3+2 (in battle), Single Weapon 3 (saber), Survival (steppe) 3.

Arts: Summoning 22

Equipment: composite bow (Load +2), metal reinforced leather half-armor (Load +2), saber (Load +1), daggers, spear (Load +1)

Encumbrance: 3 (3)

Appearance: an easterner dressed in a collection of tattered cloth, feathers and beads, carrying a ceremonial drum and stick. Closer inspection reveals his clothing is reversed.

A few of the Mongols in the army are tribal shamans versed in the power of the spirit world, and can summon spirits

to aid them by scouting out the area, attacking supernatural enemies, and spying on their opponents. The rules on Solomonic Summoning in Chapter 4: The Order of Suleiman can be used as a guide and more complex rules for summoning spirits in this way are found in *Realms of Power: The Infernal*. For the sake of simplicity you may assume that the shaman can easily summon an appropriate Faerie, Magical, or Infernal spirit of Might 30 or less and bargain with it to convince it to do his bidding. These spirits might agree to be bound to a weapon, creating a sort of enchanted device, or commanded to perform a task for the shaman. The shamans employ whatever sort of spirit is convenient to help them accomplish their objectives, even demons.

All shamans have a personal familiar spirit, similar to the *qareen* noted in Chapter 7: The Jinn and their Lands. This is usually an ancestor spirit associated with their homeland that follows them and aids them. For examples of these sorts of beings and the powers they have at their command, see *The Mysteries: Revised Edition* or *Realms of Power: Magic* or use the *jinn* contained in this Bestiary as a guide to creating various elemental spirits. Alternate ideas for Mongol shamans aligned to other Supernatural Realms are presented in Chapter 9: Transoxiana and Beyond.

The Nisnas

Magic Might: 10 (Corpus)

Season: Summer

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

Size: -1

Confidence: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Human; Magical Monster; Essential Virtue (Fast Leaper), Ways of the Forests; Keen Vision, Long-Winded, Sharp Ears, Voice of the Forest, Wilderness Sense; Enemies (people of Hadramawt); Compulsion (curiosity), Missing Eye, Missing Hand, Small Frame

Magical Qualities and Inferiorities: Greater Power, Improved Defense x2, Improved Fatigue x2, Improved Initiative x2, Improved Soak x2; Monstrous Appearance*; Susceptible to Deprivation

Personality Traits: Cautious +1, Curious +3, Skittish +2; Fast (Leaping) +6*

Combat:

Fist: Init +6, Attack +2, Defense +8, Damage -3

Soak: +6

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

Abilities: Arabic 4 (listening in), Athletics 5 (leaping), Awareness 3 (ambushes), Brawl 3 (fist), Concentration 2 (jumping), Folk Ken 2 (peasants), Hadramawt Lore 3 (forests), Hunt 3 (tracking), Stealth 3 (sneak), Survival 3 (forests), Wilderness Sense 3 (forests)

Powers:

Hop like the Wind, 0 points, Init +5, Corpus: R: Per, D: Sun, T: Ind. The nisnas can make great leaps to cover terrain at speed. This works like the Hermetic spell *Gift of the Frog's Legs*, except that the nisnas may make a great leap every round. (Greater Power, 20 levels, -2 Might cost, +4 Init)

Vis: 2 pawns Corpus, in foot.

Appearance: The nisnas (nis-NEHS) looks like a small man, but with half a head (with no face), half a body, one arm, one leg, a sheep's tail and half a face implanted in its chest.

The nisnas is found in the forests of Yemen and Hadramawt, though its origin seems to be in Hadramawt specifically. It is a wild, inoffensive creature, but the people of Hadramawt find its flesh sweet, so they hunt it for food. Nisnas can speak, and tales are told of some who begged for mercy before they were slain.

Story Seed: An Escaped Nisnas

The characters come across a nisnas that has escaped its captors. It begs them to help it get away. This is likely to raise a moral or emotional dilemma for some characters. According to most religious teachings, only humans have souls. Yet this creature seems literally half-human; does it have a soul? Even if not, will the characters willingly refuse aid to a creature that is begging them to help it escape from being eaten?

Nasu

The nasu is a Persian magical spirit which is attracted to the bodies of the recently dead; especially the corpses of magical creatures or sorcerers. They rarely take material form unless summoned; they are minor spirits, and any apprentice sahir can summon one; which is why sahir masters are very careful to indicate why they should never be summoned \ one nasu can become millions in a matter of minutes if sufficient fresh meat is around.

Nasu

Magic Might: 5 (Animal)

Characteristics: Cun 0, Per +1, Pre 0, Com 0, Str -20, Sta 0, Dex +3, Qik +10

Size: -12

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Spirit; Magic Sensitivity; Gluttonous

Magical Qualities and Inferiorities: Greater Power (Donning the Corporeal Veil), Greater Power (Swarm Form), Ritual Power (Corpse-Feeding); Improved Damage x10, Improved Powers; Miniature x5

Personality Traits: Hungry +6*

*Essential Trait

Combat:

Swarm bite: Init +10, Attack +7*, Defense n/a, Damage +10

*a nasu swarm cannot be parried, only dodged.

Soak: +0

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

Abilities: Athletics 3 (flying), Awareness 3 (corpses), Brawl 3 (biting), Magic Sensitivity 3 (wizards)

Powers:

Donning the Corporeal Veil, 0 points, Init +9, Animal: allows the nasu to take material form, which it can dismiss at any time. Nasu usually only leave the material world when there are no more corpses on which to feed. Cr(Re)An 25 (base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 requisite) Greater Power (25 levels, -3 Might cost, +2 Init)

Corpse-Feeding, 1 point, Init +8, Animal: when a nasu enters an orifice on a corpse, it can emerge three rounds later as ten individuals. Each of these individuals is identical in every way to the original nasu, including having this power except that each swarm, no matter how large, has a single pawn of vis. Every three rounds, a nasu swarm can gain three points of size, and its ability to grow is limited only by the number of corpses it has available; of course, as it grows, it attacks living things and creates more bodies. CrAn(Vi) 20 (base 5, +1 Touch, +1 requisite; raised to level 20 as minimum for ritual spell) Ritual Power (20 levels, -3 Might cost, +3 Init, including Improved Powers)

Swarm Form 0 points, Init 0, Animal: A nasu does not attack as an individual, but rather as a swarm. The combat statistics are for an entire swarm, which must be the same Size or larger than its opponent. Thus a swarm of 100,000 nasu (Size +3), can attack a standard group of humans. A nasu swarm cannot be killed by normal weapons; only area effects such as fire or smoke. The storyguide should consider how much of the swarm is affected by the area effect and assign damage in terms of Might points: if one fifth of the swarm is affected then it loses one Might point; if two fifths is affected it loses two Might points, and so forth. Greater Power — no Hermetic equivalent.

Vis: 1 pawn of Animal, in body.

Appearance: a three-inch long fly, with a red and yellow striped abdomen. They make a fearful buzzing sound when they fly.

Olghoi Khorkhoi

Magic Might: 14 (Animal)

Season: Spring

Characteristics: Cun -1, Per +1, Pre 0, Com -5, Str +2, Sta +3, Dex +3, Qik +1

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Animal; Ways of the Desert; Improved Characteristics, Puissant Stealth, Tough; Gluttonous; Offensive to Animals, Poor Communication x2

Magical Qualities and Inferiorities: Greater Power (Spit Fire), Major Virtue (Greater Immunity to Fire); Improved Abilities, Improved Might x4, Improved Powers, Personal Power x2 (*Fiery Touch*); Monstrous Appearance; Minor Flaw (Restricted Power)

Personality Traits: Hungry +6

Reputations: Death Worm 2 (Local)

Combat:

Fiery venom: Init +6*, Attack +11*, Defense +9*, Damage +30 (see *Spit Fire* Power, later)

Bludgeon: Init +5*, Attack +15*, Defense +10*, Damage +9 (and +10 fire damage, see *Fiery Touch* power, later)

*includes +3 for Ways of the Desert

Soak: +10

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

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

Abilities: Brawl 4 (bludgeon), Desert Lore 2 (trails), Stealth 4+2 (under sand), Thrown Weapon 4 (fiery venom)

Powers:

Spit Fire, 1 point, Init +3, Ignem: The olghoi khorkhoi can spit fiery venom up to 15 paces. It must succeed in a Thrown Weapons Attack to do so; receiving a -2 penalty if the target is 6-10 paces away, and a -4 penalty if it is greater than 10 paces away. The fiery venom can only be parried if the target has a shield; otherwise it must be dodged. If it hits, the venom inflicts +30 damage. It cannot use this power between June and November (Restricted Power Flaw). CrIg 35 (base 25, +2 Voice) Greater Power (35 levels, -3 Might cost, +6 Init (from *Fiery Touch* Power and Improved Powers))

Fiery Touch, 0 points, constant effect, Ignem: The fiery slime of the olghoi khorkhoi's body burns those it touches and corrodes even metal armor. It inflicts +10 damage in addition to its bludgeoning attack, and any

armor worn by its opponent loses one point of Protection even if the opponent soaked all damage. CrIg 30 (base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 corrosive effect, +1 constant effect) Personal Power x2 (30 levels, -3 Might cost)

Vis: 3 pawns of Ignem, in body

Appearance: A worm, five feet long and one foot in diameter; the olghoi khorkhoi has no discernable head or tail. It is blood-red in color, with black mottling.

Found in the northern deserts of Persia and Transoxiana, the olghoi khorkhoi ("intestine worm") is the mature form of the worms that cause a disease called rishtah (dracunculus in Latin). It can move about freely beneath the soil, and while blind, is very sensitive to vibrations. If it succeeds in a Dexterity + Stealth roll greater than its victim's Perception + Awareness roll, it can burst out of the ground next to him, gaining a +3 bonus to Attack on the first round of combat only. Initiative is rolled after this initial attack. Animals instinctively shy from the olghoi khorkhoi, and the reaction of their horses is often the first sign that one is in the area.

Pairikas

A pairika is the Persian term for the Aerial Powers (*Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 42). These demons are treated as corrupt jinn (see XREF, The Jinn) by sahirs. They most commonly embody the crushing heat of the desert or the dreadful power of the earthquake.

Peri

The peris are the courtly faeries of Persia. Peris are almost exclusively female, and extraordinarily beautiful; a pretty maiden in Persia is occasionally referred to as 'peri-faced'. Their game statistics are the same as lesser nymphs (*Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 73), and fulfill the same role as entrapping lovers; however peris rarely have powers over plant life. Peris are occasionally accompanied by diminutive male assistants who cater to their every whim; these are sprites (*Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 85) except that they have brightly-colored birds' wings.

Rukh (Roc)

These giant birds carry off their prey to their remote mountain lairs - virtually inaccessible nests above the clouds or on the cliff sides of valleys studded with diamonds and other precious gems. These nests are only accessed via Magic regio within the high clouds that the rukh can enter using its (Cloud) Regio Network Virtue, although victims of the bird may be able to climb down into the lands below with some difficulty.

Rukh (Roc)

Magic Might: 14 (Animal)

Characteristics: Cun 0, Per +3, Pre +2, Com 0, Str +13, Sta +3, Dex +1, Qik -4

Size: +6

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Magical Animal; Ferocity, Keen Vision, (Cloud) Regio Network, Unaffected by the Gift; Age Quickly, Magical Monster; Offensive to Animals.

Magical Qualities and Inferiorities: Gigantic x6; Improved Initiative x5, Personal Power; Major Flaw (Age Quickly); Susceptible to Deprivation.

Qualities: Accomplished Flier, Aggressive, Extra Natural Weapons, Fast Flyer, Grapple, Imposing Appearance x3, Keen Eyesight, Pursuit Predator, Tough Feathers

Personality Traits: Fierce +3

Reputations: Stealer of livestock 3 (Transoxiana)

Combat:

Beak: Init +5, Attack +7, Defense +6, Damage +14

Talons: Init -1, Attack +11, Defense +3, Damage +13

Grapple: Init -1, Attack +6, Defense +1, Damage n/a

Soak: +5

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-14), -3 (15-28), -5 (29-42), Incapacitated (43-56), Dead (57+)

Abilities: Athletics 5 (flight), Awareness 4 (prey), Brawl 5 (grapple), Hunt 4 (find prey), Persian Lore 6 (mountains), Transoxiana Lore 6 (mountains), Survival 3 (mountains)

Powers:

Clasp, 0 points, Init -4, Corpus: this Personal Power weakens the upper limbs of a target clasped by the talons of the rukh after a successful Grapple attempt. He cannot attempt to free himself from the rukh's talons by opposing the Grapple. (decreased Might cost from Intricacy Point from 5 unused spell levels).

Paralyzing Stare, 2 points, Init -6, Corpus: this power transfixes any human-sized target that makes eye contact with the great bird's fearsome stare.

Vis: 3 pawns of Animal, in wingtip feathers

Appearance: the rukh appears as a gigantic eagle, with steel bright eyes and cruelly curved talons. These statistics represent a smaller specimen which stands just over 25 feet tall with a wingspan just over 40 feet.

Although a magnificent creature, a rukh is not a Beast of Virtue and is not designed to be a player character. This rukh is based on a large falcon or eagle (Size -2) and advanced to gigantic proportions using its base Might of 20. This specimen is large enough to carry off livestock, horses and humans. Larger specimens (Size +8) have been seen to carry off elephants and even giants.

Anqa: the Arabian phoenix or anqa is very similar to the rukh detailed above although its coloration consists of bright hues of red, orange and gold. Like an Eagle of Virtue, as the anqa ages its feathers grow dim and it flies to its aerie above the Mountains of Qaf. There, immolating itself in flame, it is reborn as a single black egg. Hermetic magi observing this process can treat this experience as a significatos, gaining experience in the Arts of Animal, Ignem or Vim.

Story Seed: The Rukh's Nest

Faerie *rukhs* also, typically acting as Threshold Guardians involving the Path of Chance and stories within Arcadia. Characters attempting to flee the bird's approach may suffer grievous wounds, while those snatched up by the great raptors find themselves cast into strange stories in distant lands much like the legendary Sinbad the Sailor. Stories tell of whole valleys within regios beneath their nests lined with diamonds as a man's fist, populated by giant sized Faerie sheep and goats. Successful adventurers that escape to mundane lands may claim such gemstones as the prize for their courage – different gems contain different flavored vis according to their nature, although such vis is always

Faerie tainted.

The Faerie versions differ only in that they possess the *Spirit Away* Power and replace the (Cloud) Regio Network with the Faerie Speech Virtue, which allows them to fulfill their role as catalysts of high adventure.

Saluqi

Although most dogs (Arabic: *kalb*) are considered unclean by non-Maliki school Muslims, the noble breed known as the *saluqi* are prized by their masters, often sleeping in the tents of their Bedouin owners and being lauded in poetry after their passing. Prized both for their beauty and hunting skill, these greyhound-like dogs act as coursers, operating either in speedy packs or as bird dogs in tandem with falcons. Details on hunting with hounds are given in *Lords of Men*, Chapter 5: Leisure.

Saluqi use the base statistics for Hounds listed in *The Book of Mundane Beasts* or *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 143, modified accordingly: add the following Qualities: Grapple, Imposing Appearance x2, Keen Eyesight and lose Keen Sense of Smell; add the Endurance Virtue and an additional Improved Characteristics Virtue; increase Presence to +1 and Stamina to +3; change to Hunt 4 (track by sight). Exceptional saluqi may have the Puissant Hunt Virtue and have powers similar to Faerie Hounds as detailed in *Realms of Power: Faerie*, pages 88-89.

The Simurgh

An immense bird that lives on Mount Damavand, although she makes expeditions to all corners of Persia and most of its inhabitants have seen the Simurgh at some point. The people of Persia are oddly comforted by her presence, as she is a bringer of fertility as well as a symbol of national pride. The Simurgh is so old that she claims to have seen the destruction of the world three times over. During her exceptionally long life she has accumulated wisdom, and she is an authority on many subjects.

The Simurgh is so large that normal weapons are as nothing to her. It requires magical weapons or spells to cause wounds. She may grant a worthy character one of her breast feathers using her External Vis Virtue; each one contains five pawns of vis. These feathers are Arcane Connections to the Simurgh, and can be used to summon her in times of great need by casting them into a fire. In her most famous legend, the simurgh adopts the albino Zal (the father of Rostam), when he was abandoned by his father in the Alborz Mountains. Zal learnt much from the Simurgh, and when he left her she gave him all three of her feathers.

The Simurgh

Faerie Might: 50 (Animal)

Characteristics: Int +1, Per +2, Pre 0, Com +1, Str +15, Sta +3, Dex +1, Qik 0

Size: +9

Virtues and Flaws: External Vis, Huge x8; Faerie Beast, Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, Focus Power (Heart of the Whirlwind), Greater Immunity to Weapons, Improved Characteristics x9, Improved Powers x6, Positive Folk Tales, Reputation as Confidence, Ritual Power (Grant Fertility) x3; Compassionate; Incognizant, Traditional Ward

Personality Traits: Kind +6, Curious +3

Reputations: Bird of God 5 (Local)

Combat:

Claws: Init 0, Attack +12, Defense +8, Damage +19

Soak: +12

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

Wound Penalties: -1 (1-14), -3 (15-28), -5 (29-42), Incapacitated (43-56), Dead (57+)

Abilities: Arabia Lore 5 (wars), Artes Liberales 8 (Persian literature), Athletics 5 (flying), Awareness 4 (wrongdoers), Brawl 5 (claws), Persia Lore 8 (legendary figures), Philosophiae 8 (natural sciences), Survival 6 (mountains), Teaching 5 (Area Lore), Transoxiana Lore 5 (peoples)

Powers:

Heart of the Whirlwind, 1-10 points, Init -(Might cost), Auram: This Focus Power allows the Simurgh to duplicate any non-ritual wind-related spell up to 50th level, at a cost of 1 Might point per magnitude of the spell.

Grant Fertility, 2 points, Init -22, Herbam: As the Simurgh flies over fields, she can use this power to create an effect similar to *The Bountiful Feast*, except that it affects an area ten times greater, and grants fertility to animals as well as plants. CrHe(An) 55 (base 1, +3 Sight, +4 Year, +4 Bound, +2 Size, +1 Animal requisite) Ritual Power (55 levels, -9 Might cost, including 5 points from Improved Powers)

Vis: 15 pawns of Animal, in breast feathers

Appearance: the Simurgh is an enormous creature, large enough to carry off an elephant. She appears as an eagle with the head of a dog and claws of a lion. Her feathers are the color of highly polished copper, although her peacock-like tail is patterned with thirty different colors.

The Simurgh is not designed to be a player character.

Zahhak

Zahhak was the demonic ruler of Persia in its heroic age, holding the nation in his evil thrall. He ruled from Ctesiphon in the days of Jamshid (see *Istakhr*, Chapter 8: Persia), and conquered Persia after sawing Jamshid in two. Under his reign, virtue was despised and wickedness lauded. His thousand-year reign was eventually ended by the hero Feridun. Since that time, Zahhak has periodically appeared and been battled by Persian sahirs, and he has never achieved the same level of power that he did in Jamshid's day.

Zahhak is not a demon in the traditional sense. Rather, when the demon Azi Dahak possesses an individual, that person becomes Zahhak. Possession is indicated by the growth of a black snake from each of the victim's shoulders. When cut off they simply regrow; only removal of the possession can cure them. The snakes crave human brains, and the victim is driven to satisfy this need by the demon inside him.

In the first instance the possessing demon forces the new Zahhak to do evil deeds, but over time the victim is corrupted by the whispers and promises of power of the demon, and so far none have resisted his lure. Once the victim embraces evil, he is taught the Goetic Arts (*Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 114), and can use Ablating to extend his life, gain magic resistance, and call upon all manner of evil powers by stealing them from other demons and supernatural creatures.

Azi Dahak

Order: Duke of the Spirits of Deceit

Infernal Might: 40 (Mentem)

Characteristics: Int +2, Per +2, Pre 0, Com +1, Str +12, Sta +4, Dex +5, Qik -1

Size: +4

Confidence Score: 3 (9)

Virtues and Flaws: Ablating, Binding, Commanding, Summoning; Inspirational

Personality Traits: Deceitful +6, Hatred of Persia +5, Trustworthy -5

Reputations: Legendary Tyrant King 7 (Infernal)

Hierarchy: 7

Combat:

*Bite**: Init +1, Attack +15, Defense +10, Damage +20

*Azi Dahak can bite three targets in each round; he acts like a Trained Group with three members.

Soak: +15

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

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

Abilities: Athletics 5 (flying), Brawl 8 (bite), Guile 8 (promises of power), Intrigue 5 (nobles), Leadership 4 (own heads), Order of Suleiman Lore 4 (viziers), Penetration 4 (Possession), Teaching 5 (Goetic Arts)

Arts: Ablating 12, Binding 8, Commanding 8, Summoning

Powers:

Coagulation, 4 points, Init -1, Animal: Azi Dahak can form a physical body, and dismiss it at will.

Obsession, 1-3 points, Init -5, Vim: Azi Dahak can invoke the Personality Trait of Power Hungry. See *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 31 for more details.

Envisioning, 1 point, Init 0, Mentem: the demon can appear in the dreams of a person

Possession, variable points, Init +2, Mentem: Azi Dahak usually places all of his Might Pool into possession and can control the actions of his victim. He cannot regenerate Might points until the possession ends; so he has to leave periodically. During this time, his victim suffers terrible dreams of his death and torment in hell, and may act to prevent the demon returning. See *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 32 for more details.

Trust of the Innocent, 1 point, Init -1, Mentem: The target of this effect loses all judgment and believes a specific lie (as long as it is passable) until presented with evidence to the contrary. An Intelligence roll against an Ease Factor of 6 is allowed to resist the effect.

Forked Tongue of the Serpent, 3 points, Init -1, Mentem: The target believes any lie, no matter how preposterous, until he relates that lie to someone else. At this point he realizes how ridiculous the falsehood sounds, and the demonic power is broken. An Intelligence roll against an Ease Factor of 9 also reveals the lie to be false, with the first roll allowed an hour after the effect was used, and further rolls permitted once every subsequent hour.

The Serpent's Oracle, 2 points, Init -3, Vim: The demon can duplicate the effects of any Intellego spell for the cost of 2 Might points. It may also gain a morsel of future knowledge, understanding the most immediate consequences of any one specific action.

Empower the Possessed, 0 points, Init 0, Vim: Whenever a possessed victim is willfully using the Goetic Arts, Azi Dahak grants a bonus equal to his own score in that Art. Furthermore, the demon's Hierarchy score can be used in place of the possessed character's score.

Weakness: Abhorrent Material (flame from a Mazdean fire temple)

Vis: 8 pawns of Mentem vis prava, in eyes.

Appearance: On the rare occasions it takes material form, Azi Dahak is an immense winged serpent with three heads, with six eyes and three pairs of fangs on each head. When wounded, snakes and scorpions spew from its wounds.

The List of Suleiman: Sample Jinn

The following creatures are examples of *jinn* that may be bargained with, bound or simply encountered by magi and sahir. The list is by no means exhaustive and Troupes are encouraged to create their own *jinn* using the information in *The Cradle and the Crescent: the Mythic Middle East*, Chapter 3: The Jinn and the various *Realms of Power* sourcebooks if needed.

Baghl, an Earth Jinni

Magic Might: 15 (Terram)

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

Size: +2

Confidence Score: 1 (3 points)

Virtues and Flaws: *Jinn*; Greater Immunity: Fire, Ways of the Mountains; Second Sight, Skinchanger, Strong-Willed, Tough; Greater Malediction (honor bargains made), Magical Air, Vulnerable Magic (*mu'addhin's* call); Reclusive.

Personality Traits: Reclusive +5, Immutable +3, Proud +2

Combat:

Maul (warhammer): Init -1, Attack +10, Defense +2, Damage +15

Soak: +10

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

Abilities: Arabic 5 (stone), Athletics 3 (climbing), Great Weapon 3 (maul), Profession; Miner 2 (gemstones), Second Sight 3 (jinn), Theology: Islam 3 (jinn).

Powers:

Flesh to Stone, 4 points, Init -4, Terram; Baghl can change any human he touches into stone until sunrise or until the morning call to prayer (Base 20, +1 Touch, +2 Sun; 3 Mastery points spent on reducing Might cost).

Ruler of Earth, 1-3 points, Init 0, Terram: duplicates any non-Ritual Perdo Terram or Rego Terram spell less than or equal to 15th level at a cost of 1 Might point per magnitude of the effect.

Incorporeal, 0 points, Init Constant, Mentem: Baghl is naturally both invisible and intangible, and cannot be influenced by the physical world. Magic may only directly target him if the caster can sense his existence. In this form he has no physical statistics or combat scores. Without taking a corporeal form, Baghl's physical characteristics are only used when dealing with other incorporeal creatures.

Donning the Corporeal Veil, 2 points, Init +1, Corpus: Baghl can form the physical body described under Appearance to house his spiritual form; when doing so he acquires the physical characteristics, size, combat

statistics, and Wound levels listed above. His arms and armor are also created with this power. He cannot become fatigued. This body lasts until he decides he no longer needs it. Killing the body does not kill Baghl.

Presence, 0 points, constant, Mentem: Baghl is aware of everything that goes on within his haunt. This power needs to Penetrate to perceive beings with a Magic Resistance.

Vis: 1 pawn of Terram vis can be collected every year from his haunt, in the form of a quartz encrusted stalactite at the back of his cave. If slain in physical form, his body will yield 3 pawns of Terram vis.

Appearance: Baghl is a jinni of a dark cave found in the Elbruz mountains that was once used as a quarry until he drove off the miners. He may be appeased mainly by being left alone to enjoy his beautiful cave formations, although he will sometimes agree to converse with theological scholars. He appears as an obese man with pupil-less eyes of jet black stone and limbs veined with quartz. In physical form he can assume the shape of a large black mule.

Baghl has been created by using the flame *jinni* Wahhab (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 135) as a template, changing his Form alignment to Terram. He is an example of a lesser earth *jinni* that might be pressed into service by a more mature sahir as a *khadim* or servant spirit and is not designed as a starting character.

Unusually for a *jinni* of his power, Baghl has a reasonable knowledge of Islam and may pretend to be susceptible to the folk traditions that affect Faerie *jinn*, although except for the *muezzin's* call, such rituals have no real effect over him.

As a spirit of a place, the physical location haunted by the *jinni* acts as an Arcane Connection that provides a +1 bonus to the Penetration Multiplier; more potent Arcane Connections can only be obtained from a *jinni* who has taken corporeal form.

Bottles of Suleiman, Slaves of the King

There we saw a man casting his net to catch fish, and presently he pulled them up and behold, in them was a cucurbite of copper, stopped with lead and sealed with the signet of Solomon, son of David, on whom be peace! He brought the vessel to land and broke it open, when there came forth a smoke, which rose a twisting blue to the zenith, and we heard a horrible voice, saying, 'I repent! I repent! Pardon, O Prophet of Allah! I will never return to that which I did aforetime.' Then the smoke became a terrible Giant frightful of form, whose head was level with the mountaintops, and he vanished from our sight...

Tale of the "The City of Brass", *The Thousand and One Nights*

Folk tales abound in Eastern folklore of poor fisherman who cast their nets into the ocean, calling upon God's aid only to pull in strange and ancient bottles. Termed *cucurbites* and known to the peasant folk as Suleimanic Bottles, these vessels are gourd shaped copper flasks sealed with a lead plug embossed with the Seal of Suleiman. When the stopper is removed, a *jinni* issues forth alternately thankful or wrathful to its rescuer but always a potential source of wealth or woe. In some tales the prison is in the form of a seal ring shell, or most famously a humble battered lamp. The origin of these mystical containers is unclear — some may indeed represent pre-Islamic *jinn* bound by the prophet Suleiman in ancient days, while other examples may represent echoes of the legends of spirits bound by his magical descendants and contemporary sorcerers.

So popular is this motif become in Arab folklore that a particular type of Faerie *jinn*, the Bottles of Suleiman, have become associated with this story, taking the form of the vessels themselves. Typically involved in stories about the Bringing of Riches and Humility (*Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 79) these liminal entities can be found anywhere along the shore lines of Islamic lands, usually near the villages of poor fishermen.

‘Abd al-Quinnina, a servile Bottle of Suleiman *'afrit*

Faerie Might: 30 (Imaginem)

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

Size: +3 (in *'afrit* form)

Confidence Score: 1 (3 points)

Virtues and Flaws: *Jinn*; External Vis (Major: copper cucurbite, grants Self-Confident), Faerie Speech, Greater Power x2 (Tay al-Ard, Flight), Improved Powers x2, Lesser Powers x4, Narrowly Cognizant, Reputation as Confidence*, Ritual Power x4 (Binding Oath, Grant: Wealthy); Intangible Flesh, Monstrous Appearance, Sovereign Ward (Bismallah).

Personality Traits: Proud +3, Sly +3, Cruel +2

Reputations: Terrifyingly magical +3

Pretenses: Penetration 6, Theology: Islam 1 (*jinn*)

Powers:

Binding Oath, 5 points, Init (Qik -20), Vim; Voice, Penetration +15; 50 levels, Ritual Power, 5 Intricacy points; upon "releasing" the apparently captive *'afrit* from its prison, the rescuer can bargain for a set three wishes or a length of conditional service depending on the personality of the individual Faerie *jinni*, provided he agrees to destroy the cucurbite and permanently release the *jinni* from captivity.

Eidolon, 2 points, Init -2, Imaginem; 20 spell levels, selected twice; this power allows the Suleimanic Bottle to manifest its glamour both as the prop known as a cucurbite that appears to contain its essence and then in a second form as a towering humanoid column of smoke issuing from the mouth of its prison.

Illusionary Home, 4 points, Init -4, Imaginem; 40 spell levels; creates a sumptuous phantasmal palace for the bearer of the cucurbite.

Flight, 3 points, constant, Auram, Touch; 30 spell levels as *Wings of the Soaring Wind*.

Loosely Material, variable points, Init -5, Corpus; 25 spell levels; the spirit can form either a simple physical manifestation of its cucurbite that can be touched by a potential master or add substance to its *'afrit* form so it can bear loads, invoke Touch range powers or engage in combat at the bequest of its master.

Tay al-Ard (Travel), 8 points, Init +1, Corpus; 50 spell levels, 1 Intricacy point; this power instantly transports the *'afrit* and others it carries from one location to another that the bearer of its cucurbite has visited before or has an Arcane Connection to, regardless of distance. As *Leap of Homecoming*, with R: Touch, T: Group.

Serendipitous Wealth, 10 points, Init (Qik -10), Terram; 50 spell levels, Ritual Power (Grant: Wealthy), 5 Intricacy points; this power seemingly grants the effects of the Wealthy Virtue, but similar to the Wealth of Nations power of False Gods, summons treasure from somewhere else. (See *Realms of Power: the Infernal*, page 37).

Vis: 6 pawns of Imaginem, concentrated in its cucurbite prop

Appearance: these Faeries initially appear as their cucurbite, a solid gourd-shaped flask of copper, using their *Eidolon* and *Loosely Material* powers. They shift into their smoky column form only when the Seal of Suleiman stoppering their apparent prison is disturbed. This latter form consists of a giant human torso of unnatural color, either blue, green or often red, surmounted by a monstrous face tusked with horns or jagged teeth. To the inexperienced observer, this fearsome manifestation appears to be the actual faerie although in reality the *jinni* remains an insubstantial spirit beneath the illusion.

A Bottle of Suleiman is not suitable as a player character due to their unbalanced power and their limited independent potential in stories. Only an exceptionally experienced sahira would be able to bind this powerful version as a spirit companion using the *khadim* bond, although lesser examples of this type of *jinn*

may be attractive to younger sahira. This section is primarily inspired by the stories: "The Fisherman and the Jinni" and "The City of Brass"

Story Seed: the Shores of al-Khadar

In the tale of the City of Brass, there is told exists a shore in far northwest Africa that bounds upon the mystical Great Encircling Ocean, al-Khadar ("the Green"). Upon this beach, the native fishermen regularly draw up marvelous bottles in their nets. When broken, these bottles release penitent *jinn* into the skies – the magical prisoners crying for forgiveness from God and his prophet. According to the *Alf Layla wa-Layla* (literally "the 1000 Nights and A Night") and the lore of the Keepers of Tales, a loyal emir named Musa successfully returned to his caliph with several of these marvels and others have been tempted to trace his steps in search of these flasks ever since.

This beach or shore exists in two versions in Faerie — as an ever-changing part of Arcadia and as a fixed scene of the longer tale involving the City of Brass in Elysium. The Arcadian version can be reached from the junctions of a river way or a twilight soaked beach. The Threshold into Faerie can be crossed by casting a net while invoking the Name of Allah in earnest praise or scorn. The Threshold Guardian takes the form of a powerful and vengeful Bottle of Suleiman — successfully bargaining with the angry *jinni* returns the fisherman to the mundane Realm to play out the remainder of the story and his rise to fortune whereas failing to placate the spirit transports the unfortunate into an Arcadian story of imprisonment, romance high sorcery and eventual escape.

This story is best suited for a grog or companion character and works best if the *jinni* somehow escapes its servitude through the folly of its inexperienced master or by twisting his wishes to cause mayhem. Few magi would willingly submit to such a creature as the power of a mature magus usually exceeds that of the *jinni*. The gain of an easily subdued magical servant by a junior magus may result in merely an exceptional servant faerie that has little ongoing story potential and may even detract from the overall saga (*Realms of Power: Faerie*, Bestiary p74).

The scene in Elysium is an eventual goal of a longer story arc. Unlike the Arcadian story, the *jinn* are weaker but more numerous — casting a net will bring forth a dozen or so lesser Bottles of Suleiman. Of little value in themselves, they represent the final prize of the longer myth and the trigger for the return home — the act of retrieving their cucurbites acting as the final Threshold Guardian. See "The City of Brass" tale for further ideas.

The *Buran* of Yenghissar

This wild desert storm spirit, or *buran*, once plagued the small village of Yenghissar along the route to Khashgar, bringing devastation to the crops and herd animals every seven years. It is now bound by an Infernally aligned sahir using the Goetic Art of Binding (see *Realms of Power: the Infernal*, page 117). A speechless, destructive force of fury incarnate, it rages to be released and constantly strives to create elemental havoc around the thoughtless sahir who has trapped it within his ancestral sword.

Infernal Might: 25 (Auram)

Order: Aerial Powers (*Buran*)

Characteristics: Int -5, Per 0, Pre +3, Com -2, Str na, Sta na, Dex +3, Qik +6

Size: +4

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: *Jinni*; Berserk, Strong-Willed, Wilderness Sense; Fury (Major)(when summoned), Greater Malediction (bound by bargains).

Personality Traits: Untameable +5

Reputations: Scourge of Yenghissar 2 (local)

Heirarchy: 3 (storm demons)

Combat: not applicable, the *buranis* an insubstantial spirit

Soak: not applicable, the *buran* is an insubstantial spirit

Wound Penalties: not applicable, the *buran* is an insubstantial spirit

Abilities: Folk Ken 3 (travelers), Theology: Islam 3 (*jinn*), Survival 5 (desert), Taklamakan Lore 5 (legends), Wilderness Sense 2 (weather)

Powers:

Delusion of the Desert, 1 or 5 points, Init +3, Imaginem: this evil spirit can create illusions of a lost traveler's companions or a welcoming oasis, only to launch itself in fury at an unsuspecting victim. Alternatively it can create images of itself as a humanoid sandstorm with glowing fiery eyes in order to terrify its victims prior to their deaths. A minor illusion which affects an Individual amount of material (such as the demon itself) costs one point; a larger illusion which fills a room costs five points. These visions always have a flaw, however (they smell wrong, can only be seen by one target, etc.).

Elemental Control of Wind ; variable points; Init +1; Auram: the *buran* has control over the winds of nature, which it uses to wreak destruction on the desert fringes. It may create any Creo, Muto, or Rego effect appropriate to Auram, at a cost of 1 Might Point per magnitude of effect. The demon cannot create any effect with a level greater than its Infernal Might, nor duplicate Ritual effects.

Recalcitrance, 0 points, Init constant, Vim: Any attempt to control (but not destroy) the *buran* with any form of Supernatural Power (magical, Divine, or otherwise) treats the demon's Might as if it were one-and-a-half times its actual Might, or otherwise has its Ease Factor increased by 50%. For example, a *Circular Ward Against Demons* of 38th level is needed to stop this *buran* with Might 25.

Vis: 5 pawns of Auram vis prava, left behind as black sand when dispersed.

Appearance: Usually manifests as a giant shapeless vortex of raging black sand using its Auram powers. To those with Second Sight, a giant humanoid shadow can be discerned within the sandstorm.

Unlike many other corrupt *jinn*, the *buran* lacks the *Coagulation* and *Obsession* powers common to most demons and is an insubstantial spirit, unable to affect the physical world except through its magic. It is an example of an Infernal storm spirit likely to be found in the Taklamakan Desert, although much stronger and less powerful creatures also exist (see Chapter 9: Transoxiana and Beyond XREF). Many traveler's tales tell of companions fallen behind that are tempted off the track by the illusions created by these demons.

Those storm spirits aligned to the Magic realm may have very similar characteristics, although they lack the Recalcitrance power and the brutal malevolence of their demonic cousins. Similar spirits aligned to other elemental Forms can be represented with minimal modifications to these statistics.

Ghula, Faerie

These dark Faerie *jinn* may rise from, or impersonate, those who die of thirst in the desert. They seek virile and wealthy husbands. They drain the blood of their husbands as they sleep. Once sufficient vitality has been consumed, the *ghula* can have a baby. The baby appears to share the characteristics of the human parent, but it is a faerie, a *ghula* like its mother. Baby *ghuls* are born with teeth.

The *ghula* in a city sneak out of their houses while their husbands sleep. They gather in graveyards to feast, cavort and drain the blood from corpses. In most versions of their story, the husband of a *ghula* discovers these night meetings, and destroys the nest of *ghuls*, but cannot bring himself to kill his child. The young *ghula* grow to adulthood, and tyrannize the city, forcing the man who discovered the *ghuls* to flee. This old, sick, broken man lives near the town, warning travelers away, and reciting his role in his home's downfall. In doing this, he spreads the fame of the *ghuls*, which gives them vitality.

A related story says that *ghula* are the ghosts of prostitutes, given solid form, and that they are simpler in their predatory behavior. They merely eat the dead, and lacking fresh prey eat corpses. They use their wiles to lure men of weak faith to hidden places and have a power that causes sleep, allowing them to crush the heads of their victims with stones.

Faerie *ghula* statistics first appeared in *Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 72.

Ghula, Faerie

Faerie Might: 20

Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre +5, Com +1, Str +1, Sta 0, Dex 0, Qik +1

Size: 0

Virtues and Flaws: *Jinn*, 2 x Greater Faerie Powers, Infiltrator (Wealthy, orphaned merchant's daughter) Ways of the Land (Desert); Faerie Sight, Faerie Speech, Feast of the Dead, Humanoid Faerie, 3 x Increased Faerie Might, Personal Faerie Powers; Narrowly Cognizant; Greater Malediction (when it enters a bargain, it is bound to the agreed terms unless its partner reneges first), Restricted Might (Major – daylight), Traditional Ward (Bismallah Invocation).

Personality Traits: Demure/Ravenous +3

Combat:

Claws: Init 0, Attack +11, Defense +10, Damage +5

Fangs: Init +1, Attack +10, Defense +8, Damage +4

Soak: 0

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

Pretenses: Arabic 5 (seduction), Charm 6 (men), Brawl 6 (in dark areas), Stealth 9 (urban areas), Theology: Islam 1 (*jinn*).

Powers:

Cause Drowsiness: 2 points, Init –2, Corpus, (25 spell levels, ReCo (Base 4, +1 Touch Range, +4 Until Duration), 1 intricacy point spent on cost): allows the *ghula* to cause a human it touches to fall asleep.

Illusionary Home: 0 points, Init –3, Imaginem (40 spell levels, MuIm (Base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 Constant, +3 Structure), 4 intricacy points on cost): this comprehensive use of glamour makes a place look, sound, smell and feel like a suitable home for the role the faerie is playing. Within the altered space, the sense of taste is also affected.

Transform Into Human: 0 points, Init.0, Animal (25 spell levels, MuCo (An) (Base 10, +2 Sun, +1 Size), Personal Power, 3 intricacy points on cost, 2 on initiative): This power transforms the character between human and feasting form.

Equipment: Perfume, wardrobe

Vis: 4 pawns Imaginem, rat skulls

Appearance: *Ghula* usually look like beautiful women. To attract husbands, *ghula* pretend to be wealthy widows or orphans of good family, in need of husbands. *Ghulas* often pretend to be members of communities displaced by war, as it gives their story verisimilitude. The eyes and the insides of the mouths, of Arabic *ghula* are always green. Male Faerie *ghuls* exist, but are the servants of the *ghula*, and rarely play the role of seducer. See below for an example of an Infernal male *ghul*.

Ghulas are not designed as player characters. The version represented here differs slightly from the European *ghula* or *lamiae* originally presented in that she reflects the Arab conception of her as an evil *jinniyya*. Although a form of Faerie spirit, *ghula* are locked in a physical manifestation.

Ghul, Infernal

An Infernal *ghul* (female: *ghula*, plural: *ghuls* or *ghilan*) is a degenerate *jinni*, a corrupt and cannibalistic creature of the night. Commonly female, although males are less frequently encountered, they are believed to be descendants of a depraved tribe of primitive *jinn* given over to the Infernal. Solitary by nature, they haunt cemeteries, garbage pits and slums preying on the weak or feeding off carrion. Hideous to behold, they often disguise themselves in heavy robes as lost travelers, women in distress or kindly dervishes to waylay travelers with the aid of their powers of deception and mimicry.

All *ghul* can assume the form of at least one scavenger native to their area: dog, hyena, jackal or vulture and excel at assuming the forms of humans to conceal their debased nature. They disdain weapons and hunt and fight with claw like nails and jagged teeth. Folklore tells that many *ghul*, if wounded with a weapon but not killed outright in a single blow will be healed when struck by a second blow, making them dangerous opponents for lone victims.

Ghul, Infernal

Infernal Might: not more than 20 usually

Order: Furies

Weaknesses: Protected Group (individuals that invoke the Bismallah invocation), Vulnerability (Iron)

Abilities: Brawl 6 (claws), Charm 4 (trust), Stealth 4 (urban areas), Theology: Islam 1 (*jinn*). Other Abilities depend on the individual *ghul*,

Powers:

Berserker Rage, 1 point, Init 0, Mentem: the demon can grant anyone (usually itself or its animal companions) the Berserk Virtue, which persists until the target calms down.

Change Form, 0 points, Init 0, Corpus or Animal: a *ghul* can change his physical form at will, to whatever human or animal form they desire. Most *ghul* are limited to changing form into one type of creature (any human female form, any bird form, any canine form, for example), but more powerful individuals have been known to adopt multiple shapes. The Size of the form is limited to whatever is natural for the species, so a human sized *ghul* taking adult human form must be between Size -2 and +2. This transformation is not akin to a magical spell; it is a natural manipulation of the physical matter that makes up the demon's body, and consequently Magic Resistance does not stop physical attacks from shape-changed *ghul* as there is no ongoing magical effect.

Endurance of the Enraged, 0 points, Init 0, Corpus: the *ghul* do not suffer from wound penalties, except on Defense totals.

Restoration, 10 points, Init +0, Corpus: when a *ghul* uses this power, the next blow will restore the last Wound he suffered the last time he was hurt. Each use of this power is only good for one damaging blow.

Appearance: a common *ghul* is a tall feral creature, hunched over with overlong arms ending in cruel iron claws. It wears rags or rent robes stained with marrow, blood and dirt from the graves it digs up. More intelligent and magical examples appear more human but still have sharply angular features, prominently pointed or serrated teeth and long curved nails.

This character guide is for an Infernal male version of the *ghul* and differs substantially from the similarly named female Faerie *ghula* above. Whereas the latter are female appearing Faerie creatures that eat their spouses, these Infernal creatures act as primal destroyers and are found more commonly in male forms. The exact relationship between the two types of creature is unclear — Infernal *ghul* may have evolved from corrupt Faerie creatures or they may simply be different entities that appear to share similar forms and characteristics.

Unlike members of dark Faerie aligned *jinn* tribes, this *ghul* is a true "terrestrial demon" (*Realms of Power: the Infernal*, page 28) and loosely belong to the Order of Furies, sharing several of the traits and powers of that class of demons. Unlike most demons and other Infernal *jinn*, although a spiritual creature, an Infernal *ghul* cannot assume incorporeal form and does not possess the *Coagulation* power. This example lacks the *Envisioning* and *Obsession* powers of most common demons but other individuals may have these powers or additional deceptive powers or skills instead.

Exceptional individuals exhibit additional magical abilities over rock and/or flesh (as *Crafter/Master of Earth* and/or *Crafter/Master of Flesh*), illusions, possession, or have learnt some of the magic of humans (Dowsing, Hex, Malefica, or otherwise represented by the equivalent of a *Duplicate the Magi's (Technique)* power). The most dangerous and feared *ghul* are those who have gained power over other *jinn* by learning one of the summoning Arts - Sihr, the Arts Fabulosa, or more commonly, the Goetic Arts of Commanding or Spirit Summoning.

Hesaan, a Bedouin racehorse

Beloved by his master, a young Bedouin sahir named Salih al-Kamil, this *jinni* takes the form of an exceptional Arabian stallion renowned for his racing ability. Combined with his lack of fatigue, his magical travel powers allows him to cheat during the dust and confusion of longer desert races. This gives his master great status and pride, feeding his need for Vitality but is the source of continual harassment from horse-breeders wishing to mate their mares in the hope of producing talented offspring. Unaware of the Faerie nature of the horse, such suitors do not realize that time out at stud deprives his master of his magical aid and that such unions will always be unsuccessful in producing foals.

Hesaan

Faerie Might: 5 (Animal)

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

* denotes specialty for Mythic Quickness

Size: +2

Confidence Score 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: *Jinni*; Faerie Beast, Greater Power, Great Quickness x2, Improved Characteristics, Mythic Quickness (racing), Personal Power x2, Reputation as Confidence; Curse of Venus, Greater Malediction (keep any bargain made), Incognizant, Noncombatant, Proud (Major).

Qualities: Domesticated, Fast Runner, Herd Animal, Imposing Appearance x3

Personality Traits: Proud +3, Loyal +2, Brave +1

Reputations: Magnificent racehorse 3 (local)

Combat:

Hooves: Init +6, Attack +3, Defense +4, Damage +5

Soak: +3

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

Pretenses: Athletics 6 (racing), Awareness 3 (bad footing), Theology: Islam 1 (*jinn*)

Powers:

Sprint Faster than the Eye, 1 points, Init +1, Animal; Greater Power, 30 spell levels, 2 Intricacy points spent each on Initiative and reduced Might cost; this power instantly transports Hesaan from one location to

another within seven leagues that he can see or has an Arcane Connection to. As *Seven League Stride* but as a non-Hermetic effect allows the rider to accompany him to fulfill his racehorse role.

Immateriality, 3 points, Init +2, Imaginem; Personal Power, 40 spell levels, 1 Intricacy point spent each on Initiative and reduced Might cost; makes the jinni immaterial until sunrise or nightfall.

Equipment: exceptional quality tack and harness, coppery gold horseshoes

Vis: 1 pawn of Animal vis, copper horseshoe

Appearance: Hesaan appears as a magnificent example of an Arabian stallion, a breed famed throughout the Mythic Middle East and even in far off Europe. Like all horses he gains a +3 to running rolls.

This *jinni*, although able to become immaterial, can only assume animal form. He is an example of a potential *khadim* (servant spirit) of a beginning unGifted sahir with only limited scores in the Solomonic Arts. He is not balanced for use as a starting player character and is based on an Arabian racing horse – essentially a modified courser. For a mundane Arabian racehorse, use the statistics for the Courser given in the *Book of Mundane Beasts* and add Imposing Appearance x2 and the Great Quickness Minor Virtue, raising the beasts Presence to +1 and Quickness to +3.

Ighraq al-Siq

Ighraq al-Siq ("the drowning flood of the gorge"), is an ancient pagan spirit of the Tigris now confined to a gorge on the lower or Lesser Zab, a tributary of the Tigris also called Majnun, "the mad river," from its impetuous currents. Once able to range freely along the length of the river, he is currently confined to a specific stretch in the lower reaches known as the Siq al-Majnun or sometimes just "the Jinni's Gorge". He is responsible for the paroxysmal Spring flooding through this narrow canyon. This immediate canyon area has a Magic Aura of 6.

Ighraq al-Siq

Magic Might: 40

Characteristics: Int +1, Per +2, Pre +2, Com 0, Str +9, Sta +2, Dex +1, Qik -3

Size: +5

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Spirit, *Jinni*; Magical Monster; Ways of the River; Improved Characteristics x2, Large, Second Sight, Water Lore; Wrathful (Major); Infamous (the mad river), Poor Memory.

Qualities and Inferiorities: Focus Power (Crafter of Water), Greater Powers x5 (Drown, Presence, Transform into Floodwave), Lesser Powers (Donning the Corporeal Veil, Presence), Ritual Power x3 (Grant Water Lore, Grant Wilding); Huge x3, Improved Might x5, Improved Powers x5; Major Flaw: Blatant Magical Air, Limited Movement, Major Flaw: Restriction (confined to the Mujnun canyon on the Lesser Zab); Minor Flaw: Baneful Circumstances (not touching water), Minor Flaw: Restricted Power (only use Drown in floodwave form), Minor Flaw: Restricted Power (only use Grant Wilding to individuals with existing score in Water Lore), Minor Flaw: Slow Power (Transform into Floodwave), Minor Flaw: Slow Power (Donning the Corporeal Veil).

Personality Traits: Wrathful +5, Proud +3, Fickle +2, Flood +3* (Essential Trait)

Reputation: Mad river 4 (local)

Combat:

*Bludgeon**: (in floodwave form) Init -3, Attack +8, Defense +2, Damage +11

Lance: Init 0, Attack +8, Defense +2, Damage +16

Soak: +6

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

Abilities: Arabic 3 (water), Aramaic 5 (water), Area Lore (Zab) 6 (history), Area Lore (Tigris) 5 (floods), Brawl 6 (bludgeon), Great Weapon 3 (lance), Penetration 4 (wards), Second Sight 4 (*jinn*), Swim 6 (leaping out of the water), Water Lore 6 (rivers).

Powers:

Crafter of Water, 1-8 points, Init 0, Aquam: duplicates any non-Ritual Creo Aquam or Rego Aquam spell less than or equal to 40th level at the cost of 1 Might point per magnitude of the effect. Ighraq al-Siq can use the Water-way Range (equivalent to Sight) and Body-of-water target (equivalent to Structure) when invoking this power, being able to target anyone or anything on or in his part of the river or affecting the Zab as a whole (see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 43).

CrAq 40 or ReAq 40: Focus Power (3 mastery points to increase level by 15).

Drown, 0 points, Init -2, Aquam; 30 levels, 3 Intricacy points spent on reduced Might, 1 point on Initiative: in floodwave form only, Ighraq al-Siq can engulf a target whose Size is smaller than his own after a successful melee attack in an attempt to drown it, necessitating a roll to avoid deprivation (ArM5, pages 180-181). The victim can attempt to escape from his clutches each round using the Grappling rules (ArM5, page 174).

Donning the Corporeal Veil, 2 points, Init +1 (affected by the Slow Power Flaw, takes an additional round of preparation to activate), Corpus; 35 levels: Ighraq al-Siq can form the humanoid body described under Appearance to house his spiritual form; when doing so he acquires the physical characteristics, size, combat statistics, and Wound levels listed above. His arms and armour are also created with this power. He cannot become fatigued. This body lasts until he decides he no longer needs it. Killing the body does not kill Ighraq al-Siq.

Grant Water Lore, 5 points, Qik -13, Vim; Ighraq can grant the Minor Mystery Virtue Water Lore to an individual either temporarily or permanently. Characters granted this Virtue could improve it further through Adventure, Exposure or Experience like any other Nature Lore (see *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, pages 103-104). The Source Quality of Ighraq's canyon is normally 4 but magi able to persuade the malevolent *Jinni* to teach them can use the normal Teaching rules as an exception to the usual rule – in this case Ighraq's effective Source Quality is 9.

Grant Wilding, 10 points, Qik -23, Vim; Ighraq can grant the Major Mystery Virtue Wilding to an individual with an existing Water Lore score either temporarily or permanently (see *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, pages 105-106).

Presence, 0 points, constant, Mentem; 35 levels, 3 Mastery points spent on reduced Might: once released, Ighraq al-Siq is aware of everything that goes on within his haunt. This power needs to penetrate to perceive beings with a Magic Resistance.

Transform into Floodwave, 4 points Init -4 (affected by the Slow Power Flaw, takes an additional round of preparation to activate), Aquam; 45 levels: Ighraq al-Siq can transform into a floodwave, seemingly drawing on the water of the stream to appear as an elemental.

Vis: 2 pawns of Aquam vis can be collected every year from his haunt, in the form of clear rainwater that collects within a niche carved into the stone block that imprisons him. If slain in a physical form or dispersed in elemental, his body will yield 8 pawns of Aquam vis within perfectly smooth stones of varied hue.

Appearance: Ighraq al-Siq appears as a thin giant with blue-green complexion and straggly green-black hair like water-weeds. He carries a large spear and is clad in a vest of water-smoothed stones. Once manifested, this humanoid form can disperse into his preferred elemental form, a floodwave carrying a hail of stones that can travel upriver or downriver along a watercourse as a marauding torrent. The effect of a *Deluge of Rushing and Dashing* when invoked within the narrow confines of the gorge is particularly devastating.

Ighraq al-Siq is an example of a very powerful Magic *jinni* with a strong elemental affinity designed as an Autumn

starting character using the rules from *Realms of Power: Magic*, but Magic *jinn* do not necessarily have to be balanced to be used in play. He could potentially be summoned and perhaps even controlled by an experienced sahir or Hermetic magus. As these spirits are bound to a landscape feature or compelled to a magical bargain, they are best designed as non-player characters or as challenges for the Troupe rather than companions in a conventional saga. This character can be used as a template for similar elemental *jinn* using the suggestions above and the rules for genii loci Magic Spirits as detailed in *Realms of Power: Magic*, pages 106-107 and ideas from the section on elementals (pages 132-139). Note that his base Magic Might for character creation using the rules in *Realms of Power: Magic* is 35, although this has been increased to 40 using repeated purchase of the Improved Might Virtue.

He differs in powers from many Faerie *jinn* in that his magic is primarily elemental rather than illusory and is greatly focused by the physical constraints of his narrow surroundings. Like many other pagan *jinn* he is supernaturally tethered to his physical locale and suffers a significant drop in power if separated from it — in his case, he is tied to the body of the Zab river and is reluctant even to step onto its banks.

Alternatively this creature can be used as the inspiration for a similar Faerie creature or an Infernal *jinn* related to the Order of Aerial Powers. An example of a lesser fire spirit that may be encountered in the incorporeal entourage of a sahir is Wahhab (*Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 135). A medium powered creature would have a Might of 20-25, being roughly comparable in power to a starting Hermetic magus and could easily be aligned to Auram or Terram instead with some minor modification.

Unlike most Magical spirits of similar magnitude, Ighraq al-Siq does not possess the Daimon Special Virtue, although he does possess a True Name like all *jinn*. If granted the Daimon Virtue, he can only be bargained with using Hermetic Theurgy and cannot be controlled or coerced using simpler magic (see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 102).

Story Seed: *Jinni* Blocks

Since beyond times Ighraq al-Siq has been trapped by an ancient sorcerer into a *Jinni* Block — a type of unusual tower tomb usually placed at the entrances to the ruins of some lost cities. The process may be similar to the Goetic Art of Binding but an unknown effect triggered by intrusion into the Majnun canyon area releases Ighraq al-Siq from his imprisonment and compels him to drive off intruders. While trapped within the block, Ighraq al-Siq is essentially unable to affect his surroundings in any way and cannot be detected by magic, becoming essentially part of the native stone. The stone block is granted the *jinni's* Magic Resistance but can still be eroded and broken by the elements and other non-magical attacks.

Over time, the area immediately surrounding the block has become a fixed Arcane Connection to the spirit, providing a +1 bonus to the Penetration multiplier and replacing his original physical locus. A character that actually stands barefoot on top or touches the prison block is considered to have a stronger Arcane Connection to Ighraq al-Siq, gaining a +3 Penetration bonus, and also gains the benefit of the entrapped spirit's Magic Resistance. A sahir, summoner or Hermetic magus can use their magic to attempt to command Ighraq al-Siq using scouring (*Realms of Power: the Infernal*, page 117) or Sihir by standing within the vicinity of the *Jinni* Block even if they are unaware of his presence. A failed attempt at controlling him however will trigger his release and invoke his displeasure...

Jumayl, A *Jinni* Guide

This lesser *jinni* has been created as an example starting magus level character using the full rules from *Realms of Power: Faerie*. The selection of skills and particular powers are designed to be useful for a party traveling through the Mythic Middle east. His requirement for vitality and human interaction to recover Might points provide a strong hook to involve him in adventures and active stories, making him a good choice to accompany magi as a guide throughout the area covered by this book.

Jumayl may be found at times in any major city in the region that suits the saga or even the ports of the Levant, but favors the bustling markets around the fortress of al-Mushaqqar in Bahrayn (See Chapter 6: Arabia), where well-paid work and cheap alcohol can be easily found.

Jumayl

Faerie Might: 15 (Vim)

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

Size: 0

Age: appears 25

Confidence: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: *Jinni*, Mythic Companion, Pass as Human; Faerie Speech, Greater Powers x2, Highly Cognizant, Humanoid Faerie, Increased Faerie Might x2, Improved Characteristics, Ostentatious, Reputation as Confidence (caravan guard), Second Sight, Skinchanger, Warrior, Well-Traveled, Wilderness Sense; Carefree, Dutybound (Bedouin honor code), Greater Malediction (keep any bargain made), Might Recovery Requires Vitality, Traditional Ward (Bismallah Invocation), Vulnerable to Folk Tradition.

Personality Traits: Impulsive +3, Cheerful +3, Impious -1

Reputation: Skilled Caravan guard 2 (Mythic Middle East)

Combat:

Scimitar (as Long Sword): Init +5, Attack +14, Defense +9, Damage +8

Soak: +3

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

Pretenses: Animal Handling 3 (camels), Athletics 3 (running), Mythic Middle East Lore 4 (trade routes), Awareness 3 (alertness), Brawl 3 (dagger), Bows 5 (short bow), Carouse 2 (power drinking), Faerie Speech 5, al-Mushaqqar Lore 2 (drinking establishments), Faerie Lore 3 (jinn), Folk Ken 4 (mercenaries), Leadership 4 (battle), Ride 3 (camels), Second Sight 3 (jinn), Single Weapon 7 (long sword), Survival 2 (deserts), Theology: Islam 1 (*jinn*), Wilderness Sense 3 (find water).

Powers:

Cuirass of the Zephyr, 1 point, Init +3, Auram; as *Circling Winds of Protection* with Duration of Qira'a (as long as Jumayl keeps reciting verses of the Qur'an – equivalent to Concentration).

Blinding Light of the Pious, 1 point, Init +3, Ignem; as *Flash of the Scarlet Flames*.

Tay al-Ard (Travel), 9 points, Init +1, Corpus; 45 spell levels, 1 Intricacy point; this power instantly transports Jumayl and 2 individuals he holds hands with from one location to another that he has visited before or has an Arcane Connection to, regardless of distance. As Leap of Homecoming, with R: Touch, T: Group.

Equipment: a fine damascene steel scimitar, leather scale caravan guard armor, flashy jewelry

Vis: 3 pawns of Vim vis, camel's tooth

Appearance: Jumayl ("little camel") is a comely, lithe man of uncertain oriental appearance, alabaster skin and white hair. One eye is iridescent green, the other ocean blue. He favors swirling robes dyed a deep blue color over light leather armor, highlighted by gold jewelry.

This *jinni* is a wanderer — forced to wander from caravanserai to caravanserai along the trade routes of the Levant, Arabia, Persia, Transoxiana and beyond for a crime his brother committed. An excellent swordsman and skilled outdoorsman, he is well known amongst the Muslim merchants and even Levantine Redcaps for his easy-going nature and bravado in defending caravans from raiders and brigands. Like most Faerie *jinn*, he can change into animal form — in his case, a white wild Bactrian camel using his Skinchanger Virtue.

Although immune to Fatigue like other faeries, Jumayl is unusually susceptible to the effects of mundane alcohol — a weakness that helps him to play his role within stories along the caravanserai routes. Unlike most faeries, due to his

Might Recovery Requires Vitality Flaw, his Might points, once spent, can only recover if he gets a full night's rest and eats a meal in the company of fellow travelers. This must be done within a human community, eating travel rations or caravanserai meals, drinking beverages fermented by humans and listening to humans sing or tell tales about their travels. For every eight hours the character rests he recovers a number of Might Points equal to the prevailing Aura as modified by the Realm Interaction Table, or 1, whichever is greater. He does not actually need to eat or drink however. Jumayl knows enough about wizards to avoid leaving Arcane Connections carelessly and keeps his True Name a close secret.

His powers have been created as Greater Powers but could readily be reduced to Lesser Powers to downgrade him to a standard companion if his Ostentatious Major Virtue, 2 Increased Faerie Might Minor Virtues and Highly Cognizant Minor Virtues were also dropped. In this case, his Might Recovery Requires Vitality Major Flaw should be replaced with three Minor Flaws. Alternatively if used as an NPC, his Virtues and Flaws do not need to balance and further powers with illusions or summoning animals could be added.

Kharrat, the Braggart

This demonic *jinni* is an example of a creature that may be summoned by a starting sahir with only basic competence in *Sih*r. He is similar in powers and abilities to a particularly malevolent lesser *qareen*. Although relatively powerful for a creature with a Might of only 10, he is a very troublesome spirit and will need to be carefully bargained with to use his powers for his master's benefit. Like all demons, he tries to bend instructions to suit his own purposes and will attempt to lead his summoner into corruption.

Order: Tempter (*Shaitan*)

Infernal Might: 10 (Ignem)

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

Size: 0

Confidence Score: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: *Jinni*; Greater Malediction (bound by bargains); Weak-Willed

Personality Traits: Selfish +5, Proud +3, Cruel +3

Reputations: none

Hierarchy: 1 (*Shaitan*)

Combat:

Fist: Init +1, Attack +9, Defense +8, Damage +2

Soak: +10

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

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

Abilities: Arabic 5 (threats), Brawl 6 (fist), Charm 6 (bragging), Concentration 2 (maintaining spells), Folk Ken 3 (temptation), Penetration 3 (Vim), Theology: Islam 1 (*jinn*)

Powers:

Apparition, 1 point, Init 0, Imaginem: Kharrat may assume an illusory form that only his chosen victim, 'Arkhaman, can perceive. To 'Arkhaman, the form appears to be a real person in all respects.

Protection of the Close Friend, 0 points, Init +3, Mentem: The chosen victim of Kharrat cannot act directly against it without extreme provocation; it would be akin to attacking one's own mother. The victim may be as angry as they like with the demon, but actually physically opposing it requires a huge effort of will, which must be repeated every time the victim wants to renew his attacks.

Control Human, 2 points, Init equal to Qik, Mentem. If this power penetrates, Kharrat exerts direct control over its companion. It can issue commands that the target carries out to the best of his abilities; however the target can attempt to break the control of the jinni every time he is asked to do something contrary to the tenets of his faith.

Envisioning, 1 or 2 points, Init +2, Mentem. This Power allows Kharrat to appear in the dreams of its sleeping companion (in which case it costs 1 point), or make the target experience a waking dream or vision (in which case it costs 5 points). The *shaitan* cannot instantly make substantial changes to a dream, but instead gradually twists it to take on darker and more frightening tone, and can speak through any figure from the victim's subconscious. A waking dream is more obvious; the victim suffers an immediate and powerful hallucination of whatever the demon desires. This may be so frightening that the victim is stunned for a round, and must make a Brave Personality roll against an ease Factor of 9 or have an extreme reaction, such as retching, convulsions, or abject terror. This is the preferred way a *qareen* communicates with its chosen companion.

Coagulation, 2 points, Init -1, Corpus: See *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 31.

Obsession, 1 to 3 points, Init -5, Vim: Overconfident. See *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 31.

Weakness: Protected Group (A victim who willingly and totally rejects him, fueled with a Confidence Point.)

Vis: 2 pawns of Ignem in its eyes

Appearance: Kharrat looks like a normal man with pale skin and completely black eyes that give off smoke like smoldering coals. He is generally in spirit form, where no one can see him.

Kharrat is a pompous and arrogant spirit. He desires nothing more than to corrupt and control the sahir named 'Arkhaman, who believes him to be his father. At every opportunity, he encourages 'Arkhaman to behave recklessly and with sinful pride by goading him through his dreams, or by affecting him with his *Obsession* power. His plan is to help 'Arkhaman to become a powerful sahir, and then force him to help Kharrat rise in the infernal hierarchy under his control by fighting other demons.

Zawba'a, Whirlwind of the Desert

Magic Might: 18 (Terram)

Season: Summer

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

Size: 0 (+1 in material form)

Confidence: 1 (3)

Virtues and Flaws: Magic Spirit; *Jinni*; Greater Immunity (heat), Ways of the Deserts; Berserk, Keen Vision, Second Sight, Wilderness Sense; Blatant Magical Air, Driven (to kill), Greater Malediction (bound by bargains), Magical Air*; Baneful Circumstances (in contact with iron)

Magical Qualities and Inferiorities: Greater Power x3, No Fatigue; Improved Attack x2, Improved Initiative x2, Improved Soak x2

Personality Traits: Angry +2, Vicious +3, Merciless +2; Bloodthirsty (Strength) +3*

Combat:

Clawing Wind: Init +8, Attack +12, Defense +8, Damage +6*

*Includes Bloodthirsty Essential Trait above. The zawba'a may also cause additional damage with its *Flay* Power, below

Soak: +7

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

Abilities: Arabic 5 (abuse), Athletics 2 (sprint), Awareness 2 (potential victims), Bargain 1 (magical bargains), Brawl 5 (clawing wind), Desert Lore 3 (trade routes), Folk Ken 1 (wizards), Hunt 3 (tracking), Penetration 3 (Corpus), Second Sight 4 (invisible things), Survival 3 (deserts), Theology: Islam 1 (*Jinn*), Wilderness Sense 3 (deserts)

Powers:

Donning the Corporeal Veil, 0 points, Init +1, Terram: The zawba'a can assume material form (Size +1, as described below) to allow it to attack its opponents physically. (Greater Power; see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 102)

Flay, 0 points, Init +1, Corpus: R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Ind. As the zawba'a touches its opponent their skin is partially flayed from their body. The victim suffers a Heavy Wound. (Greater Power, 20 levels, -2 Might cost, +1 Init, remaining Mastery points used for Penetration Ability)

Presence, 0 points, Constant, Imaginem: The zawba'a is aware of everything happening in the area that it haunts, which can be up to a Structure in size. (Greater Power; see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 103)

Vis: When the zawba'a is destroyed, it leaves behind a small whirling column of black sand that if collected yields 3 pawns of Terram vis and 1 pawn of Auram vis.

Appearance: In corporeal form, the zawba'a appears as a column of sand whirling at high speed, within the heart of which chuckles a malicious, bloodthirsty face. It is about 8 ft tall.

The zawba'a is a bloodthirsty *jinni* of the Arabian deserts, taking delight in slaying anyone unfortunate enough to stray across its path. It is, however, a rather single-minded creature, being unlikely to adopt any tactic beyond the frontal assault, making it relatively easy to outwit.

Some experienced sahir are able to bargain with zawba'a and bind them as servants using the *khadim* bond (see Chapter 3: The Order of Suleiman). Such sahir often use these desert *jinn* as a form of travel – the sight of a powerful sorcerer being carried across the landscape by a whirling sandstorm instead of a mundane mount strikes respect into even the most powerful of mundane rulers.

Story Seed: Death by Zawba'a?

The characters are called in to investigate a murder. The victim was found flayed to death in their chamber, which was covered in a fine layer of sand. Investigating, the characters uncover a plot by a shadowy cabal of sahir from a minor Islamic sect who have learnt to bind the whirlwinds to their service. The sahir use them as weapons against their political enemies, unleashing them on unsuspecting victims. Is this what happened here, and if so, who was responsible?