

Ars Magica

The Sundered Eagle

The Theban Tribunal



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The Sundered Eagle

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Chris Jensen-Romer knows little Latin, and less Greek. That fact has not stopped him being fascinated by the byzantine politics of the Byzantine Empire. However he'd like to thank Panagiotis Koutelidakis and his friends for their help with language issues, and making the book better, and everyone who attended Grand Tribunal 2008 (especially David Chart and my fellow authors.)

Matt Ryan lives in Ithaca, the New York State city not the island. He had the great pleasure of meeting his fellow authors and line editor in Cheltenham, and would like to thank The Cotswold Inn for their hospitality. He would also like to thank Andrew, CJ, David, and Mark for making this monstrously huge undertaking enjoyable.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Welcome to the Byzantine Empire — or what's left of it. This is the *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* sourcebook dealing with the Theban Tribunal: the lands of Greece and Asia Minor in 1220 AD. If you or your storyguide has or intends to establish a saga set in the Tribunal of Thebes, or neighboring lands, you will find in these pages a rich variety of landscapes and legends, magi and covenants, and plot ideas to enrich your setting and stories.

Byzantine Landscape

The former Byzantine Empire is a land united by language, but divided by landscape. Its component realms and provinces of fertile fields, hillside pastures, olive groves, and vineyards are divided from each other by gulfs and mountain chains, making passage by sea the most practical means of transport. Indeed, this region is centered around the Aegean. Dotted with thousands of islands, the sea plays a greater role here than in any other Tribunal. Several covenants are located on islands — one is even ship-borne and another is underwater — and most of the others lie only a short distance from the coast.

To the west of the Aegean Sea lies the mainland of Greece; to the east is Asia Minor; to the north are Macedonia and Thrace, and beyond them Bulgarian lands; to the south is the island realm of Candia (Crete) and the Mediterranean Sea. At the crossroads between West and East, at the passage between the Aegean and Black Seas, lies Constantinople, the Queen of Cities. Even half-ruined as she is now, she outshines any of the lesser cities of Western Europe in both size and splendor.

Magic and the supernatural is more

commonplace in the Theban Tribunal than in many Western Tribunals. Forgotten gods and nature spirits abound in this land, and words have power. Even peasants can produce simple spells to make life easier for themselves. More important to magi, *vis* is plentiful. In contrast to Western Europe, where *vis* is the currency of the Order, in the Theban Tribunal a better analogy is to consider it as food, essential for the life of a magus, but not the common coin of the economy. This bounty has allowed the Tribunal to flourish in the absence of a continual struggle for a limited resource, and permitted the development of a society of magi that is largely altruistic and egalitarian.

Byzantine Realms

Before 1204, the entire region covered by this book had been ruled as a single empire for the previous 900 years. As the successor to the empire that had been ruled from Rome, they called themselves *Rhomaioi*, or Romans, despite being composed of many cultures, and their ruler was called the *basileus Rhomaion*, the Roman emperor. Referring to this empire as "Byzantium" or the "Byzantine Empire" is a modern convention and is anachronistic in the 13th century, yet it is a useful label for the region, and will be used throughout this book.

The landscape of the empire changed dramatically and suddenly in 1204, with the sack of Constantinople by an army of bloodthirsty crusaders from the West. The invaders, described by the blanket term of "Frankish" by the natives, replaced the upper classes of the Roman Empire and instituted their own government, which became called the Latin Empire. The great and the

good who survived this invasion fled to former provinces and founded governments-in-exile — the most significant of which are the Empire of Nicaea, Epiros, and the distant Empire of Trebizond. Meanwhile, the northern provinces won independence from the Latin Empire to form the Empire of Bulgaria. Now Western and Eastern cultures clash amid a rapidly changing political situation where native Greeks and foreign Franks vie for supremacy.

Byzantine Peoples

Principally inhabited by Greeks (or "Hellenes"), the lands of the Theban Tribunal are united under a common language called Romaic Greek. Most magi use this language instead of Latin, and even work their spells in its ancient precursor, Classical Greek. As a cosmopolitan region and the gateway to the East, Greece hosts many people from exotic nations; Egyptians, Seljuks, and Persians, to name just a few. However, the indigenous Greeks are the dominant race, and are typified by dark hair, dark eyes, and an olive complexion.

Byzantine Legends

The legends of these lands inevitably draw heavily — but by no means exclusively — on the rich mythology of ancient Greece, as well as romances contemporary to the 13th century, and Christian mythology. Many of

the supernatural denizens of the Theban Tribunal have evolved from classical origins; *nerieides* and *drakoi* bear some resemblance to the nymphs and giants of the ancient world, for example. Others, such as the *stoicheia* and *vrykolakes*, have their roots in local folklore and peasant superstitions.

The mythology of ancient Greece is associated with all four of the supernatural Realms. From the Magic Realm are the primeval Titans who are reckoned to be personifications of forces of nature, as well as lesser natural gods and beings who pay scant regard to mortal worship, such as Helios, Asklepios, or the sibyls. Belonging to the Faerie Realm are the famed Olympian gods, as well as many members of the classical bestiary such as centaurs, fauns, and satyrs. Stories of these gods are often fables or morality plays, exploited for a rhetorical purpose or as a moral lesson. These beings then arise from the human stories. The tales of the Heroic Age, in contrast, are interpreted scripturally; that is, they are alternative versions of stories from the bible. Their heroes, such as Herakles or Theseus, are associated with the Divine Realm, as are sites associated with their virtue. Their adversaries often belong to the Infernal Realm, as do the sites associated with their struggles.



How to Use this Book

As always, nothing written here is "set in stone" as far as your saga is concerned. You should feel free to use as written those bits that you like, and adapt or discard other parts. It's up to you to decide how closely you want to follow the real history of the region, or the Tribunal as it is depicted here. There are numerous covenants and magi described in these pages, but by no means enough to fill entirely a Tribunal consisting of about a hun-

dred magi. Space is left for you to add covenants of your own devising, and to add to the membership of the described covenants.

If you are a player in a Theban saga, it may be best to consult your storyguide before reading further. Most of Chapters 2 to 8 should be safe for you to read, consisting of information that characters could reasonably be expected to know about their home territory and Tribunal. Although in places there are some story seeds and game statistics that the storyguide may prefer you not to read. Heavier spoilers may be found in Chapters 9 to 12, each of which deals with creatures, schemes, factions, and story plots associated with one of the four supernatural Realms.

Medieval Perceptions of Antiquity

The perception of the ancient civilizations of Greece in the rest of medieval Europe varied substantially with time and place, and with social standing. The intelligentsia were aware of Homer, Herodotus, and Thucydides, while lords and peasants were regaled with epic romances of Aeneas, Hector, and Odysseus, which cast their heroes in roles more suited to Western feudalism than Ancient Greece. Certainly, the scholars of the Byzantine Empire had access to both the mythology and the histories of the classical period in superior number and quality to Western scholars, but even in the West, most educated people had heard of the Greek gods, of the Trojan War, and of the national characters of its most famous cities: Athens, Thebes, and Sparta.

In later times, the disorderly democracy of Athens will be contrasted unfavorably with the good stern control exerted by Sparta over its subjects, but in the 13th century matters were somewhat different.

St. Augustine relates the myth of Athens' founding in his *City of God*, casting the conflict between Athene and Poseidon as an allegory for the triumph of reason over passion. Athens was portrayed as a place where law and reason prevailed, largely due to the reputation of its most famous king, Theseus. In an allegorical sense, Theseus stood for the perfect man, divine and inherently good. These characteristics were transferred by association to the city he ruled, despite the fact that the days of the Athenian polity had little to do with the rule of King Theseus.

In contrast, ancient Thebes was known for the nasty, animalistic intensity of its crimes. This is directly attributed to the origin of the people of Thebes, who were born from the dragon-teeth sown by Kadmus. Its history of incest, betrayal, patricide, and fratricide led to its branding as a den of iniquity and its name becoming poetic shorthand for moral corruption.

Sparta is little known in the 13th century except by those who have access to the histories. It is admired for its strict hierarchy, almost as a model of feudalism, and lauded for its military prowess.

The Greek myths were not necessarily shunned because of their pagan origins. Writings of the Church Fathers, including St. Augustine's *On Church Doctrine*, instructed Christians to read these myths in a number of ways: as moral allegory the mythic figures represent virtues, vices, desires, and inclinations; as exempla they demonstrate a virtue or failing; as physical allegory they can represent the forces and elements of the cosmos such as planets; and as typology they can stand for versions of Biblical characters — Deucalion was a type of Noah, Herakles a type of Samson, and both Orpheus and Theseus were types of Christ.

Chapter Two

History of the Empire

The Origin of Mankind

In the legends of the Ancient Greeks, the first race of men was the golden race who sprung from the earth. They were subjects of Kronos and never grew old, spending their days laughing and dancing; death was no more terrible to them than sleep.

Following them was the silver race, growers of grain and eaters of bread, ruled by their womenfolk. They were long-lived but quarrelsome and ignorant; they never sacrificed to the gods, but neither did they make war on one another.

The brazen race followed them, falling like fruits from the ash-trees, ready-armed with bronze weapons. They ate flesh as well as bread, and loved warfare, being pitiless and insolent.

The fourth race was also a brazen race, but nobler and generous. They bore the blood of gods, and were the great heroes of the classical age. The myths say that they were created by the sons of the titan Iapetus.

The current race of man is an iron race, unworthy descendants of the fourth race. They have the heroism but none of the nobility of their ancestors, and share in the worst qualities of the sons of Iapetus: excessive daring (from Atlas); crafty scheming (from Prometheus); foolish stupidity (from Epimetheus); and rash violence (from Menoitios).

The first three races lived under the rule of the Titans, and some Seekers link their disappearance with the coming of the fourth race, who brought the worship of the faerie gods to Mythic Greece. These primal races might provide an interesting background for a magus or magical character through the Mythic Blood or Magical Blood Virtues (for the first three races) or the Faerie Blood or Blood of Heroes Virtues (for the fourth race).

Nation of Historians

The great historians of the ancient world were Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Polybios, who recorded various histories of classical Greece. They started an intellectual trend of de-mythologizing their subject, removing all mention of the gods, magic, and fate from their accounts, a convention that was aped by the historians of the Byzantine era. Kalliopeia of House Merinita claims to see the hand of a group of Magic Humans called the Warders of Mystery (*Realms of Power: Magic*, page 95) in this, although it is unclear whether she is suggesting that the historians are Warders themselves, their servants, or the victims of their bowdlerization. The Warders are devoted to hiding evidence of magic from the pages of history; and their meddling — if indeed they are responsible — has reduced the power of the faerie gods by preventing the repetition of their stories.

The Age of Heroes

The great stories of Ancient Greece, concerning heroes such as Perseus, Theseus, Jason, Herakles, and Achilles, are part of Greece's history. St. Jerome wrote a universal chronicle called *The Chronicon* in Constantinople in about 380 AD. In it, he related the events of the Bible to those of classical times based on a wealth of different sources. A small fraction of his timeline, along with modern dates, is given below:

DATE	EVENT
5201 BC	Creation of the world and Adam
2599 BC	The Flood

2016 BC	Birth of Abraham
1685 BC	Prometheus steals fire from the heavens
1559 BC	Kekrops, first King of Athens
1592 BC	Birth of Moses
1347 BC	Perseus slays Medusa to rescue Andromeda
1320 BC	The theft of Europa
1261 BC	Jason and the Argonauts
1235 BC	Theseus and the Minotaur
1191 BC	The Trojan War begins
1182 BC	The Trojan War ends
1175 BC	Samson slays the Philistines
1104 BC	Eurystheus, first King of Sparta
1037 BC	Solomon takes the throne in Jerusalem
776 BC	The First Olympiad
683 BC	Beginning of Athenian democracy
591 BC	The Captivity of the Jews, destruction of the First Temple by Nebuchadnezzar

THE TROJAN WAR

According to Herodotus, the Phoenicians were the ultimate cause of the fall of Troy when they stole Io, a Greek princess. Later, Cretans landed at Tyre and stole Europa from the Phoenicians (although some say it was Zeus), and the Greeks — in the form of Jason the Argonaut — stole Medea from the king of Colchis. They refused to make restitution for these acts, since no compensation had been made for Io. With these events in mind, Paris the son of Priam of Troy resolved to have a Greek princess in retaliation. He abducted Helen and sparked off the invasion of Troy and the wasting of Asia by Greek forces under Agamemnon. The *Roman de Troie*, written by Benoît de Sainte-Maure in 1165 AD, begins with Jason's voyage to Colchis, which provokes Herakles' punitive expedition against Troy and its destruction for the first time. Hector, who led Troy's armies, is pictured

The Theban Tribunal

as the very flower of the chivalrous heroes of the classical age, whereas Akhilles, champion of the Greeks, is a base coward unable to defeat the noble Hector without resorting to trickery. The *Roman de Troie* ends with the return and death of Ulixes (Odysseus) at the hands of his own son by the witch Kirke.

The fall of Troy is the source of the enmity held for the Greeks by the Persians. They had always considered Asia Minor to be their territory, and the Greek invasion and subsequent colonization could not be permitted.

The Pulchritude of Princesses

The outstanding beauty of the daughters of Greek kings shaped much of Greece's early history. To carry off such a woman, says Herodotus, marks a man as a rogue, but to retaliate for such a deed marks a man as a fool. Helen of Troy is vilified throughout history as the most perfidious of women, and used as an exemplum in sermons on the inconstancy of woman.

This is a theme that should not be ignored in Mythic Greece. Players with beautiful female characters should be encouraged to take the Curse of Venus Flaw, especially if they bear noble blood, no matter how dilute. They may attract the attention of faeries born from the stories of Jason or Paris, who seek to derive vitality from attempts to recover the abducted beauty.



The Persian Wars

The formation of city-states (*poleis*) began the process of the urbanization of Greece. There were many hundreds of these independent city-states, which spread throughout the mainland and the islands into Asia Minor (Ionia), and also colonies throughout the Western Mediterranean region, particularly Sicily. Sparta (in Lacedaemon) was among the first to make its male citizens all equals, but this was a small fraction of the total population. Athens (in Attica) was the real innovator in the field of democracy.

Towards the end of the sixth century BC the emerging city-states came under threat from the Persians to the east. Darius I of Persia was the first Persian king to cross into Europe, taking Thrace (513). When the major Ionian states (Miletus, Chios, Samos, Phocaea, and Ephesus) rebelled against his rule (499–494), the two Greek states of Athens and Eretria (in Euboea) sent ships to help them, making war with the Persians an inevitability. The Persians took Eretria through treachery, and then moved on Attica with 20,000 men to confront Athens. They clashed at Marathon in a momentous victory for the Greeks; despite facing twice their number, the Greeks suffered just 192 casualties compared to the 6400 lost to the Persians.

Darius' son Xerxes I launched another attack on Greece in 480, taking Thessaly, Delphi, and Argos with ease. This time it was Sparta who raised the defense, convening the first Panhellenic Congress at Corinth in 481, at which 31 city-states granted the Athenian Themistocles supreme command over its forces, although overall inter-allied command remained in Spartan hands. The Spartan defeat at Thermopylae delayed the Persian forces long enough to save the Greek fleet at Artemisium from annihilation. The Persian fleet was eventually defeated in the battle of Salamis, one of the most famous naval victories of all time. Xerxes took most of his forces back to Asia after this defeat, but left behind a picked force of 40,000 men under General Mardonius to try again the next year. In 479 this force marched south, ravaged Attica, and occupied Athens for a second time. When the Spartan army marched to confront the Persians, Mardonius withdrew from Attica to Boeotia, intending to meet the Greeks on the plains where he could employ his cavalry to best effect. The Greek victory in the resulting battle of Plataea was the greatest land battle ever fought by the Greeks, finally driving the Persians out of Greece forever.

Persian Magical Warfare

The Greek armies facing Darius I were wholly unprepared for the use of magic on the battlefield. The Persian king had brought with him a cadre of sorcerers (or *yatus*) who deployed their spells against the Greek forces. Supernatural creatures under the command of these sorcerers rent their way through Ionian and Thracian soldiers, and it was only in Attica where Athenian theurgists had mustered that they were seriously opposed. When Xerxes led his subsequent invasion, the Greek theurgists were more prepared for the *yatus*, although the defenders were still outclassed by the professional battle-magicians of the Persian army.

The Persians' principle magical aid came from the *jinn*, *nasu*, and the *paririkas*. The *jinn* were spirits of the natural elements who used thunder, dust storms, and earthquakes against the Greek armies, and waterspouts and torrential rain against their navies. The *nasu* were fly-spirits that appeared in immense numbers to bite the Greek warriors and defile their fallen comrades. The *paririkas* appeared in human form and were able to disturb the elements through violent winds and spontaneous conflagrations. The most powerful of the monsters under the yoke of Xerxes' sorcerers was an immense bull that filled the horizon like a

mountain; its breath spewed flame, and its wounds spewed forth serpents and scorpions. It is said that in their desperation to combat such hideous monsters, the Greek wizards turned to the Witches of Thessaly and employed their chthonic magic to lay powerful bindings on the creatures, bindings that persist to this day.

STORY SEED: PLAGUE OF FLIES

The livelihood of a merchant connected to the covenant is under threat from clouds of flies that consume his goods and attack his pack animals and agents. They are being commanded by a rival, who has found a relic from the Persian Wars containing a bound *nasu*.

STORY SEED: AMULET OF POWER

A Persian wizard, descendant of one of the *yatus* who served Cyrus, is collecting artifacts from old battlefields in search of his ancestor's amulet of power. The characters have unwittingly gained this item without knowing what it is, and the wizard will approach them, civilly at first. But he is not used to taking "no" for an answer.

Athens and Sparta

The three victories of Marathon, Salamis, and Plataea are often seen as the beginning of European history, and gave the Greeks a sense of superiority and confidence in their abilities to keep the "barbarians" out of their land. The Greek states formed the Delian League, named after the meeting place of the confederacy on the holy island of Delos. Its purpose was mutual protection against Persia; together with retaliation, where possible, to avenge the Persian occupation.

The Peloponnesian War was fought between Sparta and Athens between 431 and 404. It was precipitated by widespread suspicion of the Athenians, who had suppressed several rebellions in Corinth, Euboea, Boeotia, and Samos, and moved the treasury of the Delian League to Athens where it had allegedly been spent on magnificent buildings and glorification of the city. Jealousy and fear among the Spartan leaders of the burgeoning power of their chief rival prompted them

into action. The war paused indecisively in 422 when both war-leaders fell in the Battle of Amphipolis, and Sparta's allies of Corinth and Boeotia repudiated the so-called "Peace of Nikias" in years to come.

Athens' ambitions knew no bounds however, and they launched an expedition against Syracuse in Sicily, which ended in total disaster. Meanwhile the Spartans cut Athens off from its agricultural land and silver mines with fortifications in Attica, and rebellions in their subject-allies imperiled the city's grain supplies. In Athens itself, an oligarchic revolution overthrew the former government, and an unexpected alliance between the Spartan general Lysander and Cyrus the son of Darius II of Persia was the final nail in the coffin of Athenian power. In 404 Athens unconditionally surrendered to Sparta. Over the next fifty years alliances formed and failed, ably stirred by Persian treachery. The resultant chaos left the city-states of Greece vulnerable to a threat they had not yet considered.

Amphipolos

The Battle of Amphipolos still rages in a Faerie regio in Thrace, where faeries take the part of Kleon of Athens and Brasidas of Sparta and their accompanying soldiers. Furthermore, both sides have numerous minor deities among their allies. Gods and men fight shoulder to shoulder against the enemy, Athene supporting the Athenian army, while Apollon and Artemis can be

seen among the Spartan defenders. Ares is also present, honored by soldiers of both sides by bloodshed and the atrocities that come with war. Characters wishing to meet with one of the gods have the opportunity to do so here, if they can drag the divine attention away from the battle. However, they will have to participate in the battle to get close enough.

refused entrance), and discovering the well-spring of life. When the emperor found the water of life, he slew a dragon that guarded it, and sent his sister to bring him a drink. However, she spilled it, and he cursed her to become a half-fish. She is now Gorgona, a huge mermaid who haunts the Black Sea and the eastern Aegean.

Alexander had three wives, two mistresses, and countless lovers, both male and female, but had only two known children. Both sons died before they reached their majority. When he was campaigning in Hyrcania in 330 BC, Queen Thalestris of the Amazons came to Alexander's camp and announced her intention to bear his child. Alexander gave his army 13 days' rest while he fulfilled this request. When Thalestris left, she announced that she was indeed pregnant. What happened to this child is a mystery.

Alexander's conquering ambition was checked by the rebellion of his armies, who were unwilling to press on further into alien lands. He returned from the East to put his empire in order, executing rebellious governors and dealing with plots against his person. He arranged governance of his empire in collaboration with the conquered people, which he symbol-

KING PHILIP II OF MACEDONIA

The Macedonians had remained aloof from Greek politics, despite being semi-Hellenized themselves. The kingdom had been a former vassal of Persia, but had refrained from committing itself during the Peloponnesian war. King Philip II came to power in 359 when his elder brother was killed in a war with Macedonia's non-Greek neighbors, the Illyrians. Upon taking power, Philip defeated the Illyrians and seized several Athenian dependencies in the Thermaic Gulf and Delphi, as well as attacking Thrace and the Chalcidian League. Athens accepted the Peace of Philocrates (346) which confirmed Philip's dominance in central Greece. Philip summoned the Panhellenic Congress at Corinth in 338 with a view to invading Persia. Soon after this assault began, Philip was murdered, possibly by Olympias, who was one of his wives.

Macedonians and Greeks, and conquered western and southern Asia Minor. In the following year he defeated the Persian emperor Darius III himself, captured Tyre and Egypt in 331, and chased Darius into Mesopotamia, capturing Babylon, Susa, and Persepolis. Darius was murdered in Media, and Alexander assumed kingship in his place. Over the next three years, Alexander expanded his empire eastward. He explored the boundaries of the world by descending into the sea in a glass ball, flying through the air in a chariot drawn by griffins, reaching the realm of the blessed (where he was

ALEXANDER THE GREAT

In the romances of the 13th century Alexander, the son of Olympias, appears more than human. His hair was likened to a lion's mane, his eyes were of different colors, and his strength was immense given his modest height. He was brave, self-assured, and of noble character, but prone to violent temper and possessed of a huge sexual appetite. He was actually the son of the Egyptian sorcerer-king Nectanabus, begotten in secret on Olympias. Alexander was trained in sorcery by his father Nectanabus until he discovered his parentage, whereupon he slew him in a fit of rage. Alexander's education continued under Aristotle, and he became the model of a philosopher-king.

Alexander was 19 when his stepfather Philip died, and he was quick to seize power, vigorously promoting Philip's plans to invade Persia. In 338 he crossed the Hellespont at the head of an immense army of



ized by marrying the daughter of Darius III. However, in 324 he contracted a fever aggravated by a wound suffered in India, and died of the infection.

Hellenistic Greece

Forty years of hostilities between Alexander the Great's former generals and would-be successors followed his death, ending in the emergence of three major warring kingdoms: Macedonia, Ptolemaic Egypt, and the Seleucid Empire. The cities of Alexandria and Antioch — capitol of Egypt and Seleucid Syria respectively — became the centers of Hellenistic culture rather than Greece itself. Macedonia remained dominant over Greece, Thrace, and Anatolia, but it was not until King Antigonos II Gonatus (284–239) that the impoverished kingdom's fortunes were reversed and a new line of monarchs governed Greece. Throughout this period Athens retained its pre-eminence, despite having to accept a Macedonian garrison thanks to several rebellions. By 229 it had gained sufficient wealth as a commercial power to buy out the garrison. Another prominent power in Greece was Rhodes, which expelled the Macedonians following Alexander's death, and repelled a siege by one of his would-be successors. Rhodes rivaled Athens as the principal Aegean commercial state, and was the headquarters of international finance and banking and exchange in partnership with Egypt.

THE LEAGUES

Perhaps the most important development of the Hellenistic age was the evolution of the leagues: confederacies of cities acting as a political unit. In the past the leagues had been dominated by one pre-eminent city, whereas the cities of the Hellenistic leagues were equal partners. The Achaean League arose from the states south of the Gulf of Corinth, whereas the Aetolian League comprised those states to the north, and was later joined by Pergamum and Rhodes. Both leagues were ruled by an assembly open to all male citizens. The Boeotian League constituted a third power, while Athens, Euboea, Elis, Messenia, and Sparta remained independent. In 267 the Aetolian League rebelled against Macedonia but was defeated, and the subsequent invasion of the Macedonians also marked the end of Athens

as a independent, democratic, and politically powerful state. Sparta remained hostile to the Achaean League, and invaded in 227, but the Achaeans allied with King Antigonos Doson of Macedonia which lead to the final defeat of Sparta in 222.

ROMAN GOVERNANCE

Rome's waxing imperialism became an important factor in the affairs of Hellenistic Greece. King Philip V of Macedonia's provocative alliance with Hannibal in 215 led to Roman military intervention in Greece which ended in 205 with the Peace of Phoenice, a treaty of mutual co-existence. However, Philip's continued ambition to expand his kingdom in Greece, in the Aegean, and along the Adriatic caused further military action from the Romans and a Macedonian defeat at the Battle of Cynoscephalae in 197. In 190 BC the greatest of the Seleucid monarchs, Antiochus III, invaded Greece and was similarly humbled by the Romans at the Battle of Magnesia and stripped of his possessions in Asia Minor. From then on Rome had no serious rival in the Aegean or the Middle East. The former Seleucid lands were given to the Roman allies of Pergamum and Rhodes. After a decisive Roman victory over Perseus, the son of Philip V, Macedonia came under Roman rule in 168. The Greek peninsula succumbed in 146 after the Battle of Corinth, although some Greek *poleis* managed to maintain partial independence. The Aegean islands were added in 133, and in the same year, Pergamum in Asia Minor was bequeathed to Rome at the death of its king. Several *poleis*, including Athens, rebelled against Roman rule in 88, but were crushed, and the land was devastated.

The stable government of the Roman Empire meant a time of peace and prosperity for nearly 250 years. Life in Greece continued much as it always had, and Roman culture became highly influenced by the Greeks through epic stories, poetry, and philosophy. In the first century after Christ, Greece and much of the Roman East embraced Christianity, following the efforts of Paul of Tarsus who preached in Athens and Corinth. When Diocletian came to power in 284 AD, it was obvious that no one ruler could hold together the whole empire, and he divided it into four prefectures, adopting a joint Augustus to rule alongside him and two subordinate Caesars. The eastern prefectures were the *Praefectus Praetorio per Illyricium* (most of mainland Greece and Crete) and the *Praefectus Praetorio*

per Orientem (Thrace, Asia Minor, Judea, and Egypt). The center of gravity of the empire was pushed ever eastwards, with Constantine establishing a new capital and Christian city at Byzantium, renamed as Constantinople in 330 AD. Although theoretically governed by joint rulers, the empire gradually broke into an Eastern and Western half. While Rome itself was eventually sacked by barbarian invaders and fell before them, the Eastern Roman Empire continued to thrive.

Constantine

After severe persecution of Christians by the Roman state had led many to martyrdom, in the fourth century the Roman Emperor Constantine promulgated an Edict of Toleration of Faiths, including Christianity. His saintly mother Helena was a staunch Christian, yet despite her influence it was a miraculous sign seen in the sky before the battle of Milvian Bridge that led to his eventual conversion to Christianity.

Constantine developed an interest in ecclesiastical matters, and following a council on doctrinal matters called by 12 bishops that produced disputed edicts, Constantine called the First Council of Nicaea in 325, where bishops of the whole Church affirmed true doctrine. This was the first of the great Oecumenical Councils of the Church, which define correct belief. Constantine himself had been a devotee of the mysteries of the pagan cult of Sol Invictus, but he was baptized upon his deathbed.

Constantine created a new Roman Capital at the small city of Byzantium, naming it Nova Roma Constantinopolis, and following his death it was known simply as Constantinople.

THE GOTHIC YOKE

During the brief return to paganism under Julian the Apostate (361 – 363), God allowed the Huns, Goths, and other barbarian peoples to move increasingly across the Danube against the empire. In 378 at the Battle of Adrianople the Eastern Roman Empire's army was almost annihilated, and the Gothic army reached Constantinople. They occupied the city as "advisers" until 400. In that year an elderly beggar woman at the gate insulted a Goth. When the Goth struck her,

locals came running to her aid. A riot ensued, and the Goths trapped within the city were wiped out. The Goths left, never to return.

The Byzantine Empire

With the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire continued to maintain Roman tradition and customs. A succession of glorious emperors led an empire which at its height included much of the Levant, Egypt, North Africa, Italy, and Southern Europe.

JUSTINIAN

One of the greatest Byzantine emperors, if not the greatest, Justinian is most renowned for his legal reforms, having commissioned a great Codex of Roman Law that was created by the lawyer Tribonian. Personally deeply pious, yet decidedly non-conformist — he is said to have believed that Christ was fully divine but not also fully human — his subsequent return to true doctrine came about through the personal intervention of Pope Agapetus I. Justinian married a low-born dancer, Theodora, causing a scandal, but she proved a magnificent empress. His military conquests expand-

ed the empire through southern Italy.

Justinian's generals Narses and Belisarius were among the great captains of history, achieving spectacular conquests. Justinian fostered a culture of careful civic administration, scholarship, and with the building of the great church of Hagia Sophia (See Chapter 7: Constantinople, Hagia Sophia), gave his capital city its most beautiful landmark. Autocratic and determined, his brilliance proved unpopular, for his efficient imposition of taxation caused much resentment.

In 532 a riot broke out in the Hippo-

drome, with the Blue and Green circus factions manipulating the crowds. The mob set fires that consumed much of the city, and the emperor prepared to flee. Only the Empress Theodora stood firm, saying she would rather stay and die in the city than run, and forcing Justinian to remain and face the crisis. Justinian acted decisively, sending troops into the Hippodrome. Thirty thousand people died there that day, massacred by Justinian's troops, ending the "Nika Riot" (the name taken from the crowd's cry of "Nika!" — "Victory!"). Their ghosts still haunt the area (see

The Mob in Constantinople

Throughout history, Constantinople has been shaped by the apparently spontaneous will of the people manifesting in riots and popular uprisings. Since the fall of the city this has not occurred, leading some to speculate that it was a side effect of the ancient bindings upon the city. Another strong possibility, however, is the personal interest of three demons in Constantinople: Golab, called "Foe of the Seraphim," and his lieutenants Hulikang and Nike (described in *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, pages 70–73). Hulikang and Nike entertained themselves for centuries, despite the pow-

Constantine's Visions

Constantine had a vision in which he saw an old hag who, upon his approach, became a beautiful young damsel who he seized and kissed. A short time later he had a second vision of his mother, Helena, who told him that the maiden would be his till the end of time. The spirit of a pope then appeared, and the secret was revealed — the maiden was a symbol of Byzantium that, through Constantine's actions, will be reborn in splendor. A third vision from God now revealed to him that his plans for the city were guided by God's hand, and showed exactly where the boundaries of the city must be laid out. Constantine led a great procession, and guiding a plough with his own hand walked the boundaries of the site, boundaries that lay far beyond the ancient walls of Byzantium. By this rite he bound the local spirits and created a potent Divine ward that endured for many centuries.

The binding took the form of the Sol

Invictus (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 70) Method and Power of Invocation/Cursing effects. The wards are currently disabled following the Sack of 1204, but were as follows.

GOD'S CITY

Invocation/Cursing Level 50 Effect

The Might of Faerie and Infernal creatures within the walls was reduced by 10, with a penetration of 20. In Justinian's day these were extended to the new walls by a great rite.

WALLS OF THE CITY OF GOD

Invocation/Cursing Level 50 Effect

Invaders attempting to storm the walls suffered three additional botch dice on all stress rolls. This effect was likewise trans-

ferred to Justinian's walls later.

This rite endured down the centuries, until in 1204 somebody removed the palladium, the item that was central to the rite, from under the Column of Constantine. The palladium lay in a sealed underground vault along with several other relics. These included the 12 baskets that contained the fragments of loaves and fishes from the feeding of the 5,000, the axe used by Noah to construct the Ark, the jar that contained the perfume the Magdalene poured on the Lord's head, and the crosses of the two thieves from Golgotha. These potent relics are also missing, but if the palladium and the relics were restored, the binding would be reactivated and the wards would once again protect the city.

The exact nature and form of the palladium are unknown, as is its current location and the identity of the thief.



Chapter 7: Constantinople, and the Mob in Constantinople, earlier.)

In the latter years of Justinian's reign, two monks were persuaded to smuggle some silkworms, and the secret of silk manufacture, from the distant East. This luxury product has been produced in Constantinople, Thebes, and Thessaloniki ever since, and has greatly assisted the creation of the near-legendary wealth of the capital.

PHOCAS

In 602 the populace of the empire was enraged by the costs of the endless wars against the Avars, a steppe people who had invaded from the north. The army mutinied and a charismatic young officer, Phocas, was proclaimed emperor. Emperor Phocas' brief and destructive tyranny led to the collapse of the wars against the Slavonic peoples, who now settled across Greece unimpeded. In 610 a revolt by the son of the Exarch of North Africa finally ended Phocas' tyranny, which had seen many executions of prominent citizens, including even the ex-empress and her three daughters. Phocas was captured and brought before the exarch's son, Heraclius, who, enraged, struck off his head on the spot. Acclaimed as emperor, Heraclius' accession was greeted with joy by the people of the capital, sick of the horror and

oppression. Phocas' head was lost, but many in the crowd said it continued to speak after it was severed from the tyrant's body, and a demon may still dwell within it.

WAR WITH PERSIA

In 626, Persia invaded. Emperor Heraclius sued for peace, but the Persians were determined to overthrow the Christian empire in the name of their Zoroastrian religion. Forced to fight, Heraclius defeated the Persians at the Battle of Nineveh, destroyed many Zoroastrian temples, and recaptured the True Cross that the Persians had captured. The Persians were never again to trouble the Byzantines, for a new enemy had arrived in the form of the Islamic Arabs, and Persia was to collapse before their onslaught.

THE ARAB THREAT

Within a few decades of the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the Muslim Arabs had overthrown the Persian Empire, and by 711 had forever destroyed Byzantine North Africa, subsuming it in the vast and highly expansionist Caliphate. Twice the Muslim armies reached Constantinople, with fleets and an army besieging the city from 674–678, and 717–718. From this point onwards

the provinces of the empire in Asia Minor were to act as a bulwark against Islamic expansion into Eastern Europe, and continuous warfare followed. However, after reaching a natural border south of the Anatolian mountains, the Arabs largely contented themselves with raids into Byzantine territory, and diplomatic and mercantile contacts were to continue throughout the centuries that followed. Mosques were built in Constantinople, initially for the benefit of Arab prisoners, and later for the trading community. This state of affairs persists.

ICONOCLASM

The conflict with Islam led to two major developments. The Byzantine Empire was divided into *themes*, military provinces each with their own standing army that also served as administrative districts. Secondly, there followed a century of intense theological controversy that was to have huge effects on the military and political scene, as the controversy between the Iconoclasts and Iconodulists broke out. Iconoclasm was favored by militarily aggressive emperors, and military successes were attributed to Divine favor resulting from these religious reforms and suppression of the veneration of icons. Ultimately the pro-icon Iconodulists triumphed, however, under Empress Irene (752–803).

THE RISE OF BULGARIA

In 800 the Byzantines began an aggressive campaign to retake Greece from the Slavonic tribes who had settled there. This was partially to try to reestablish land routes with the West as the Mediterranean was now infested with dangerous Arab pirates, who continue even in 1220 to prey upon shipping.

However, since 680 the situation had changed, with a new Turkic people, the Bulgars, having created a highly successful state in the Balkans. Despite the missionary activities of the monks Cyril and Methodius that resulted in the conversion of Bulgaria to Christianity in 864, the Bulgarian Empire was to fight with the Byzantines for control of the Balkans throughout the second half of the ninth century. The Bulgarians were to prove dangerous and worthy opponents, and continue to be so, their fortunes often favored by House Tremere.

THE MACEDONIAN DYNASTY

In the 10th century the empire began a period of military re-ascendancy, marked by the recapture of Antioch and Tarsus from the Muslims, and, by 1019, by the complete conquest of the Bulgarian state which now became part of the empire. Crete and Cyprus were taken back from Arab pirates with the aid of Greek Fire and the fine war galleys of the imperial navy. Mainland Greece was freed of Slavonic control, and the southern Italian peninsula as far north as the Papal States held. Only the loss of Sicily to the Saracens in 902 clouded the resurgence of the empire. In 971 an army of Kievan Rus invaded Bulgaria, and soon approached Constantinople. A total of 12 cavalry charges failed to break the Rus ranks, but the 13th charge, led by Emperor Ioannes I in shining golden armor, broke the Rus and proved decisively the superiority of the Byzantine troops.

The Macedonian Dynasty (from the *Theme* of Macedonia, that is Thrace) ruled from 867–1056, and led a military and cultural renaissance which saw Byzantine power reach its apogee. The emperors and empresses of this dynasty introduced a form of military conscription into peasant militias, and built a highly successful war machine that enjoyed huge success. The elite troops, the Byzantine *kataphraktai* (heavily armored cavalry), developed a new wedge formation that smashed opponents' units and drove deep into enemy forces, routing them. Mercenaries continued to be employed, and the

imperial bodyguard remained the Varangian Guard, comprised first of Norse axe men and then after 1066 largely of Anglo-Saxon warriors who had fled the Norman Conquest of England. (See Chapter 3: Customs and Culture of the Greeks, The Imperial Guard)

BASIL THE BULGAR-SLAYER

The reign of Basil II from 976 to 1025 saw the highest point of Byzantine military success. He completely subjugated Bulgaria, reestablished the ancient northern frontier, and pushed east across the Taurus Mountains, beyond Lake Van. His reign saw the conversion of the Russians to Christianity, though at the expense of allowing an "illegal export," the marriage of his sister Anna to Vladimir of Kiev. Basil in exchange received the use of 6,000 Rus mercenaries, but the marrying of a *porphyrogennetos* ("born in the purple") Byzantine princess outside the empire was forbidden by law and said by many to promise disaster. Basil's brilliance was undoubted, yet so was his ruthlessness, for after the Battle of Kleidion in 1014 it is said he had 14,000 Bulgarian prisoners blinded, leaving only one in a hundred with his sight to lead the others back to the Bulgarian capital. On seeing his army return home, Tsar Samuel of Bulgaria dropped dead of a heart attack. Likewise, Basil had the right hand of each of his Bedouin captives lopped off, and repeated the mass blindings while fighting against the Georgians. Perhaps this cruelty is why God punished him by allowing him to die without an heir.

ZOE AND THEODORA

The end of the Macedonian Dynasty was presided over by two of the many empresses who had marked Byzantine rule. Women are, despite the social conventions and conservatism of Byzantine life (Chapter 3: Customs and Culture of the Greeks, Women), able to ascend to the highest office in the land, and the rule of Zoe and Theodora demonstrates the extreme importance the notion of being born *porphyrogennetos* (see Chapter 7: Constantinople, Birthing Chamber) had achieved in court life. Zoe had four consorts, who effectively ruled in her name, and was addicted to the acquisition of magical amulets and automata, some of which may survive. Following her death her last husband, Constantine IX Monomachos, was deposed in favor of her sister Theodora by the mob, as always active in the politics of the capital.

TRAGEDY AT MANZIKERT (1071)

A new people had arrived in eastern Asia Minor, the Seljuk Turks. In a series of brilliant campaigns they reached Baghdad, and on converting to Islam were to become the real power behind the Caliphate for decades to come. The Seljuks took up Islam and jihad with fervor, and in 1071 at Manzikert met the Byzantine army under Emperor Romanos Diogenes. The Byzantine cavalry attacked repeatedly, but the Seljuk horse archers fired and retreated, in classic steppe tactics, until at nightfall the Byzantines fell back towards their camp. The commander of the Byzantine reserves, Andronikos Doukas, deliberately betrayed the emperor and fell back, allowing the emperor's capture in the confused night retreat.

Doukas' betrayal of the emperor was motivated by political concerns at home, not love for the Seljuk Turks. Four years before, Romanos had been arrested on charges of treason for plotting a coup against the reigning Doukas family. Sentenced to death, he was brought before the Empress Regent Eudokia, but so charmed her that she not only pardoned him but married him, bringing him to the imperial throne. The Doukas family wanted revenge, and when Romanos foolishly trusted the reserve to Andronikos Doukas his fate was sealed.

Romanos was better treated by his captor, the Seljuk leader Alp Arslan, who arranged surprisingly favorable terms and released him from captivity. Oh his release after only a week of captivity, he was met by the Doukas with troops loyal to the traitor, and brutally blinded. Romanos died of an infection shortly afterwards, and Andronikos repudiated the peace treaty. The outraged Seljuk Turks moved swiftly west, conquering all before them. By the treachery of Andronikos the Byzantines lost the Anatolian Plateau, breadbasket of the empire, as the Seljuks overran it and began to colonize the sparsely populated highlands.

ALEXIUS KOMNENOS (1081–1118)

Following Manzikert, the *strategos* (general) Michael VII seized power, and two other generals rebelled and made their own bids for the throne. Nikephoros Botaneiates succeeded and briefly ruled, before a third *strategos*, Alexius Komnenos, carried out a daring coup that put him on the throne. Alexius Komnenos came to power surrounded by enemies, both in court intrigues and on his borders, but is recalled in his daughter Anna's biography *The Alexiad* as a heroic figure who saved the empire.

THE SICILIAN INVASION (1081–1084)

Southern Italy and Sicily had fallen to Norman mercenaries who had instituted a brilliant and successful state, and with the fall of the city of Bari marking the end of Byzantine power in southern Italy, the kingdom of Sicily prepared an invasion fleet to carry the war to the empire. In 1081 King Robert Guiscard sailed to Durazzo, taking the city with 1,300 Norman knights and a similar number of Saracen cavalry, plus foot soldiers. The Byzantine army was defeated, and the Sicilians advanced across the Greek mainland, checked only by a revolt at home that forced Robert to return. His son, Bohemund, assumed control of the expedition and continued the war, taking Macedonia and much of Thessaly. In the autumn of 1084 a terrible plague broke out in the Sicilian camp, ending the conflict.

THE PECHENEG THREAT (1091)

In 1091 a new danger arrived in the form of an great force of Pechenegs, fierce steppe nomads. The Byzantines allied with a related people, the Cumans, and the Pechenegs were almost annihilated in the victory of Levunium. The survivors sued for peace; from this time on surviving Pecheneg light cavalry along with the Cumans have been used extensively in Byzantine armies.

THE FIRST CRUSADE (1091–1108)

Pope Urban, moved by appeals from the emperor for assistance, preached a great crusade to retake Jerusalem and the Holy Land from the Muslim lords who ruled there. Alexius was dismayed, for he had wanted mercenaries to fight with him against the forces of Islam, not crusaders who were likely to take former Byzantine territories and not accept his suzerainty. He prepared carefully to meet the crusading armies as they arrived from the West through the Balkans, stockpiling food and assigning Pecheneg and Cuman cavalry to police the armies as they traveled through the empire.

Despite Alexius' best efforts, the crusaders despoiled the countryside. They burned towns and pillaged as they proceeded, clashing with Byzantine troops and constantly harried by the steppe troops Alexius had sent, who killed stragglers and tried to protect the innocent citizens of the empire from the Latin marauders. When they reached Constantinople,

Alexius refused to convey the armies by ship to Asia Minor until he received formal oaths of homage and a promise to restore former territories of the empire to him. A tense stand-off followed, with the crusader lords refusing. Alexius used his troops against the crusaders when they offered violence, and withheld supplies from their encampment outside Constantinople until the crusaders acquiesced, giving grudging oaths to restore former Byzantine lands captured or do homage to them.

The disasters that befell the crusaders and eventual success in retaking Jerusalem are chronicled elsewhere, but only one lord, Raymond of Toulouse, upheld his promise to restore former Byzantine territory. Many crusading forces attacked and sacked Greek cities in Asia Minor. Both sides felt a bitter sense of betrayal, and relations between East and West deteriorated sharply, with Westerners blaming the disasters on Byzantine effeminacy, duplicity, and treachery, and believing the empire had willingly betrayed them to their foes.

GENOA & PISA (1111)

1111 saw a new enemy in the form of the fleets of the Italian city states of Genoa and Pisa, which assembled off the Ionian coast and threatened to attack the empire. Fighting the Turks again in Asia Minor, Alexius was forced to grant them considerable trading concessions. Such concessions had already been granted to the Venetians in the trade with Constantinople, and led to the situation that persists today where Greek merchants are severely disabled in comparison with the benefits enjoyed by their Italian rivals within the empire. The long-term effect has been a decline in native trading, and the loss of the Byzantine fleet, as the empire has relinquished its maritime ambitions to Westerners.

IOANNES II KOMNENOS (1118–1143)

Despite palace intrigues, Ioannes II Komnenos succeeded his father. A deeply pious man of unusual ugliness and dark complexion, he was known as "Ioannes the Beautiful" or "Ioannes the Moor".

Ioannes revoked the unpopular rights of the Venetian merchants that gave them an advantage over Byzantine merchants. The Venetians responded by raising a fleet and seizing many of the major islands of the empire, and Ioannes was forced to restore their immense privileges within the empire to re-

gain his lost possessions. Military successes against Hungary and Serbia demonstrated that Byzantine power persisted, but their naval power was now forever eclipsed.

MANUEL I KOMNENOS (1143–1180)

The third emperor of the great Komnenos dynasty, Manuel was every bit the noble lord — tall, athletic, a great huntsman, and an energetic warrior. Scandalously, he was also a great lover and seducer of women, and his conquests are still proverbial today. Manuel faced the challenge of the Second Crusade (1143–49), which saw a further deterioration in relations with the crusaders, more violence and looting by the crusaders, and ultimately complete disaster for the crusading forces.

WAR WITH VENICE

In 1171 the Genoan colony at Galata was burned to the ground. Emperor Manuel immediately blamed their commercial rivals the Venetians, and 10,000 Venetians in Constantinople were imprisoned, their ships and property confiscated. The Venetians raised a great fleet and sailed to attack the empire, but while they were at Chios a terrible plague broke out and the Venetian fleet limped home, bringing the plague and death back to the city. Peace terms were agreed upon, and the prisoners released.

THE SICILIAN CONFLICT

The Kingdom of Sicily had not forgotten its ancient enmity towards the empire, and seized Corfu. A Venetian fleet and Byzantine army attacked, and succeeded in retaking the island. Unfortunately this success came only after the Venetians had openly expressed their contempt for their allies. Venetians staged a mock parade on the imperial flagship they had taken in a brawl with their Greek allies, and held a mock coronation of a Saracen eunuch in a marked comment on the Komnenos' swarthy complexions. A more ominous omen was the raid by Sicilian ships which sailed right up to the walls of Constantinople and fired a few arrows over into the very grounds of the imperial palace as a gesture of defiance.

Plans to attack the Kingdom of Sicily were ended by a Serbian uprising, but eventually a disastrous campaign to attempt to retake the southern Italian possession was undertaken, in alliance with papal forces.

ANDRONIKOS THE TYRANT (1183–1185)

The death of Manuel left his infant son as heir, under the regency of his mother Mary. A series of plots and coups led to the triumph of Andronikos I Komnenos, who is still remembered for his legendary cruelty, use of torture, and execution of political enemies. The coup that brought him to power is remembered with horror by the Latins. The mob ran out of control, killing very Westerner they could find in the city. Women, children, even the sick in the hospitals were dragged from their beds and murdered in a tremendous bloodbath that pushed relations with the West to breaking point.

In spring 1185 the Sicilian army returned, taking Durazzo, which surrendered without a fight, and advancing down the ancient Via Egnatia. In August they took Thessaloniki and carried out a general sack and massacre, most notable for the terrible acts of sacrilege and desecration of a type formerly unknown in Byzantine history. Thousands of the inhabitants died in the madness of rapine and loot and sacrilege, and it seemed this fate would soon befall Constantinople.

Andronikos ordered the immediate imprisonment and execution of many hundreds more political enemies and their families. A mob arose rescuing many of the condemned and gathered in the Hagia Sophia. At dawn after a night of speeches and plotting, the mob ran out through the streets, calling all citizens to arms against the emperor. Andronikos was out of the city at his country villa, but returned with a detachment of troops and ordered them to shoot at the mob. The soldiers refused, and Andronikos, realizing his danger, tried to flee, but was seized. Starved for several days, he had one eye burned out, and then, laden with chains, was sent out backwards on a donkey to face the howling mob. They tortured him horrifically until he finally expired. His mutilated ghost still rides the streets on nights of the dark of the moon, calling out for the mercy he refused others. The mob pillaged the palaces, and carried off a fortune in gold and silver, as well as many priceless relics that were lost forever.

ISAAC II ANGELOS (1185–1195)

The popular uprising that swept Isaac to power spread to Thessaloniki, where during peace negotiations a sudden attack by the outraged citizens and imperial army routed the Sicilians. The invaders fled in terror, being mas-

sacred in the general uprising which followed.

Earlier Byzantine emperors had realized the threat crusading armies passing through to the Holy Land represent, but Isaac was not able to prepare as efficiently. While many of the crusaders sailed directly to the Levant, the army of Frederick Barbarossa came overland through the empire, and Isaac was terrified. He sent two ambassadors to the crusaders to arrange peaceful conduct, but on arrival they immediately betrayed him by encouraging Frederick to seize Constantinople and the throne. Frederick marched to Phillipopolis and occupied it, before sending envoys to arrange for the safe conduct of his men across the Bosphorous, but Isaac seized the envoys and threw them in prison. The crusaders took Didymotichum, and seemed ready to attack Constantinople before Isaac agreed to their terms for safe passage and had them ferried across the Bosphorous. In April 1195 Isaac was overthrown in palace coup, and blinded, by his own brother Alexius III Angelos.

ALEXIUS III ANGELOS (1195–1203)

Alexius III was, though it seems scarcely possible, a worse ruler than his deposed brother. Deeply unpopular, he began his reign by levying the *Alamanikon*, a high tax designed to provide tribute to the German crusaders. Frederick Barbarossa had drowned in Cilicia while crossing a river, but the Emperor Henry VI managed to extort this tribute from Alexius, and it was to prove fatal to the Byzantine Empire. In Morea, Leo Sgorous carved out an independent state, and throughout the mainland local rulers sprang up, as centralized administration and authority broke down.

The Fourth Crusade (1202–1204)

After decades of catastrophe and worsening relations with the West, the overthrow of the Byzantine Empire occurred almost by chance. The Fourth Crusade had been preached to recover Jerusalem, but its real aim was to seize Damietta in Egypt, for only after Egypt was defeated did the crusade leaders feel they would be able to retake the Holy Land. A great agreement was made between the leaders and the Venetians. Each crusader would pay a sum of silver, in exchange for which a vast fleet would be constructed by

the Republic of Venice, to ferry the crusaders to the Holy Land (or Egypt).

Many crusaders did indeed assemble at Venice. The crusade leaders, however, could not pay the agreed sum, and many crusaders died of hunger or disease as they were left ill-supplied for months on a marshy island in the lagoon. Finally the Venetians offered a compromise solution. One of their vassal cities, Zara, on the Adriatic coast, had recently rebelled. If the crusaders agreed to stop off there and take the city back, the Venetians would reduce the sum owed, and the crusade could continue. Desperate, the crusaders agreed, and besieged and then sacked Zara, a Christian city. It was while at Zara that the situation changed.

PRINCE ALEXIUS

Prince Alexius, son of deposed Emperor Isaac II, approached the crusaders. Alexius had escaped his imprisonment and fled to the West seeking allies against his uncle, Emperor Alexius III. He made the crusaders a remarkable offer of wealth and military support. By diverting the crusade to Constantinople, and putting the rightful rulers back on the throne, the crusade would ultimately retake Jerusalem much more easily. As no fighting was anticipated, or very little, it seemed an excellent offer. The crusaders and Venetians, after much discussion, accepted the offer, though some left to sail direct to the Holy Land.

CONSTANTINOPLE BESIEGED, SUMMER 1203

In the summer of 1203 the crusaders set up camp at Scutari and Chalcedon, two miles across the straits from Constantinople on the coast of Asia Minor. They faced 30,000 men of the Byzantine army, and at least an equal number of armed civilians ready to fight them, large contingents of Genoese and Pisan soldiers in Constantinople, and the formidable walls of the city. The crusaders paraded Prince Alexius around the walls, but there was little sign of the popular joy at this return he had led them to expect, and the gates were firmly shut against them. After a month's siege, Emperor Alexius III unexpectedly fled the city into exile, leaving by night. Facing only light resistance the crusaders entered the city, and the young prince was proclaimed Emperor Alexius IV. He ruled alongside his blind father Isaac II, restored from prison to the throne.



EMPERORS ISAAC II ANGELOS & ALEXIUS IV ANGELOS

The reunion of father and son may well have been touching, and their elevation back to the imperial throne a surprising reversal of fortune, but the crusaders eagerly awaited fulfillment of the promises made to them. The new rulers proved unpopular with their subjects — forced to raise taxes to pay off the crusaders, and finding themselves unable to keep the promises made at Zara, popular feeling was running high against both the emperors and their Western allies camped outside the city walls.

In August a disaster occurred which made a rebellion almost certain, when a gang of crusaders attacked a small mosque in a suburb just outside the city walls. The worshippers put up a brave resistance, and many locals ran to their defense, forming an angry mob. Driven back by the citizens, the crusaders

threw burning torches into local houses, and a fire broke out. The wind carried the sparks over the wall into Constantinople itself, and the Great Fire began. For three days the fire burned out of control, consuming the homes of the poor and wealthy alike. On the third day it finally burned out, but a vast swathe across the city of 440 acres had been reduced to blackened ruins. In 1220 this huge expanse is still a field of ashes.

EMPEROR MURZUPHLOS, JANUARY 1204

The Venetian Doge Dandolo, realizing the impossibility of the situation, suggested that the crusaders must seize the city, yet from August until January they waited, negotiating with Alexius. Alexius by now had become hardened against the crusaders' demands, and was preparing to fight, but in January 1204 the mob of Constantinople

rose and took matters in to their own hands. They gathered at Hagia Sophia, and seeing his chance another Alexius, known by his nickname of Murtzuphlos, conducted a brutal palace coup. Isaac and Alexius were swiftly murdered (though some say Isaac died of old age and shock on being taken prisoner again), and Murtzuphlos was crowned Emperor Alexius V. He immediately prepared the city's defenses and repudiated the crusaders' claims, and it became clear war was inevitable. Once again the crusaders would have to take the city by force.

THE SECOND SIEGE, APRIL 1204

The crusaders planned a second assault. The walls had been significantly reinforced by the Byzantine forces, who had also built wooden towers atop the wall to counter siege engines, and stockpiled rocks and oil. Both sides had siege machinery, soaked in vinegar to prevent combustion, and both sides employed Greek Fire. (Though the accounts of the balls of flame trailing smoke hurled at the ramparts by the attackers may well indicate a Flambeau magus was aiding the assault.) The Venetian ships had ladders lashed to the mast tops, and tried to sail in close to the walls, but they failed. A few brave knights managed to scramble from the ladders onto the walls, but they were all killed or captured. After a few days of prayer, the expulsion of all prostitutes from the camp, and inspiring speeches, a second assault took place. This time first one, then a second tower was taken. Then a man-sized hole was made from a ship brought hard up against the walls, and the warrior cleric Aleaumes of Clari hurled himself through the tiny gap, straight at the Byzantine soldiers massed on the other side. Incredibly they fled, and more and more crusaders poured in after him. It was a single boatload, but enough to cause disarray among the defenders, who panicked.

Murtzuphlos was close by, and rallied his men before charging the invaders, when street fighting began in earnest. That night Berthold of Katzenellenbogen's men began another fire which spread quickly. Meanwhile, the small force of crusaders within the city tried to work out a plan to either force the Byzantines to an open battle, or to let their colleagues still outside gain entrance. It was not to prove necessary, for that night Murtzuphlos slipped away into exile.

Constantine Lascaris (brother of Theodore) was elected by the people as emperor that night in the Hagia Sophia, once it be-

came clear that Murzuphlos had fled. In the morning he too realized the city was now indefensible, as the troops and even the Varangian Guard were pouring out of the city, deserting their posts and taking what the chronicler Niketas famously called "the road to perdition." The city was lost, and Constantine Lascaris fled.

THE SACK OF CONSTANTINOPLE

Agreements intended to reduce rapine and attacks on civilians forgotten, for three days the city was subjected to a brutal and violent sack. While a three-day looting after a siege is normal practice to repay the troops, the sheer savagery and violence of this attack left observers stunned, as did the violation of even nuns and the desecration of the holiest artifacts and altars. Utter madness seized the crusaders, and everything that could be stolen was taken with as much force as was required, and piled high at central repositories for later sharing out. The streets ran scarlet with the blood of the murdered. The horror of those three days and three nights still haunts those who witnessed them, as the ghosts of the slain haunt the streets.

The Latin Empire

Following the Fall of Constantinople, the agreement between the crusaders and Venetians first drawn up in March 1204 was implemented. The emperor was to receive direct dominion over one quarter of the empire; three eighths were to go to the Venetians, and three eighths to the other crusader lords.

The first issue was who was to be appointed emperor, and an electoral college of six Venetians and six crusaders was appointed to settle the issue. With the Venetian Doge Dandolo declining to be a candidate, two strong contenders immediately emerged: Boniface of Montferrat, and Baldwin IX, Count of Flanders. After lengthy deliberations and as a result of Venetian influence, Baldwin IX was appointed Emperor Baldwin I, and Boniface (who was related by his brother's marriage to the former Byzantine imperial dynasty) set off to capture his own kingdom, Thessaloniki. Meanwhile Byzantine leaders fled to Arta where the state of Epiros (Chapter 5: Greece, Epiros) was set up, and to Nicaea where another Byzantine successor state developed, the Empire of Nicaea (Chapter 8: Anatolia, Empire of Nicaea.)

THE THESSALONIKI CRISIS

By the terms of the agreement, Boniface should have received as-yet unconquered lands in Anatolia. Now-Emperor Baldwin was horrified when instead Boniface marched towards Thessaloniki, as it was clear he planned to take the empire's second city. Boniface desired independence from Baldwin, and the crusaders began to split between pro-Lombard and pro-Flemish factions. Boniface captured Adrianople, a city held by Baldwin, and Baldwin raised an army to confront Boniface. Only the patient diplomacy of the Venetian Doge Dandolo prevented a civil war breaking out almost immediately after the capture of the empire. Adrianople was restored to Baldwin, and Boniface secured Thessaloniki and was welcomed by the Greek populace there as rightful lord of the city. (See Chapter 5: Greece, Kingdom of Thessaloniki)

THE DEATH OF BALDWIN

Emperor Baldwin began a campaign in Asia Minor with the aim of ending the resistance from the city of Nicaea where many Byzantine exiles had fled. He came close to capturing Nicaea, but the attempt to introduce feudalism in mainland Greece caused a revolt in Thrace, with the rebels supported by an invasion by the Bulgarian Tsar Kaloyan. On April 14, 1205, the Bulgarians ambushed and inflicted heavy losses on the Latins at Adrianople, and Emperor Baldwin was captured. His fate remains unknown, but it seems likely he died in captivity. Some have said that he was due to be ransomed when he made improper advances on the Bulgarian Tsar's wife, but persistent rumors of his being seen in Flanders still circulate, and there are curious whispers about House Tremere having more knowledge of his fate than they are willing to share. The indiscreet Redcap who started the Tremere story has since died after being thrown from his horse, and the then-magistrates of the Tribunal of Thebes were not willing to pursue the matter.

EMPEROR HENRY, 1205–1216

Baldwin was succeeded by his brother Henry who was crowned Emperor Henry I on August 20, 1205, when news of Baldwin's death in captivity arrived at Constantinople. By this time the Latin Empire was under immense pressure from the Bulgarians and Nicene Greeks, and was reduced to a narrow

strip of territory around Constantinople.

Married to Agnes of Montferrat, Boniface's daughter, Henry enjoyed better relations with the Kingdom of Thessaloniki, but the two Latin states were still cut off by Greek rebels and Bulgarian forces until a series of successful battles brought them back into contact by land in 1207. Henry then sought peace with Tsar Karolyan.

Agnes died in 1207, and in 1216 Henry married Maria of Bulgaria, daughter of Karolyan and stepdaughter of the current Tsar, Boril. She is popularly believed to have poisoned Henry, and fled the court following his sudden death in 1216, though other rumors attribute his murder to the hands of Count Oberto of Thessaloniki. Maria's current whereabouts are unknown, but disquieting Hermetic gossip links her to the dark magical practices of the Daughters of Erichtho.

EMPEROR PETER, 1216–1217

The crusaders once again elected a new ruler, Peter II of Courtenay. A brother-in-law of Emperor Henry, he had not been on the Fourth Crusade. He somewhat unwillingly set off to his new empire, stopping to be crowned by the pope in 1217. Peter landed at Durazzo, with 5,500 men, but was seized by the ruler of Epiros, Theodore Komnenos Doukas, and imprisoned. He is believed to have died a prisoner in 1217 or 1218, almost certainly murdered, though like Baldwin his body has not been found and no grave is known, leading to rumors of his survival.

EMPRESS YOLANDA, 1217–1219

Peter's wife, Yolanda of Flanders (Henry's sister), did successfully reach the city by ship. From 1217 until 1219 she ruled as regent, achieving peace with both Bulgaria and the Empire of Nicaea, and marrying her daughter, Marie de Courtenay, to Theodore Lascaris, the Nicene emperor. On her sudden death in 1219 the throne was offered to her eldest son, Phillip of Namur, but he declined the honor. His younger brother Robert of Courtenay has now accepted the title, and will be Emperor Robert, but he will not arrive in Constantinople until 1221, leaving the empire leaderless in 1220.

The Empire of Nicaea has just renewed hostilities after three years of peace, so the Latin Empire is once again at war, and the prospects do not appear bright.

Chapter Three

The Order of Hermes

The Theban Tribunal is a curiosity in the Order of Hermes. As an organization it predates the founding of the Order, albeit in a very different form than today. It was originally much larger, but early in the Order's history split in two, to form the Transylvanian and (modern) Theban Tribunals. Most distinct is its political system, which departs radically from that found in the rest of the Order. The Theban Tribunal is occasionally depicted as a model Tribunal, where magi live and work towards a common goal rather than being riven with strife and political bickering. More often, however, it is seen as an interesting anomaly rather than a model for the rest of the Order to follow.

Hermetic History

The lands that eventually became the Tribunal of Thebes have a long history of magicians. Rich sites of vis and the attentions of magical and faerie entities made fertile soil for arcane practitioners, and the natural geography provided hundreds of isolated pockets in which these magicians could co-exist. While the East may have had its "Dark Ages," it never suffered the literary severing that the West did, meaning that Greek wizards were more literate than their Western counterparts. While their language evolved, it was not splintered into many different tongues like the West, and pre-Hermetic sorcerers could more easily communicate through letters, allowing them to cooperate if a specific venture proved fortuitous. The long-standing superstition that killing a wizard would curse the killer also helped.

Such cooperative couplings predated the founding of the Order. Wizards in Greece and the islands would form temporary leagues —

groups that followed a charismatic leader or banded together for a common goal. Members found that the less they actually met, the better the league succeeded, and so relied on communiqués and individual assignment of specific goals. Once the goal was reached or the leader departed, the group would separate, retreating back to its members' individual pursuits. While interesting to politically minded Theban magi, none of these early leagues merit individual mention.

Before the Order of Hermes

The wizard Prokopios preceded the founding of the Order of Hermes. In much the same way as Trianoma united the 12 Founders, Prokopios attempted to execute a similar vision among the wizards of Thebes. But lacking secrets to offer such as the *Parma Magica* and Hermetic theory, he had only limited success despite his Gentle Gift. Central to his scheme was a *typikon* — named

after the charter used by Orthodox monasteries — which regulated how wizards should act, how collective decisions should be made, and what sanctions could be brought against the foresworn. Prokopios claimed that the *typikon* was dictated to him by the spirit of Aristotle, who wrote copiously on politics in his day. The *Typikon* of Prokopios became the charter of the pre-Hermetic leagues; although it failed in its intended goal to unite the Greek wizards in a Panhellenic Congress. However, when the Order of Hermes came to the lands of the Greeks, the magi used the *typikon* as the foundation document of the Hermetic polity still practiced today in the Theban Tribunal.

The first notable league was the League of Iconophiles, formed in the early eighth century to save religious icons from the Byzantine emperors who thought they should be destroyed. Thirty years into their struggle, the league's leaders met Trianoma, and though declining her invitation, the League of Iconophiles serendipitously provided the origin for House Jerbiton (described in detail in *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 40–1).

The Descendents of Prokopios

Prokopios' numerous children and apprentices joined the Order of Hermes, and there are still some (principally in House Jerbiton, and among the Trianomae of House Bonisagus) who identify him as an ancestor. These magi claim that the Daimon of Aristotle is the daimon *syggeneias* (family spirit) of their line; and that he still offers them advice, particularly with regards to preserving the unique political system of the Theban Tribunal in favor of that of less-democratic Tribunals.

Shaping the Theban Tribunal

The expansion of the Order into the Byzantine Empire had little actual impact. The Order, primarily House Jerbiton, was only present in the major cosmopolitan areas of Constantinople, Thessalonica, and Adrianople, since the countryside was ruled by hostile powers — malignant faeries, capricious gods, bands of vampires and Infernal witches, and superstitious peasants — and magi settled where books, learning, and civilization were strong. Jerbiton magi were content to live alongside the various Gifted and unGifted practitioners who already existed, a *détente* born from the previous centuries of coopera-

The Theban Tribunal

tion between magical folk and the non-aggressive philosophy of House Jerbiton. Few magi of other Houses bothered with the area, content to explore their native soils in Western Mythic Europe. At the founding of the Order of Hermes, the Byzantine Empire extended into Hungary and Bulgaria, and deep into Asia Minor. This vast area contained wizards from many disparate traditions, who were all members of the Eastern Empire and showed little desire to join the nascent Order. Distrustful of Westerners in general and Latins in particular, they saw little need to replace their freedom

under the typikon of Prokopios with the restriction of the Oath of Hermes.

In 775, House Tremere invaded Greece, slaying wizards and taking vis and magical items as spoils. None of the wizards slain were members of the Order, meaning that the participating Tremere magi did not break their Hermetic Oaths. The response, however, was swift. Wizards suddenly found the need to defend their territory, and formed the Theban League to repel the invaders. Followers of Jerbiton and Trianoma renewed the invitation to join the Order, and many

accepted in order to receive legal immunity from these attacks. This act, more so than the military reprisals, ended the conflict. Tremere magi who were ready to slay outsiders balked at attacking members of the Order.

One hundred years later, House Tremere again threatened the Tribunal and the entire Order. Always watchful, Theban magi successfully intercepted messages indicating Tremere's grand plan to become the Order's overlord (see *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, page 113 for more details). His most trusted lieutenants and advisors were due to meet at



Dorostolon, a Tremere covenant in southern Bulgaria. A secret force of magi clandestinely entered the covenant and broke the minds and loyalties of Tremere's lieutenants. Although no one officially claimed responsibility for the Sundering (as this event it is known), the most commonly held local opinion is that the magical bindings holding Typhon (see Chapter 9, Magic: The Titans) were undone, and a pact forged with it. This group of magi — probably from the covenant of Hedyosmos, among others — directed the creature at Dorostolon. Once Typhon had removed the threat of Tremere's ambition by destroying the covenant and incapacitating the magi, it was re-imprisoned. Tremere himself died shortly after.

At the sixth Grand Tribunal in 865, the Theban Tribunal was officially instituted, and named after the Theban League that had formed in response to the depredations of House Tremere. The territory granted to the Tribunal stretched from the Ionian to the Black Sea, and extended into the lands of the Bulgars and into Anatolia. The fact that the Tribunal contained just one domus magna — Coeris, Tremere's home — but was named after and centered on the lands of the Theban League was testament to the distrust that the Order held for House Tremere at that time. The formation of the Bulgarian Empire thirty years later, along with the gradual recovery of House Tremere from its self-imposed isolation and subsequent expansion, convinced the ninth Grand Tribunal in 964 that the Theban Tribunal was too unwieldy in its current form, and the Transylvanian Tribunal was formed from its northern reaches. The Theban Tribunal's boundaries have remained constant since then.

The Tribunal of Thebes played almost no part in the Schism War, although some Greek magi enlisted in the cause and fought battles in Western Mythic Europe. As the war tailed off, a Byzantine army invaded Bulgaria in 1014. House Tremere insists that Theban magi assisted the emperor. This claim hasn't been proven, but it is true that certain magi, especially Gentle Gifted Jerbitons, had close connections with the emperor and other powerful families of the Byzantine Empire. House Tremere's response came in 1185, when the House supported the lords behind a Bulgarian rebellion. Military aid was withheld, but materials and advice were supplied. This led to a few Greek magi announcing their support for the emperor, and forming the League of Advisors, who took up residence in Constantinople to openly participate in the emperor's court. They did not benefit monetarily

from this association and claimed they only offered advice, mindfully treading the line between the permitted role of advisor and forbidden post of court wizard.

In the midst of this affair was the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, and the loss of the Anatolian plateau to the Seljuk Turks. Byzantine magi occupying the area fled Asia Minor following the invasion of the sultan, and have not returned to the region since.

THE COLLAPSE OF AN EMPIRE

Many Theban magi avoided the entire imbroglio of the League of Advisors, concentrating on their own interests and participating in the Tribunal's culture and political responsibilities. Some paid no attention at all, until 1204 when Constantinople fell to the Italian and French forces of the Fourth Crusade. Once boasting three covenants, the fall of the mighty City of the East saw the end of them all. Thermakopolis was destroyed utterly, and its only survivor, Mathieus, is in self-imposed exile (see *The Lion and the Lily*, page 87). Moero's Garden, a covenant more concerned with poetics than politics, relocated to Nicaea, following the exodus of many Greek nobles. Xylinites became more insular and closed its walls to outsiders.

In the aftermath, accusations flew as rapidly as arrows. House Tremere was blamed, as was House Jerbiton. The League of Advisors, which had lost many of its members with the fall of Thermakopolis, couldn't weather allegations of interference with mundanes, and disbanded. Although the Theban Tribunal failed to secure a conviction against members of the former league, House Tremere has appealed to the Grand Tribunal of 1228 for the case against the two surviving magi to be reconsidered. Should this appeal be successful, it could have important consequences for the autonomy of Tribunals in general and the Theban polity in particular.

The reorganizing of the Byzantine Empire into smaller empires has forced some covenants to adapt to the changing political landscape that results from new rulers, but others have been left untouched. Every Theban magus has an opinion on the current situation, but not all are willing to commit to the various leagues that have formed as a response (see *The Leagues of Thebes*, later). Not all believe that the situation threatens the supernatural balance that existed, but the majority does. It has been just 16 years since the fall of Constantinople, and while Frankish magi have followed the mundanes east-

wards, they have not settled in sufficiently large numbers to have a noticeable impact on the Tribunal's practices. However, some have already rebelled against the Theban polity, and the Tribunal of 1221 promises to be an interesting one as they seek to make changes to their adopted home.

The Leagues of Thebes

Theban magi have a propensity to form leagues: alliances of like-minded individuals devoted to pursuing a specific goal. There are several leagues currently active in the Tribunal; each league has only a few members and none is powerful enough to accomplish its goals quickly or privately. Each will need more members or cooperation from other sources. The overall goal of each is altruistic: to continue the prosperity and hegemony of the Theban Order of Hermes. Each league, however, has a different idea how this should be done. Some of the leagues presented below might have goals that could be construed as contrary to the Code of Hermes. However, actions are prohibited by the Code, not ideology, so none of these leagues contravene the Code merely by existing. On the other hand, the actions of magi pursuing the goals of their league may well provoke other magi to prosecute them for a crime. The following are just examples of some of the leagues currently active in Thebes.

The League of Constantine

Constantine was the Roman emperor who founded Constantinople, dividing the Roman Empire into Eastern and Western halves, revitalizing the empire, and pouring new energy into the faltering state. While the West was lost to barbarians, the East still maintains its imperial traditions and nature. Constantinople has been conquered several times over the centuries, but in the past, the conqueror would marry into one of the noble imperial families and continue the Roman tradition. The Latins have not done this. To make matters worse, they have subjugated the Church to the pope's authority, something

no conqueror has done before. The League of Constantine hopes to return the empire to its true path, put a legitimate Greek emperor back on the throne, and return the empire to the hands of God. The league is composed entirely of Jerbiton magi, although that is not a requirement for membership. Each has an apprentice who is nearing gauntleting age, a member of the antigones (*Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 43). The apprentices are more martial than their parentes, and this league promises to be more effective than Jerbiton magi in the past. The league is currently centered at Moero's Garden, the covenant near

Nicaea. For more information on this league, see Chapter 11.

The Children of Olympos

A small and eccentric league of magi who have dubbed themselves The Children of Olympos believe that the Tribunal would be better served if the magical patrons of each covenant were the Greek gods of old, rather than the sundry assortment currently occupying those positions. Centered around

the charismatic Lucian the Scholar of House Merinita (see Chapter 4: Theban Covenants, Aegaea), the league declares that the Order should step away from the ebbing fortunes of the Divine and Infernal by adhering to a more permanent and ancient supernatural foundation. Magical creatures are too temperamental, and uninterested in mortal affairs. Faeries, however, are intrinsically interested in the fates of men. The Greek gods have outlasted all others, Lucian claims, with Christ's reign casting a shadow over their long involvement with the hearts of men. See Chapter 10 for more information on this league.

Former Covenants of the Theban Tribunal

DOROSTOLON (815 –848)

A covenant on the south bank of the Danube, and temporary home to several powerful Tremere magi who were orchestrating their Founder's plan to dominate the Order. The fortress was ripped apart, allegedly by Typhon in its efforts to get to Tremere's lieutenants during the Sundering of that house.

ESTROPI (914 – 1069)

A sept of Bjornaer magi all with heartbeasts of predatory birds. They lived on Mount Erciyes, the highest mountain in central Anatolia, and fled after the invasion of the Seljuk Turks.

GRAMMATON (980 – 1092):

Grammaton of Bonisagus and his filii were devoted to the completion of original research connected to binding magics. The covenant, named after its founder, was disbanded over a hundred years later when it became apparent that the research was not going to achieve its goal, despite several interesting innovations and discoveries. The remaining magi joined other covenants.

DIADELPHIA (1004 – 1067)

Founded by the two brothers, Cosmas and Baztas of House Verditiis, on the island of Kalymnos. Other Verditiis magi joined,

but left due to the bitter rivalry between the brothers. Cosmas was ostracized in 1067, and surprisingly his brother left the Thebes Tribunal with him. With no other magi living at the covenant, it was disbanded by default.

KYDDOPETRE (1039 – 1076)

Founded by a collection of Flambeau magi at the Cilician Gates, a narrow pass south of the Tarsus mountains that lead to southern Anatolia. After the Battle of Manzikert, in which the emperor was soundly defeated by the Seljuk Turks, the Byzantine Empire lost Cilicia to the Sultanate of Rum. Living outside the Byzantine empire was not a legal problem, but the magi disbanded, feeling too isolated from their Greek fellows to remain.

THE COURT OF FOOLS (1101 – 1204)

An itinerant Ex Miscellanea covenant full of mystics and soothsayers, which toured throughout mainland Greece. It was in Constantinople at the time of that city's destruction, and was destroyed in the fires. Several of its magi have resurfaced in 1220.

THERMAKOPOLIS (1115 – 1204)

The pride and shame of House Jerbiton, pledged to the protection of Constantinople, a task in which it ultimately failed.

LAMITES (1123 – 1127)

A short-lived Anatolian covenant devoted to prophecy, and claiming the Phrygian Sibyl (see Chapter 9) as their patron. It is believed that Lamia killed them all for their presumption, although it may have been the faerie called Lamia (*Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 68) who objected to the competition.

THUMACHIA (1151 – 1185)

Founded to protect the Tribunal's western border after ravages from the Second Crusade. The primarily Jerbiton magi trod a fine line between intervention in mortal affairs and protecting their sodales. Thumachia was sacked during the war between the Sicilian Normans and the Byzantine Empire. Instead of reforming Thumachia, the surviving magi joined Thermakopolis.

NOVOCASTRUM (1207-1212)

A short-lived covenant of Frankish magi in the western borders of the Kingdom of Thessaloniki, land which has since been conquered by the Principality of Epiros. It had little time to prepare for the Greek attack, and was destroyed when its magi unsuccessfully resisted; few in the Tribunal mourned their loss.

The League of the Vigilant

The League of the Vigilant was formed very recently. Most magi know that Infernal forces were active in both the Latin and Byzantine armies when the city of Constantinople fell, and many suspect that the Order may also be infected. Hydatius of Ingasia and Proximios of Alexandria have banded together to form this league, the former to act as its general and the later to provide funding and magical supplies (see Chapter 8: Anatolia, The Covenant of Alexandria for more on Proximios).

The league is just forming and its membership is small. It has no formal home or central meeting place at this point; Hydatius and Proximios are just beginning to recruit members. Hydatius and Proximios want magi who are not native to the Tribunal, hoping that fresh blood can hunt out bad. They plan to keep the identity of the other members of this league secret so as to best search out corruption, while the two of them seek cooperation and assistance publicly. Demon hunting is dangerous, demon detecting nearly impossible. The league knows that Hermetic magic can not detect demons, but hopes that careful investigation will. They watch their brethren patiently, waiting for a tainted member to accidentally reveal his true nature.

The Tribunal of Thebes accepts this league, as they do any, but wonders at its effectiveness. Persecutions have a history of growing out of control, and the more reserved magi of the Tribunal are wary. Others think this is a necessary step to ensure that the Order isn't corrupted like the ruling factions of the mundanes were. Hydatius and Proximios' glowing reputations give the League of the Vigilant an air of respectability, making naysayers reluctant to criticize it.

League Against Idolatry

This league consists of those magi who strongly oppose the remnants of pagan practice in the Order's traditions, and work actively to remove them, principally through the workings of the Legislative Board (see later). Their main focus at the moment is the Ceremony of Propitiation, which they consider to be idolatrous. This small league consists in 1220 of the magi of Oikos tou Eleous and Gigas, with sporadic half-hearted support from Artoud of Xylinites. The league actively opposes the Tribunal's recognition of patrons, and in particular the maintenance of the altars and vis sacrifices practiced at Delos in Tribunal years. These practices are seen by the covenants mentioned as clearly pagan — and going beyond veneration and the respect due to an entity, which is *proskynesis timetike* directed to the subject, and crossing the line to worship (*latreia*). The league is highly controversial, and the outbursts and anger that the issue raises have yet to be resolved. The tradition of the Tribunal is ancient, but the league claims that these practices constitute a mortal sin, and bring the anger of God upon the magi who participate, and upon their sodales.

Theban Tribunal Politics

When the Order of Hermes formed, a typikon offered by a Jerbiton magus of Prokopios' line was influential in constructing the Order's system of governance. As a result, the Order developed into a democratic organiza-

tion largely unknown to eighth century Europeans. However, the Theban League did not feel that the Order went far enough in its principles of fairness and democracy, and when the Theban Tribunal was formed in 865 they swiftly executed rulings of the Peripheral Code that moved the governance of the Tribunal closer to that used by the original typikon of Prokopios rather than the diluted version practiced in the rest of the Order.

The members of the Theban Tribunal are very proud of their political system. They consider the weakened governance practiced by the rest of the Order to be inherently corruptible, requiring men and women of great character to prevent that corruption from affecting the members of the Order themselves. In the Theban polity, all decisions are delegated to the Hermetic Assembly; that is, the magi of the Tribunal. However, the business of the Assembly is initiated, prepared, and implemented through magistrates who are selected by lot — the magistrates themselves are excluded from the actual decision-making procedure. Theban magi believe that their system removes block voting and factionalism (since magistrates are chosen at random), prevents cronyism (since the figures in power cannot serve for more than seven years at a time), and negates corruption (since magistrates have no executive or political power). Furthermore, the system encourages a sense of responsibility and altruism by rewarding acts that strengthen the Tribunal, and punishing antisocial acts.

The Hermetic Polity

The cornerstones of the polity of the Theban Tribunal are twofold. The citizens of the polity have all the executive power, whereas the Council of Magistrates has all the administrative power.

Take, for instance, the most common example of an alleged violation of the Code of Hermes: in Thebes it is the magistrates who prepare the evidence for the prosecution and the defense, not the principles involved. The decision of guilt or innocence is determined by the citizens (which is true for both Thebes and the usual Hermetic system), but deciding the punishment to be levied against a guilty party — which would normally be the job of the Quaesitores — is again the prov-

The Origins of the Polity

The Athenian political system has long been held up as an ideal government. Modeled on political theories of Plato, Aristotle, and Polybios (to name but a few), it reached its height in the days of Demosthenes (384–322 BC). It was lauded for its fairness, in that the laws were both determined by and protective of the people rather than the rulers. Technically not a democracy but a polity (*politeia*), a key feature was that individuals could not amass political power: they were not elected into

positions of authority, but rather chosen at random; they served for no more than one year at a time; and they could never serve in the same capacity more than once. Furthermore, those who served in an authoritative position had no executive power; all decisions were made by the Assembly as a collective rather than by any individual. Despite its noble beginnings, through successive reforms the governance of Athens became corrupted from its philosophical ideal, and eventually vanished.

ince of the polity. House Guernicus remains the expert in the study of Hermetic law, but has little role in the execution of it. This is quite deliberate; by putting the interpretation of the Code into the hands of amateurs, the Tribunal ensures that its rulings are intelligible to the average member of the Tribunal rather than being the arcane minefield common in so many other Tribunals. Technicalities of the law and legal loopholes are far less common in the Theban Tribunal.

The Tribunal's procedures are mediated through the election of **archai** (singular "arche"), a council of 16 magistrates who manage the Tribunal's resources, review the law, and investigate cases. Archai are selected at each Tribunal meeting, and serve for seven years at a time. They elect one of their number to be the **archon**, who acts as chairman to the council. There are two other executive positions: the **logothete** who marshals the Tribunal's bureaucracy, and the **polemarch** who ensures its edicts are carried out.

Citizenship

The magi of the Theban Tribunal are its citizens. All citizens are equal; anyone trying to claim superiority over a member of the Tribunal based on lineage, reputation, age, or raw power is violating local etiquette. Theban magi do not acknowledge titles such as Archmage, Chief Quaesitor, Primus, and so forth, although they do respect job titles such as Quaesitor, Redcap, and hoplite.

Not every magus in Theban territory is a citizen, however. The Tribunal recognizes two categories of individual: *politai* and *metoikoi*.

A **polites** (pol-LEE-tees, "citizen") is a member of the Order of Hermes who passed his Apprentice's Gauntlet in the Theban Tribunal, and who remains in good standing with the Tribunal by maintaining his civic duty. This civic duty is measured by the possession of tokens that are awarded for certain acts. Only *politai* are entitled to become magistrates.

A **metoikos** (MEH-tee-kos, "resident foreigner") is a member of the Order of Hermes who is not a member of the Theban Tribunal. They are either guests to the Tribunal, or *politai* who have lost their rights due to failing in their civic duties. A foreign magus can become a *polites* through a citizenship decree of the Tribunal (see Tribunal Procedure). This caste exists to keep those who have not contributed to the well being of the

Theban Quaesitores

In the Tribunal of Thebes the polity (in the form of a board of magistrates, see later) conducts investigations into potential breaches of the Code of Hermes, rather than the Quaesitores. Furthermore, another faculty traditionally devolved to House Guernicus — the review, updating, and expansion of the Peripheral Code — is also performed by the polity. Rather than emasculating the House, Theban magi (Guernici included) argue that this permits them to be more than simply investigators and judges, and removes an onerous and sometimes time-consuming duty from their backs. Thanks to their training, members of House Guernicus remain the experts in

Hermetic Law, and are often used as expert witnesses or sources of information, which enhances rather than diminishes their prestige in the Order.

As a consequence of this shared responsibility of Quaesitorial duties, members of House Guernicus tend to be as variable as other houses in their magical interests and studies, rather than concentrating on investigatory magic. Furthermore, they feel less obligation to remain neutral parties than in other Tribunals, and partake in voting readily. It is a matter of personal choice as to whether a Theban Quaesitor uses his vote when attending meetings of other Tribunals, such as the Grand Tribunal.

polity from benefiting from it. The Tribunal of Thebes does not tolerate parasites easily.

THE PHYLAI

To ensure equal representation of citizens in the administration of the Theban Tribunal, all its *politai* are divided into four *phylai* (feel-EH, "tribes", singular *phyle*), and each *phyle* is represented four *archai*. *Phylai* are determined purely by the covenant in which a magus maintains his sanctum, and one's *phyle* is meaningless outside of the political context. A *phyle* never functions as a political party, and there is no precedence or hierarchy among the *phylai*.

The four *phylai* are:

The Ionian Phyle: Covenants on the western mainland of the Tribunal contribute to the Ionian *phyle*. Thessaly, Epiros, and the Peloponnese are counted among its territories, which currently include the covenants of Erebus, Epidaurus, and Hedyosmos.

The Aegean Phyle: The lands around the Aegean Sea all under the Aegean *phyle*. Boeotia, Euboea, and Macedonia are within its territories, as well as the northern islands. The covenants of Aegaea, Oikos tou Eleous, and Ingasia contribute members to the Aegean *phyle*.

The Kretan Phyle: Candia, the Cyclades, and the Dodecanese are the principle territories of the Kretan *phyle*, along with southern Nicaea. This includes the covenants of Alexandria, Favonius, and Polyaiagos.

The Propontian Phyle: Covenants to the

east of the Tribunal, in Thrace, northern Nicaea, Constantinople, and any covenants in the Black Sea, are members of the Propontian *phyle*. This currently includes Moero's Garden, Gigas, Xylinites, and Michael's Tabula.

The Council of Magistrates

The role of *arche* (arkh-EE, "magistrate") is a duty rather than an honor; it confers no additional political rights but greater responsibility. Archai assist in organization and administration on behalf of the Tribunal's citizens for seven years. There are 16 archai, four drawn from each of the four *phylai*; and the Council of Magistrates also has two executive members — the polemarch and the logothete — and is lead by the archon, who is chosen from among the archai.

The archai constitute three boards and the treasury council according to the capacity in which they serve the Tribunal. No citizen can serve two consecutive terms as *arche*, but apart from this restriction, any citizen can serve as a magistrate regardless of age or experience. The Council of Magistrates meets as a whole once at the Tribunal meeting that formed it, and once more midway through the inter-Tribunal period. This mid-term meeting is held at the archon's covenant, or an alternative venue of his choosing. At this meeting, matters of jurisdiction are discussed, and archai can request advice or assistance from the Council. If a case re-



quires vis expenditure, the Council can release funds from the Tribunal coffers on a simple majority vote. Members of House Guernicus are invited to meetings of the Council to provide advice according to the Code of the Tribunal, and their guidance is considered invaluable since most archai have only a passing knowledge of the law.

The duties of an arche do not usually consume much time, and can often be completed in between seasons, or require the occasional month to attend meetings. Nevertheless, these duties can disrupt seasons of study or laboratory work, and the arche is compensated by the awarding of tokens (as described later).

THE ARCHON

As a council, the archai elect one of their members — through a simple casting of votes — to be the archon of the Tribunal. This position is exactly equivalent to the Praeco of other Tribunals, except that the archon is rarely the oldest magus of the Tribunal. A magus can serve as archon more than once. As well as his Praeconic duties, the archon is the chairman of the Council of Magistrates, and it is his duty to settle disputes between its members and oversee the conduct of the archai during his tenure. He is expected to report back to the Tribunal any mismanagement or wrongdoing by the members of the Council.

At the last Tribunal the archai elected Aiakia of Hedyosmos to serve as archon (see

Chapter 5: Greece, Hedyosmos for more).

THE POLEMARCH

The polemarch ensures that all the Tribunal's sentences and decrees are enforced, and although her selection is based on her capacity to execute Wizard's Marches against convicted breakers of the Code of Hermes, such events are sufficiently rare in the Theban Tribunal that the polemarch is largely a precautionary measure. Nevertheless, the position of the polemarch is not left to the whims of chance; rather, the Council of Magistrates elect a magus with sufficient capabilities from all the citizens of the Tribunal. An arche can be chosen as polemarch, in which case she must satisfy both roles. She is also granted the executive power to award tokens to those magi she designates to assist her in performing a Wizard's March. The polemarch also gains the use of some enchanted devices belonging to the Tribunal that place constraints on a magus' body and Gift: reducing movement with Rego Corpus and casting totals with Perdo Vim.

There is no limit to the number of times an individual can serve as polemarch, and it is typical for the same magus to be elected Tribunal after Tribunal. The polemarch is entitled to withdraw herself from the election if she is unwilling to serve a subsequent term, but no other exclusions are permitted.

The current polemarch is Maria Laskarina of the covenant Polyaios, and she

has served two terms already (see Chapter 6: The Islands, Polyaios for more).

THE LOGOTHETE

The logothete is the Chief Redcap of the Theban Tribunal. The role of the logothete is to record all business of the Council of Magistrates, and to oversee all bureaucratic procedures. The logothete used to be an elected position chosen every seven years from among the Tribunal's Redcaps. However, in 1186 a motion was successfully passed making the logothete a permanent position. This was to remove the strain on the Tribunal's bureaucracy imposed by a continually changing administration. An election for the position of logothete is now held at the Tribunal meeting only if the post becomes vacant: through death, Twilight, resignation, or if the incumbent fails a vote of no confidence from among the Tribunal's Redcaps. The logothete receives no tokens for his service.

The logothete maintains the records of tokens and shards, and neutralizations as witnessed by a Redcap (see later). Each phyle is assigned a Redcap to assist its archai in their duties, which usually reduces the burden of travel. The polemarch, boards, and the Treasury Council (see later) have additional Redcaps who have specialist knowledge about the relevant subjects. The disposition of all Redcaps is in the hands of the logothete, although he is usually willing to entertain equests from Redcaps or archai on the disposition of specific individuals.

The logothete must also perform the usual functions of House Mercere's chief representative in the Tribunal, although many of these tasks are delegated to his personal staff of Redcaps. Redcaps in the Theban Tribunal, as in the rest of the Order of Hermes, by tradition do not vote at Tribunal meetings. Despite being members of the phylai, they do not participate in the sortition of archai, and cannot serve as polemarch. If there are insufficient eligible archai to constitute a board, then a Redcap is assigned to the vacant seats; these Redcaps are chosen by the logothete based on their abilities and knowledge.

The current logothete, Leontius of Alexandria, is planning to step down at the next Tribunal, and there is much speculation as to whom House Mercere will choose as his successor. One possibility is Proximos of Alexandria. (See Chapter 8: Anatolia, The Covenant of Alexandria for more on both.)

THE BOARDS OF MAGISTRATES

The 16 archai are all assigned to one of the three boards or the treasury council, nominally there are three members of each board, and seven members of the treasury council. Because archai cannot serve on the same board more than once, it is not always possible to assign three members to each board. If three members cannot be achieved, the logothete assigns qualified Redcaps to make up the numbers. The logothete and polemarch do not serve on a board, although the polemarch is invited to meetings of the Judicial Board so he is apprised of the duties he may be required to perform.

The boards technically have no power to convene themselves, since an arche cannot request that a board meets to discuss an issue. Instead, a board is convened by a citizen who has a complaint or a matter for consideration; he makes an application to the appropriate board through its Redcap. The board will then agree on the location and time of its subsequent meeting. The Peripheral Code states that a board must convene within six months of the request, and at a place either convenient to the board or pertinent to the issue under consideration. If an arche needs to convene a board, he must do so as a citizen. He cannot be present at a meeting where a case involving himself is being reviewed.

The use of amateurs in Hermetic justice has been strongly criticized by outsiders. However, Theban magi claim it is fairer. Make an enemy of a Quaesitor and you'll lose every case before a Tribunal until one of you dies. However, should an enemy get elected to a board, you will only suffer him for seven years at most. Furthermore, action can be brought against an arche who fails in his duties through the awarding of shards, yet it is almost unheard of for a Quaesitor to receive equivalent censure.

The **Judicial Board** prepares the cases for all High Crimes. This board has precedence over the other boards; it can request that any matters seen by the other boards be transferred to its purview if they are deemed to be in clear violation of the Oath of Hermes. When an accusation of a High Crime is made, the accuser brings his complaint before the Judicial Board. A defense principal and prosecution principal are assigned to the case from among the board members by lot, and the accused party is notified of the charge against him. It is now the job of the two arche to gather evidence to support the prosecution or defense, and to prepare testi-

mony. The principals do not need to work in isolation; in fact they are required to share information and present the salient points before the Tribunal. (See The People's Court, later, for the process of trying a case.) In cases where haste is required, such as the apparent illegal slaying of a magus or accusations of diabolism, the Judicial Board can also convene an interim Tribunal if they can gather together at least 12 magi from four different covenants. The polemarch is dispatched to bring the accused to the Tribunal.

The **Legislative Board** is responsible for reviewing and revising the Peripheral Code of the Theban Tribunal. Any polites can apply to the board for a change in the Peripheral Code. The application must be accompanied by an alternative to the current Code ruling; a ruling cannot simply be repealed. Two members of the board are selected by lot; one to defend the current ruling and the other to defend the alternative. The archai must gather evidence in support of their argument, which will be presented at the Law Council at the following Tribunal (see Tribunal Proceedings, later).

The **Conciliatory Board** has as its purview all personal conflicts between magi, including conflicts over lands and resources, and between masters and apprentices (in-

cluding investigation should an apprentice die). It can also issue decrees of contrition (see later) and solemnize agreements, such as the distribution of vis sources, the founding of a new covenant, and the taking of the Oath of Hermes by new members. Magi are not required to bring every argument to the Conciliatory Board, but where the outcome of a disagreement is required to be legally binding, the resolution must take place before the Conciliatory Board. Occasionally, the board is convened to witness a certamen, or act as arbiter in a debate (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, pages 90–93). The conclusion must be supported by the unanimous decision of the Conciliatory Board that the conflict was resolved fairly and without trickery. An appointed spokesman of the board announces the ensuing agreement as a decree during the People's Assembly phase of the Tribunal meeting (see later).

Certamen in the Theban Tribunal is generally restricted to cases of legitimate and substantive dispute. The use of certamen as a means to establish dominance or precedence over another magus is frowned upon in this Tribunal, since it violates the principle of equality. The use of certamen to determine the claimant to a vis find is especially bad-mannered. In such a case, it is more usual to

A Selection of Redcaps

LYSANDROS

Lysandros is an expert in Hermetic law, and probably one of the most knowledgeable individuals on the Code of Hermes in the Tribunal. He is always assigned to an arche on the Judicial Board, but is often consulted on obscure points of law by all the archai. Unfortunately, he is both abrasive and excruciatingly pedantic, and answers exactly the question which is asked, without extrapolation or necessary auxiliary information.

DIANTHA

Diantha is one of the most popular Redcaps serving the archai, and the logothete usually has to field several requests for her assignment. Not only is she beautiful, she is charming and easily makes friends with both men and women. She is particularly useful to those archai whose role brings them into contact with non-

magi, since she has an almost supernatural ability to get people to see her side of any story.

NIKO

Niko is young, but enthusiastic. His father is a magus and he was raised in the Order of Hermes, so Redcap seemed an obvious career choice. He has not yet served as an assistant to an arche yet, but is eager for his first assignment.

ARISTIDES

Aristides is one of several Redcaps directly serving the logothete. He is approaching his sixth decade but is still hale; and he is widely believed to bear the Blood of the Hero Odysseus. Certainly he is well-traveled, and his one-man fishing skiff is in almost constant motion; he rarely spends more than one night on land.

divide the vis equally, or for one party — usually the richer one — to graciously concede.

THE TREASURY COUNCIL

The *apodektai* (Treasury Council) is the informal collective name for the remaining seven archai who are not assigned to one of the three Boards. Their primary area of responsibility is the magical resources of the Tribunal, principally the gathering and storing of vis from sources claimed by the polity as a whole, and the discovery and welfare of Gifted children destined to become apprentices.

One of these seven archai is chosen by lot to act as the *tamias* (treasurer); he leads and coordinates this effort. The treasurer is responsible for vis expenditure, as well as the storing of vis at the Tribunal's treasury (see Chapter 6, Delos). At the start of his term, and before the end of the Tribunal gathering, he withdraws sufficient vis from the treasury to cover the next seven years' expenditure. It matters not which covenant this vis is stored at, although the treasurer is responsible for keeping track of it all. A certain amount of vis is also deposited with the polemarch for emergency usage. A polites may petition the treasurer for a loan of vis from the Tribunal coffers, who negotiates with him a suitable repayment plan. Large non-emergency loans must be approved by the People's Assembly. The repayment of vis does not include interest, since usury is a sin.

Four of the remaining archai are given responsibility for the collection of vis and apprentices, if possible one is delegated from each phyle. They may further delegate vis collection to any willing magus. These archai follow up on rumors of Gifted children (although again, often delegate this responsibility), and test any children found for their suitability to learn Hermetic magic. This duty typically results in the discovery of about 15 apprentices in total every seven years.

The remaining archai are given the title of "tutor" and have primary responsibility for the Gifted children of the Tribunal who have yet to become apprentices. They have charge of their accommodation, welfare, and education, although this is often delegated to another magus who may house the child at their covenant and provide a basic education. Additionally, the tutors must ensure that the Gifted children arrive at the Tribunal in good health, that suitable accommodation is prepared for them, and that a written

description of the talents and circumstances of each child is available for consultation in a dossier before the apprentice presentation (see later).

TOKENS AND SHARDS

A key feature of Theban citizenship is a system which credits a polites for socially-acceptable behavior and debits those who engage in antisocial activities. The Redcaps of the Tribunal keep a record of the balance of good and bad deeds of every individual through a system of **tokens** and **shards**. These are the true currency of the Theban Tribunal, unlike other Tribunals where vis is the coin of the Order. In the Theban Tribunal, vis is so bountiful that it is more like food than coin; essential for life but easily obtainable.

A token (Greek: *psephos*) is awarded for performing a service for the community as a whole. Most tokens are awarded at Tribunal meetings, but some special cases exist. The token is a bronze disk inscribed with a gorgon's face on one side.

Tokens are awarded for the following, although this is not an exhaustive list:

- Successfully completing a term as an arche (two per term)
- Successfully completing a term as archon (three per term)
- Successfully completing a term as polemarch (five per term)
- Gathering vis from a source belonging to the Tribunal (one per Tribunal period). Responsibility for these vis sources is assigned by the Treasury Council (as described later);
- Participating in a Wizard's March at the request of the polemarch (see later);
- Initiating legal proceedings against a member of the Tribunal that results in a Wizard's March (three per case);
- Initiating legal proceedings against a member of the Tribunal that results in conviction (one per case);
- Successfully completing a specific service requested by the Tribunal that falls outside the purview of the Council of Magistrates (one per service)
- Crafting of a Longevity Ritual for another member of the Tribunal, at the behest of the treasurer (one; two if the Ritual is of 10th magnitude or higher)
- Delivery of a Gifted child to the Council of Magistrates for the apprentice presentation (one per child)
- Successfully completing the first seven

years of the training of an apprentice, without abuse (one)

- Successfully completing the 14 years of the training of an apprentice to Gauntlet, without abuse (one)

The shard (Greek: *ostrakon*) is a shard of pottery, and represents an act that threatens the stability or unity of the Tribunal. Like tokens, shards are principally awarded at Tribunal, for the following reasons (once again, this list is not exhaustive):

- Being found guilty of a High Crime (three per crime in addition to any other penalty);
- Being found guilty of a Low Crime (one per crime in addition to any other penalty);
- Initiating legal proceedings against a member of the Tribunal that result in exoneration of the accused (one per case);
- Being the subject of a successful decree of defamation at the Assembly (see later);
- Losing a decree of defamation that you brought to the Assembly (see later);
- Self-disqualification for election to the Council of Magistrates when eligible (one)
- Neglect of duties as an arche, as determined by the Conciliatory Board under the advisement of the archon (one per instance)
- Neglect of a specific duty promised to an arche, for example forgetting to harvest vis from a Tribunal source (one per instance)
- Refusal to surrender a Gifted child to the Treasury Council (two)
- Abuse of one's own apprentice, as determined by the Conciliatory Board (one per instance)

Tokens and shards are awarded at Tribunal meetings, and the physical object of the award or demerit acts as a currency in and of itself; although House Mercere also keeps a record. The principle use of the tokens is neutralization. A magus with a token can approach a magus with a shard and request a service from them. Subject to full disclosure over the nature of the service, the magus with the shard can decide to perform the service. The agreement must be witnessed and recorded by a Redcap, and the magi surrender to him a token and a shard respectively. The magus with the shard is never compelled to take the service offered him, and he is only bound by the arrangement to spend a single season in service, with no cost to himself

other than time. Neutralization is principally used to secure assistance in the laboratory for a particular project, or the scribing of spells invented by the magus in service. Neutralization cannot occur between a magus' own tokens, nor may a magus neutralize the shards of a magus in his own covenant.

A magus can also rid himself of a shard through a decree of contrition. This must be lodged with the Conciliatory Board (see the Council of Magistrates, later) and presented at the Tribunal (see Tribunal Meeting, later).

Tokens can also be exchanged between magi without neutralization. For example, if a magus is healed by another from a serious injury, or rescued from certain harm, then it is common for him to award his benefactor one of his tokens. A record of this exchange should be lodged with the Redcaps.

Any citizen possessing one or more shards is liable to the vote of ostracism (see Tribunal Procedure, later). Because of this, neutralizing shards and winning decrees of contrition are important pursuits in the Theban Tribunal. Magi who are in the metoikos class cannot gain tokens or shards, and are instead censured by the Tribunal through fines or ostracism (see later).

Customs of the Tribunal

Other than the political system, there are some features of the Theban Tribunal that differ substantially from those found in other Tribunals.

The Language of Magi

With the defeat of House Tremere, orchestrated by Theban magi (see Hermetic History, earlier), the cultural influences promulgated by House Jerbiton prevailed. As a consequence, the common language of the Tribunal's magi is Classical Greek rather than Latin. Classical Greek was chosen over a more modern dialect to add a certain gravitas, in addition to the magical significance of using a dead language. The magi of the Theban Tribunal adapted Hermetic Magic into the Greek language (see *Ancient Magic*, page 29 for the process) immediately before the Sundering of Tremere, although a sizeable

Other Tasks for the Common Good

From time to time, it is expected that magi will undertake additional tasks and quests at the request of the Tribunal. Once the People's Assembly (see Tribunal Procedure, later) has determined the need for a specific task, volunteers are called for. Any magus who volunteers and successfully completes the job is awarded a token. It is considered selfish for an appropriately skilled magus not to volunteer, especially if asked directly. In extreme cases, a degree of censure may be employed against such a refuser.

Such tasks, which are a good source of story seeds, may include the following:

- Acting as a diplomat or ambassador to another Tribunal, a mundane agency such as the Church or an important noble, or a supernatural agency such as a Faerie lord.
- Participation in the Grand Tribunal.

- The crafting of an enchanted item for the Tribunal, to be used by the archai and Redcaps.
- The investigation of a supernatural item or relic deemed to be of import.
- The translation of a book (either to or from Greek) or lab text deemed to be of import.
- Writing a book deemed to be especially needed.
- The exploration of a mystical site deemed to be of interest.
- The investigation of a potential new source of vis.
- The hunting of a beast that threatens one of the Tribunal's sources of vis, or the Tribunal site at Delos.
- The investigation of a dangerous hedge wizard.
- The slaying of a renegade magus or a hedge wizard who has refused membership of the Order of Hermes.

minority — those from outside the Tribunal, and from certain Houses — retain a preference for Latin. It is a point of minor annoyance to some magi of the Tribunal in that they are not united under a common tongue, and there are movements afoot that are trying to champion one language over the other.

Magi raised in the Tribunal usually have Romaic Greek as their native language; and, since they use Classical Greek to cast their spells, need not learn Latin as a separate language. However, to read the Hermetic books written in Classical Greek they need an effective score in that language of 4 (*ArM5*, page 32), so they need to increase their Native Language to 6 to account for the penalty. To write books in Classical Greek requires fluency in that language (a score of 5, *ArM5*, page 165) rather than Romaic Greek, so magi often learn both languages. Of course, many also learn Latin if they travel beyond the Tribunal's boundaries, or wish to benefit from books written by the rest of the Order, although the Theban Tribunal has sufficient works written in Classical Greek to satisfy many lifetimes of magi. A character who is not fluent in Greek finds it difficult to recognize the spells cast by a Greek magus. Non-Greek speakers suffer a -10 to attempts to determine the Form of a magical effect (*ArM5*, page 83) if they have no score in Classical Greek, or a -5 if their

effective score in Classical Greek is less than 4. Theban magi suffer the same penalties to recognize spells cast in Latin if they lack fluency in that language.

Common Vis Sources

Some vis sources are not owned by individuals, but rather by the polity as a whole. This tradition stems from the days of the Theban leagues, who possessed a superstitious disinclination from claiming something provided by the gods. They felt that vis found at the shrines to the gods of the ancients, along with that stemming from certain mythic sites, was given to everyone rather than to individuals. The vis sources held in common are now clearly defined by the Peripheral Code. The vis from these resources is collected by individuals on behalf of the Tribunal; a service for which they receive one token. The vis from these sources contributes to the coffers of the Tribunal.

In total, the Tribunal harvests approximately 50 pawns of vis from such sources each year. Creo and Vim vis are especially abundant. A certain amount of the Tribunal's vis is used to fund the crafting of Longevity Rituals for its most favored members. Vis is also used for the creation of magic items for

Gifts of Vis

The Theban Tribunal is blessed with relatively plentiful supplies of vis, which allows its magi to be generous; as such, an informal tradition of gifting vis to others has developed. A season of hospitality or access to a library is typically repaid with a small gift of one or two pawns, in addition to the neutralization of one of the hosts' shards. The magical healing of a fellow magus (see later) is usually repaid generously. Gifts of vis from visiting Redcaps are also common, as elsewhere in the Order, but they also gift generously whenever they trade vis on behalf of a magus, so that the effective rate of return on a vis trade is more than the usual 50% (see Houses of Hermes: True Lineages, page 85). The gifting of vis between friends and friendly

covenants is not uncommon. While there are no rules governing such matters, stinginess or a consistent failure to provide gifts is regarded very dimly; in extreme cases such a magus may even be considered for a decree of defamation. The demanding of a gift in advance of a favor is equally poor etiquette. Magi from outside the Tribunal unfamiliar with local customs find these principles hard to adopt, and are often considered bad-mannered or greedy by the Theban magi. A maga who hoards vis beyond what is needed for her personal projects (such as for study, or the enchantment of a talisman or familiar) is regarded as being insufficiently generous. The exchange of tokens or shards, the true "currency" of the Tribunal, for vis is not permitted.

the Tribunal — principally used by archai and Redcaps — and to fuel the Ceremony of Propitiation (see later). Vis is also set aside for magical healing and other emergencies requiring Ritual magic.

Acts of Altruism

The culture of the Theban Tribunal has a great emphasis on the common good, and the polity as a whole has instituted several procedures that relieve the burden on its members and mitigate personal hardship, principally the provision of Longevity Rituals, healing, and apprentices. On an individual level, the members of the Theban Tribunal use the token and shard system to share duties and favors. Furthermore, the Treasury Council is a means by which an individual can secure a loan of vis for a project.

PROVISION OF LONGEVITY RITUALS

The Tribunal spends approximately half of its vis income on funding the crafting of Longevity Rituals for its most valued and beloved members — an extraordinarily generous tradition, by the reckoning of most other Tribunals. Every year, the Tribunal sponsors a Longevity Ritual for a single Theban magus. To be eligible for this honor, a magus must be a polites not in possession of any shards, and without a currently active Longevity Ritual. Any

such applicant writes to the treasurer, who has organizational responsibility for this process, by spring. The applicant with the most tokens is chosen; she must surrender all these tokens and the crafting of the Longevity Ritual is then organized before the following winter. The winning applicant typically possesses about three or four tokens; in the event of a tie, the older magus wins. Any suitably skilled magus may volunteer to craft a Longevity Ritual on behalf of the Tribunal; for this service he is awarded either one or two tokens (see earlier). They are traditionally created at the covenant of Epidaurus, which is famed for its expertise in healing and longevity.

PROVISION OF HEALING

As with longevity, the Theban Tribunal has a long-standing tradition of generosity with respect to magical healing. It is expected that any capable magus, when asked, should provide magical healing to a fellow magus in need. Unless the injured party has the requisite vis on hand, which is usually not the case, the vis cost of the healing is expected to be borne by the healer. The altruistic act of healing can thus be an expensive business, although the recipient of such generosity customarily gifts his healer with vis; by tradition, the gift is usually half the amount that was required for the healing. For example, a gift of two pawns would be appropriate for a magus receiving *The Surgeon's Healing Touch*, which

costs four pawns of Creo or Corpus vis to cast. In case of emergency, the needed vis may be paid from the Tribunal's coffers, but only if both the victim and the healer lack the ability to pay. The phyle's Redcaps negotiate the fetching, borrowing, or reimbursement of the vis. The healing party thus typically ends up paying for some of the vis cost of the healing, but this is offset by the token which they are awarded (see earlier). Magi in need of magical healing commonly travel to the covenant of Epidaurus, which receives a small stipend of vis from the Tribunal for its services. When a magus is injured at his home covenant, it is expected that the covenant will bear the vis cost; here, no token is awarded.

DONATION OF APPRENTICES

If a magus discovers a Gifted individual, he has a duty to notify the Treasury Council. Rather than claiming the individual himself, the potential apprentice is distributed to the most appropriate master through the Apprentice Presentation, which takes place prior to each Tribunal meeting (see later for more details).

The Covenant Patrons

A peculiarity of the Theban Tribunal, adopted from the Theban League that preceded it, is that each covenant is associated with a specific supernatural entity with whom they have entered a pact of mutual protection. For example, the covenant of Hedyosmos venerates a nymph Daimon that guards a mystical gate in their covenant; the covenant of Polyaios benefits from the protection of a giant; and the covenant of Alexandria holds the spirit of a grove of myrhh trees in high regard. Patrons may be spirits, gods, or genii loci, or even saints or faeries. Each covenant takes it upon itself to ensure the welfare of its patron, with whom its identity and fortunes are strongly associated, and enjoys some benefits in return, expressed as either the Powerful Ally Boon or the Local Ally Boon (*Covenants*, page 21). Each covenant's symbol is usually a representation of its patron in some way. The requirement to secure such an ally before founding a covenant (see later) serves as one means by which the rich lands of the Tribunal limit the number of magi dwelling within its bounds.

Most covenants have a patron with a Magic Might, although patrons associated with other Realms are possible and not unheard of. It is highly unlikely that the Tribunal would tolerate a patron known to be associated with the Infernal Realm, but it is conceivable that either a covenant could deceive the Tribunal, or that an Infernal patron could disguise itself and deceive a covenant. If the patron expires — a very rare occurrence considered to be extremely ill-fated — the cursed covenant should quickly find a new patron, since a covenant without a patron is deemed to have itself expired.

THE CEREMONY OF PROPITIATION

Arguably the most serious and central ritual of the entire Tribunal gathering, the Ceremony of Propitiation, which has its origins in the cult practices of ancient Greece, consists of each covenant making a public and ceremonial dedication to their patron. This rite takes place on the shores of a sacred lake on the island of Delos (see Chapter 6: The Islands, Delos), which has a Magic Aura of 8. Each covenant has erected a plinth on the edge of the lake. This either contains an Arcane Connection to the patron, or an Arcane Connection is brought along for the ceremony, or else the ally actually accompanies the magi.

The ceremony is presided over by the archon, who begins by the casting of an ancient Ritual spell recorded on a Casting Tablet (see *Covenants*, page 89) at the cost of

eight pawns of Creo or Vim vis, which is provided by the Tribunal. This spell seemingly triggers the lake's power, although most magi do not fully understand its workings. In turn, the magi of each covenant, typically dressed in ritual or priestly garb, begin by recalling worthy stories of their covenant and patron. For example, the magi of Polyaios might list the enemies that their giant protector has bested, and extol his strength and valor. These stories are often rhetorical in nature, and are not necessarily to be interpreted literally. The oratory is followed by a renewal of their dedication to their patron, followed by a ceremonial offering that is thrown or placed into the lake. This ceremonial gift is most often vis, but sometimes treasure or minor magical items are sacrificed.

This ceremony is rarely discussed with (or witnessed by) magi from other Tribunals, nevertheless it is unavoidably not a complete secret in the Order. Foreign magi who know of it usually hold a negative opinion; they are horrified at the thought of such a wanton waste of valuable vis, and many are wary of the overtones of pagan god-worship inherent in the rite. Even within Thebes, The League Against Idolatry boycotts this ceremony and is actively trying to having it banned, claiming it has crossed the line of veneration and into actual worship.

Despite these prejudices, the sacrificed vis is not actually wasted; rather it is used to empower the patron with Might and powers. Any patron who is propitiated in the rite gains 25 experience points, which, like other experience gain by Magical creatures, is reduced

by the creature's Might score (see *Realms of Power: Magic*, pages 51–52). However, the offering of vis at the lake is functionally equivalent to the eating of vis, reducing the penalty due to the patron's Might by two points per pawn. For example, a patron with a Might of 25 would normally gain nothing, but if the covenant offered a sacrifice of 10 pawns of vis, it still gains 20 experience points that can be used for advancement or transformation.

The Founding of Covenants

It is not especially difficult to found a new covenant in the Theban Tribunal, although there are a number of requirements that need to be met. Every Theban covenant is publicly dedicated to a specific role or purpose, and so a prospective covenant is required to declare its own purpose. Secondly, and related to this, a prospective covenant needs a patron at the proposed site of the new covenant. Finally, a suitable charter must be drawn up. The proposal is then reviewed by the Conciliatory Board, which ensures that the charter is in good order, that the patron exists and is truly willing, and that any other legal requirements are met. A decree of founding is then offered at Tribunal, with a vote to accept. If approved by the Conciliatory Board, this vote is, in most cases, a formality.



The Tribunal Meeting

The formal meeting of the Theban Tribunal takes place every seven years on the floating island of Delos (see Chapter 6). A Tribunal meeting always has a fixed order of business. It is divided into four phases, each of which fulfills a different state function. The Tribunal begins with a meeting of the Hermetic Assembly, followed by the Law Council, the People's Court, and the Council of Magistrates. There is then a closing ceremony. Each day of the Tribunal meeting begins at sunrise, when the magi are expected to be already in attendance. The Tribunal meeting ends when the magus who is speaking when the sun sets has concluded whatever he was saying. The business of each phase can span several days if necessary.

Each Tribunal meeting is under the governance of a phyle, called the principle phyle. This phyle changes every Tribunal in a predetermined rotation — Ionian, Aegean, Kretan, and Propontian, then back to Ionian. It is up to the storyguide as to where in this cycle his saga is currently, but it is recommended that the second Tribunal that the characters attend has the characters' phyle as its principle phyle. This gives the characters one Tribunal to become familiar with Tribunal procedure before they are asked to assist in its organization.

Pre-Tribunal Procedure

The phyle responsible for organizing the Tribunal meeting is expected to ensure that the buildings set aside for housing the attending magi are cleaned and ready for their occupants. See Chapter 6, Delos for more details of the challenges this might pose.

SELECTION OF ARCHAI CANDIDATES

A day or two before the Tribunal takes place, members of a phyle gather in their respective houses to enjoy a meal organized by the archai who currently represent them. The order of business is to produce a candidate list, from which its archai will be chosen at the Tribunal. The list consists of all magi belonging to the phyle who are both polites

and not currently an arche. They must also give their consent for inclusion, but a magus who is eligible for selection but refuses consent is given one shard. The Redcaps of the phyle's current archai are responsible for the inclusion of candidates who are unable or unwilling to attend Tribunal, and to ensure that the list is an accurate record of all candidates in the phyle.

INTERVIEWS WITH APPRENTICES

For two days prior to the start of the Tribunal, all Gifted children located by the Treasury Council are made available for interview by magi in search of an apprentice. There are usually between 12 and 20 Gifted children present at this event. Any potential master who is not in possession of a shard, or any Bonisagus magus even if possessing a shard (the Code trumps local customs), may consult the written record of each child's circumstances and may briefly question or test any of the children in whom he is interested. He then gifts one or more tokens to one or more of the children whom he desires as his apprentice. For example, he may give his favorite two tokens, and his second favorite one. According to the rights granted them in the Oath of Hermes, Bonisagus magi may immediately claim any of the presented apprentices. According to tradition, however, they still gift their new apprentice with one or two tokens. Young magi — those who are attending their first or second Tribunal — are recruited to extend their *parmae magicae* around the children so that they are not affected by The Gift of any of the potential masters.

The Hermetic Assembly

The first phase of the Tribunal itself is the Assembly. The magi assemble in the forum, politai wearing white robes and the metoikoi wearing grey robes. Archai supplement their robes with a wreath of myrtle leaves, the archon is further distinguished by a staff of office, and the polemarch wears a red sash. All votes take place via a show of voting sigils, and all magi present — whether politai or metoikoi — can take part in the vote. All decrees are passed by a majority vote of those magi present. The logothete is responsible for counting the votes, and the archon announces the result immediately after the vote is taken.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF DECREES

The principle order of business at the Hermetic Assembly is to hear the decrees of the Conciliatory Board, which deal with personal conflicts and disputes. Each decree is read out by one of the archai on the appropriate board, and the archon calls for a vote after each one. If the Assembly rejects the decree, then whatever conclusion was reached by the board is overturned, and the matter must be brought before the Conciliatory Board again after the Tribunal.

DECREES OF CITIZENSHIP

Once this business is dealt with, any metoikoi present may request that the Assembly grants him a decree of citizenship. He must provide evidence that he has made a positive contribution to the polity, must be resident at an established covenant, and have at least one arche as sponsor. Even if the Assembly accepts the decree, the new polites is not eligible for election to arche at this Tribunal since he has not been registered on the candidate list.

DECREES OF DEFAMATION

Any polites who believes that another citizen has acted in a manner contrary to the unity of the polity may stand and present his case for a decree of defamation. The accused citizen is permitted a rebuttal before a vote is taken. If the Assembly finds in favor of the decree, then the accused is credited with one shard. If the Assembly rejects a decree, then the accuser receives a shard. A decree of defamation can be made against someone who is not present, but it is not voted upon. Instead, the Conciliatory Board deals with the dispute after the Tribunal, with the intent to settle rather than uphold the complaint; however, it is still empowered to award a shard against either party if reconciliation cannot be achieved.

DECREES OF CONTRITION

Any magus with a shard can make a plea to the Assembly to have it removed. This plea must be lodged with the Conciliatory Board prior to the Tribunal meeting, and is brought to the Tribunal's attention by the arche assigned to the case. Accompanying each plea is the reparation that the magus

offers the Tribunal: this is commonly in the form of vis, a magical enchantment, or a book; but other services may be offered. After presenting the reparation to the Tribunal, the arche invites the contrite magus to make a formal apology for the actions that earned him the shard. If the Assembly rejects the decree, the magus need not surrender the reparation.

The magnitude of the reparation is determined by the magus himself. Magi with many enemies, or who willfully defied the Tribunal to acquire the shard, may offer seven or more pawns of vis, a summa, or an invested item. A particularly arrogant magus, or one who acquired his shard on a technicality, may risk offering less in the hope that the Tribunal will look favorably on him.

NEWS FROM THE ORDER

The logothete calls upon members of his House who have received news from the rest of the Order of Hermes. The most significant items of interest are announced by the logothete himself. The final item of news is the names of all magi who have been subject to a Wizard's March since the last Tribunal. Those who have escaped execution of that sentence are especially highlighted.

THE APPRENTICE PRESENTATION

Unlike the serendipitous and chaotic approach common in most other Tribunals, the Theban Tribunal has a highly formalized routine for the assigning of apprentices to masters. At the presentation during the People's Assembly, each child steps forth and proudly (or otherwise) shows the number of tokens she has gathered in the interviews prior to the Tribunal meeting. If she has received tokens from only one magus, then she becomes his apprentice. She keeps these tokens and may spend them as soon as she becomes a maga in her own right. If a child has received tokens from more than one magus, then she may choose who is to be her master. It is usual for her to pick the master who has gifted her the most tokens, both because she may later spend these tokens herself and because a greater number of tokens indicates a master who is either more generous or accomplished, but this is not always the case. All tokens given by unsuccessful bidders are returned to them at the end of the presentation. A child who



Story Seeds

HERMETIC KINDERGARTEN

The characters are among those sharing their *Parmae Magicae* with the Gifted children during the interview phase, and are little more than babysitters. Most of the children are apprehensive of what happens over the next few days, and scared by a rumor that children who are not chosen are never seen again. In addition to the normal problems of shepherding a group of children of mixed ages, one of the children is a faerie changeling who is determined to lead the other children to "safety" away from the magi.

BIG SISTER

A Gifted child is found some time before the Tribunal, and lodged with an arche of the Treasury Council. A bond forms between the maga and child that proves distressing when a Tytalus magus ends up as the child's master. When the boy runs away, the Tytalus magus assumes that the character is responsible and demands her help to return the child. The boy has used the enchanted items he purloined to gain control of a group of robbers and amass wealth for himself. This naturally makes the master exceptionally proud of his apprentice!

has not gained any tokens, which is typically the case only for the most ill-favored, may be claimed by any magus present, even one with a shard.

The Treasury Council ensures that all apprentices are aware that they can lodge a complaint against their parens, delivered to another magus at the master's home covenant; this third party is then required to inform the Conciliatory Board in writing. The board will, after investigation, determine whether the complaint is justified. If the complaint is upheld, then the master is assigned a shard. Due to pressure from House Tytalus, the Conciliatory Board has held that adherence to the infamous *Book of Instruction* (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 82) does not constitute abuse. Conversely, magi are awarded tokens for training an apprentice without abuse, one for the first seven years and another at Gauntlet.

As a consequence of the apprentice presentation, most apprenticeships are squeezed into a period of 14 years and align with the Tribunal cycle. The principal disadvantage of this system is that the finding of Gifted children does not align with the Tribunal cycle; in the worst case, a Gifted child may have to wait up to seven years to begin training. The finding of an apprentice at the right time — shortly before a Tribunal gathering — is thus regarded as particularly auspicious. While waiting for the next presentation, Gifted children usually receive schooling at a covenant, typically learning Classical Greek, Artes Liberales, and sometimes Latin. A pre-apprenticeship of one or two years usually compensates for the one year fewer of apprenticeship.

OSTRAKISMOS

The last order of business in the People's Assembly is the ostrakismos, or ostracism. The logothete reads a list of every magus who has one or more shards, along with their current count of demerits, excepting those magi who have become politai at this Tribunal through a decree of citizenship. For each name, a vote is taken as to whether the individual is a candidate for ostracism. Once this process has selected the candidates, each magus present writes the name of the candidate he wishes to ostracize on a sliver of pottery, or else writes "no one" and drops it into a jar. Once everyone has voted, the slivers are counted, and the magus with the most to his name is declared ostracized. If

there is a draw, the vote is held again with just the names of the drawn candidates. If "no one" has the most votes, then there is no ostracism this Tribunal. An ostracized magus is stripped of his status as a citizen of the Theban Tribunal, and must leave the Tribu-

The Nature of the Law

The Hermetic Code of the Theban Tribunal is comparatively simple. It consists of the Oath of Hermes, the edicts of the Grand Tribunal that apply to all Tribunals, and a relatively small corpus of the Peripheral Code. Unlike other Tribunals, where every prosecution becomes part of the Peripheral Code and acts as precedent, the Theban Code contains only deliberate acts of law-making, as passed by the Law Council. Each case is judged according to the Code and with no reference to previous rulings.

nal's bounds within one season of the close of the meeting. He cannot return to Thebes for seven years; and if he chooses to return, he bears the status of a metoikos.

The Law Council

In this phase of the Tribunal, which always starts on a new day, the Peripheral Code of the Tribunal is reviewed. The Legislative Board presents any cases that have been brought before it. The two archai assigned to each case debate the relative merits of the current ruling and the proposed alternative. The Tribunal then votes on the matter, and if the alternative is accepted, the change to the Peripheral Code is recorded. The debate between the two principals can be glossed over if it has little relevance to the player magi; or, if it is important (or they are acting as one of the archai), it can be orchestrated using the rules provided in *Houses of Hermes: Societates* (pages 90–93). As with all tasks assigned the archai, if they are deemed to have not defended their position to the best of their abilities, then they may be awarded shards during the fourth phase of the Tribunal; however, there is no shame

in asking an expert — such as a member of House Guernicus — for advice on how to pursue the case.

If a polites suspects that he will be found guilty of a crime at the People's Court, he may preemptively request a review of the law that he supposes will convict him. This must be organized prior to the Tribunal meeting, but can result in negating the case against him. Likewise, if a magus suspects that his aggressor will be deemed innocent, he can pursue the same route. Note that this is a potentially risky strategy, since if the case goes against the magus he has no defense available to him when his case is heard at the People's Court.

The People's Court

In the third phase of the Tribunal meeting, all Hermetic crimes are heard and considered by the Tribunal. At the beginning of this phase, the archon announces the order of the cases that will be heard by the Tribunal. All cases must come through one of the three boards, although the Judiciary Board is responsible for most of the Court's business.

Trying a case before the People's Court proceeds much as described in *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages* (pages 56–61), except that the prosecution and defense principals are always archai of the appropriate board, exhorted to do their best by the threat of being awarded shards when their conduct is reviewed in the Council of Archai (see later). The principals call witnesses to read prepared testimony, and indicate the sections of the Code of Hermes that cover the prosecution's case. The defense principal provides counter-evidence and declares mitigating circumstances. Once both have spoken, the Tribunal decides the case through voting. No sentence is decided at this stage, only guilt or innocence. However, the polemarch is responsible for ensuring that all convicted magi remain at the Tribunal meeting until sentencing is carried out, and is usually very watchful of those found guilty of a High Crime. The polemarch is empowered by the Peripheral Code to prevent the flight of a guilty party by any means, although the polemarch should stop short of deadly force if possible. In the history of the Tribunal, no magus has been killed trying to escape justice, thanks to the enchanted devices given over to the use of the polemarch.

The Council of Archai

The final phase of the Tribunal is the Council of Archai. First, sentences are executed, then the conduct of the outgoing archai is examined. The new Council of Archai is then chosen, and the Tribunal is closed.

EXECUTION OF SENTENCES

Every case dealt with at the People's Court is now re-examined in turn. If the case for the defense was defeated, the prosecution principal will suggest a succession of punishments in decreasing order of severity; each one is voted for by the polity, and once one receives a majority of the votes present, it is accepted as the sentence. Typical punishments — and their relative severity — are given in *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages* (page 60). The punishment is enacted immediately under the supervision or direct action of the polemarch. As with other Tribunals, damages may be awarded to the victim, and fines awarded to the prosecuting arche. A Wizard's March is never conducted on Delos due to an ancient ban against deaths occurring there (see Chapter 6, Delos); consequently, all executions take place on neighboring islands or at sea. The polemarch is responsible both for securing the prisoner and for the March itself, and he often names lieutenants to assist him.

All punishments are accompanied by a penalty of three shards for a High Crime or one for a Low Crime. The magus who brought the case to the board of magistrates is awarded a token in recognition of his accomplishing a civic duty. This is increased to three tokens if the guilty party was Marched. However, any magus who brought a case to a board that was subsequently defeated by the People's Court is fined with a shard as a deterrent for bringing frivolous suits before the Tribunal.

CONDUCT OF ARCHAI

Any polites can ask that the conduct of an arche or the polemarch be scrutinized, stating his reasons. The alleged fault must be clearly stated, along with a proposed fine of one to seven shards. Typical complaints include a failure to sufficiently defend or prosecute a case, accepting bribes, or indolence. The arche has the right of response before a vote is taken. Note that failure to secure or prevent a conviction is not generally considered a dereliction of duty, unless the polites can demonstrate willful neglect. A vote is taken to judge the merit of the complaint, and if upheld, another determines whether the fine is appropriate.

SORTITION OF ARCHAI

The main business of this phase of the Tribunal meeting is to select the archai for the coming seven years. First, the current archai are thanked for their service by the archon and offered payment in the form of two tokens, and then dismissed. The polemarch then resigns, followed by the archon, and they are awarded five and three tokens each, respectively. All the regalia of office are returned to the logothete.

The Redcaps of each phyle step forth in turn, starting with the principle phyle of this Tribunal, and each read out the candidate list for his phyle. As each name is read out, the Redcap places a token inscribed with the name of the candidate in a large earthenware jar. The logothete then selects four tokens from the jar at random; as their names are called, the magi step forward. The process then proceeds to the next phyle, until 16 names have been chosen in total. Once all phylai have had their candidates chosen, the new archai take an oath of allegiance to the Tribunal and promise to serve faithfully and with justice. If an arche is selected but is not present at the Tribunal, he is required to make this oath of allegiance at the first meeting of

the board or council to which he is assigned.

Archai are then assigned to boards. The magi who have served as archai before are assigned first, as they cannot serve on the same board as they have before. If there is more than one choice of board, then assignment is performed by the drawing of lots, again placing the votes in a jar. If there are insufficient magi who can serve on a board, then the logothete assigns an appropriately skilled Redcap to serve on the board. Once three members have been assigned to each of the three boards, the remaining archai are enrolled in the Treasury Council.

ELECTION OF THE ARCHON AND POLEMARCH

The newly elected archai don myrtle wreathes, and then elect, through a show of hands, the archon who will lead the Council for the next seven years. It is traditional that if an arche has no preference for archon, then he votes for the oldest magus on the Council of Magistrates as long as that is not himself.

The new archon asks the archai to nominate magi as candidates to serve as polemarch. Only a magus who has already served as polemarch can refuse the role. Once a pool of candidates has been selected, the archai then vote for their favorite. The magus who secures the most votes is inaugurated as the new polemarch. It is not uncommon for the same magus to be elected as polemarch many times if he has shown himself to be capable in the role.

RITE OF DISMISSAL

The last official order of business of the Tribunal is to dismiss the Assembly. The new archon usually says a few words, and the Tribunal's business is concluded. The magi proceed directly from the agora to the lake on Delos for the Ceremony of Propitiation (see earlier).

Chapter Four

Culture & Customs

Byzantine lands differ from the Western realms of Mythic Europe in many ways. Local customs, which may seem bizarre or alien to foreigners, are important in defining the atmosphere of the region and acting as a backdrop for stories. In the last 15 years, the political landscape has undergone major upheavals with the arrival of the crusaders and the fall of Constantinople and, with it, the Byzantine Empire. However, this has had remarkably little effect on the vast majority of the populace of the region, and only a modest impact upon their culture and practices.

This chapter focuses predominantly on the Byzantine people, specifically where they differ from the Western Europeans — or, as they are known locally, the Franks. Not all of the practices and beliefs described here are exclusive to the Theban Tribunal or the former Byzantine Empire, but many are.

Social Structure

Aristocracy in Byzantine lands is not strictly hereditary in the Western sense; the difference between landed nobility and peasants who work the land is not as stark, allowing a much larger middle class of smallholders and craftsmen. However, the invasion of the Franks has imposed an artificial feudal hierarchy on a non-feudal system; this has had little impact on the middle and lower classes, but has completely undermined the upper class.

The Emperor

At the top of the social pyramid is the *basileus Rhomaion* ("king of the Romans"), the

emperor. The emperor variously is born into the family of the current ruler, appointed as co-ruler by the current emperor, or seizes power with the support of the army.

The Dynatoi

The elite members of Byzantine culture are the *dynatoi*, or "powerful ones". Largely restricted to established families with a distinguished history, the dynatoi are the high-ranking bureaucrats, military leaders, and major landowners. Byzantine emperors are notorious for handing out honors and titles, but these last for the lifetime of the recipient and do not remain within his family. Maintaining their position at court is a constant struggle for the dynatoi, since the new honors force everyone to revisit dominance



The Middle Classes

and alliances. Once residing principally in Constantinople, where they maintained fine mansions and spent vast amounts of wealth in a conspicuous manner to maintain their status in the eyes of their peers, the dynatoi have now fled from the Latin invaders to Epiros and Nicaea.

In the surviving fragments of the Byzantine Empire, political power is a function of one's role in the imperial service, which has three major branches: the imperial court, the military, and the civil authority. The imperial court consists of the emperor's immediate family, together with a large number of court officials, and the senate. In the 13th century many of the important and advisory roles are occupied by eunuchs (see later). The senate is a largely ceremonial body made up by the dynatoi and senior members of the clergy. The military (see later) consists of an elite imperial guard and a series of provincial field armies, each commanded by a general (*strategos*). The civil bureaucracy is staffed by skilled, literate men responsible for the administration, record keeping, and legal work taking place mainly in the capital, who were supported by the taxes raised by the provincial officers.

Latin Lords

In contrast to the Roman Empire that preceded it, the Latin Empire is divided up between the noble lords responsible for the invasion in 1204. Directly beneath the Latin emperor are the *vassalli*, who include the Frankish lords who hold baronial titles under the emperor, and the people of simple homage (*homini plani homagii*) — those Byzantine lords who complied with the new system. Included within the *vassalli* are the King of Thessaloniki and his barons, the prince and the lords of the 12 baronies of Achaea, the Duke of Athens, the Duke of the Aegean (Naxos), and a host of other lords who either seized or were granted lands during the Frankish invasion.

The imperial court of the Latin Empire consists of the private council of the emperor and the council of the empire. The former is made up of the emperor's trustees, whereas the latter is constituted of the emperor, the Venetian podesta of Romania and his own council, and the Frankish barons. The imperial bureaucracy remains largely unchanged, since taxes still need to be collected, crimes still need to be judged, and resources still need to be gathered.

The smaller property owners and merchants form the *mesoi*, or "middle class". Most are farmers who live in the towns but own nearby land. Diversification is the key to success, and many farmers own vineyards, olive groves, grazing land, and so forth. Crafts and services are very much concentrated in provincial towns.

The Dynatoi as Player Characters

A player wanting a character of noble background might choose to be one of the dynatoi dispossessed by the invading Franks. Such a character is likely to have the Privileged Upbringing Virtue to represent his former status. If he wants to struggle against the invaders, then the Heir Story Flaw along with the Driven Personality Flaw are particularly appropriate, spawning stories about his attempts to regain his birthright. A dynatos whose lands are now part of the Kingdom of Thessaloniki may be ideal, since these lands are currently most threatened by Greek forces.

The Lower Classes

The largest stratum of society is the rural peasantry, who live on the land they work — small fields or orchards that they own outright or lease from others. This class is rightly called the *aporoï* ("poor"), for it makes a subsistence living, struggling to produce enough crops to feed the family and to pay taxes. The urban poor exists as a distinct group that relies on official, religious, and private charity; the emperor dispenses alms at festivals, setting an example for his citizens.

Slavery

Once an important feature of Byzantine society, slavery (*douleia*) has become relatively uncommon in the 13th century, partially due to the influence of the Western Church, but has not disappeared entirely. Most slaves

are born to enslaved parents or are of foreign origin, acquired by merchants and regulated by imperial decree. The enslavement of prisoners of war was a third source of slavery, but this is now much less common. Well-treated slaves in a large household are better off than the urban poor: they have limited property rights, the right to Church sacraments, are allowed to marry, and have the capacity to gain freedom, usually upon the death of their owner. At the same time, a slave is considered a special form of property, and the owner has the right to enforce good conduct with the threat of lethal force. The Church (especially the Western Church) disapproves of, but does not forbid, slavery, and stresses the obligation of the owner to treat obedient slaves well.

Eunuchs

Eunuchs, while a freakish rarity in Western Christendom, are a relatively common sight in the East, where they are well-integrated into society, commonly serving the imperial court or noble families as courtiers, administrators, or generals. Many court positions are reserved only for eunuchs, especially those closest to the emperor and his family. The most important eunuch officials in the Byzantine hierarchy are dubbed archieunuchs; in the past, some palace archieunuchs have even grown to rival their emperors in the power and influence that they have wielded. There are several famous instances of eunuchs, including the great general Narses, who fought campaigns in Italy under the emperor Justinian in the sixth century. And Ignatius, a ninth-century Patriarch of Constantinople, was later recognized as a saint. Eunuchs also often become monks, although some monasteries, including those on Mount Athos (see Chapter 5: Greece), have forbidden them, for fear of tempting others from their celibacy. The beautiful singing voices possessed by many castrati are, however, greatly appreciated in the Church, leaving even Western visitors gentled and teary-eyed. Several Theban covenants employ eunuchs as autocrats and stewards, and there is a small handful of eunuch magi.

In the Byzantine Empire, "eunuch" is a broad term for men who are not sexually active. A distinction is made between *castrati*, males who have been physically castrated, and *spadones*, a more general term for an impotent or asexual male, whether castrated or not. This is an important le-

gal distinction, since the latter may marry, whereas the former may not. Men who were castrated before puberty retain a somewhat effeminate appearance and voice, and do not develop facial hair. They tend to have long bones, making them long-limbed and blessing them with large lungs, due to their long ribs — they often possess improved stamina or a great singing ability, but lack in manly strength. Eunuchs tend to dress ostentatiously, and commonly wear makeup or perfumes.

In earlier centuries, only slaves were permitted to be made into eunuchs. Since the eighth century, however, it has become acceptable for Byzantine Christians to be castrated. Many sons of noble families — often second or third sons — voluntarily accept castration with the aim of a pursuing a career in the imperial court or the Church. Eunuch slaves may be purchased in the market in Verdun, on the French-speaking west fringes of the Holy Roman Empire, or in Venice, although such trade has declined since the 10th century. Most such slaves are destined for service in the Almohad Empire in Moorish Iberia and northern Africa.

Women

Byzantine culture is extremely patriarchal, and for many centuries most women were largely relegated to the domestic sphere. Still, in rural communities and among the lowest orders of society, women have always labored alongside the men, and female members of the imperial family have always been influential in politics and have on occasion risen to the throne. The Church provides opportunities for women, and many women who desired an education were able to obtain one. Women can hold property in their own right and inherit. On the whole, however, Byzantine society has been male-dominated.

In the last century that has begun to change significantly. Even before the Latin conquest, many women were entering business and even the professions, and some female apothecaries, doctors, and scholars exist alongside their male counterparts. Medical women are usually expected to treat their own gender, though. It is not unusual to buy food or cloth from a woman at a shop or stall, and women have rights of inheritance which can

see them taking over their husband's workshop if no suitable male heir is available and they are able to pursue a craft. In the cloth industries, and in silk production in particular, women can rise to great prominence. Women still wear the veil and are under the authority of their husbands, but they are a force in intellectual culture and the new pragmatism of the empire in decline has allowed many women greater freedoms than before.

The Eastern Church

Travelers from Western Mythic Europe will immediately recognize certain aspects of Orthodox Christianity, while much will appear alien and confusing to them. Still the Churches are drawing closer, as mainly Venetian priests have been appointed by the new rulers. Many Orthodox priests remain in office, indeed the great majority, and they have varying degrees of acceptance of the claims of Rome.

The Two Patriarchs of Constantinople

The Orthodox Church consists of a number of autocephalous Churches, such as the Bulgarian Church, the Russian Church, and the Greek Church. The patriarch is the senior figure in all of the Orthodox Churches.

The Patriarch of Constantinople is the honored first bishop of the Orthodox Church. He is not in authority over the other patriarchs or autocephalous Churches (Churches who maintain independence as part of the Orthodox Communion, which include the Bulgarian Church and since 1219 the Serbian Church). He is understood as "First Among Equals" among the patriarchs of the Church. With the official title of Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome, and Ecumenical Patriarch, he alone has the right to convene Oecumenical Councils of the Orthodox Church, and to deal with disputes between bishops in any of the Orthodox Churches. He directly heads the Greek Orthodox community under Constantinople's patriarchal region. Orthodox patriarchs are often forced to abdicate by the emperor,

Virtues and Flaws for Eunuchs

NEW VIRTUE: ARCHIEUNUCH

Major, Social Status

You have risen to enjoy the status and privilege associated with the most important and talented eunuchs, the archieunuchs. Although you are not a ruler in your own right, a ruler likely depends on you to govern effectively and has thus granted you considerable authority to act in his stead. Due to this status and importance, you wield significant influence among the lesser nobility. You might serve either as a regional administrator, an important courtier, or a general, and there are numerous servants and possibly other subordinate eunuchs under your command. You have been granted a residence, either within a castle or palace, or elsewhere. Due to your education, you may take Academic Abilities during character creation. This Virtue is only available to male eunuch characters, either castrated or not, or (very rarely) a female character disguised as a male.

NEW VIRTUE: EUNUCH

Minor, Social Status

You have been educated and trained to serve the Byzantine nobility as a courtier, steward, chamberlain, scribe, lawyer, or accountant. You are likely employed by a court, a lesser noble, or a covenant. It is also possible for you to pursue a career in the Church, and some monasteries accept eunuchs. Due to your education, you may take Academic Abilities during character creation. This Virtue is only available to male eunuch characters, either castrated or not, or (very rarely) a female character disguised as a male.

NEW FLAW: CASTRATUS

Minor, General

You are a male that has been castrated before puberty, leaving you beardless and somewhat effeminate compared to most men. Social rolls involving characters from Latin culture suffer a -3 penalty. Under Byzantine law you may not marry, although you may adopt children.

who then "nominates" a more suitable successor, but the office is held for life unless abdication occurs.

In Nicaea, the Orthodox patriarch, Manuel I Charitopoulos, continues to rule the Orthodox Church in close relationship with the Emperor of Nicaea, Theodore Lascaris. His authority is accepted in Trebizond, Epiros, and other Greek-held areas, and by many Orthodox believers in the Latin states. Also present is the Orthodox Patriarch-in-Exile of Antioch, Dorotheus, who has been forced out by the creation of the Latin Patriarch of Antioch in 1095, when the city was captured by crusaders. In Ohrid the Bulgarian Patriarch is now within the lands controlled by the state of Epiros, following their conquest of that city.

After the fall of the city, a Latin patriarch was appointed in Constantinople, the Orthodox Church theoretically being brought into submission to Rome. Some clergy have accepted this, while others are deeply opposed and look still to the patriarch in Nicaea.

The agreement between the Venetians and the crusaders specified that the Venetians should appoint the Latin Patriarch, and the first person to serve in that role was their candidate, Thomas Morasini. Pope Innocent III, faced with the appointment, grudgingly accepted it. Following Morasini's death in 1211, the position remained vacant until the appointment of Gervase in 1215, but his death in 1219 has left the patriarchal role once again vacant, and the pope has yet to express a preference for a replacement.

The Latin Church has created new episcopal sees and appointed Latin bishops, and obvious tensions exist with their mainly Orthodox priests. Attempts are underway to actively recruit more Latin priests from Western Europe, and in many churches' Latin rites have replaced the Byzantine rite. However, the vast majority of people remain loyal to the Orthodox Church, and many Orthodox priests who actively oppose union with Rome continue to serve in the new hierarchy.

Buildings

An Orthodox church is sumptuously decorated and extremely ornate and rich by the standards of the Latin West. A great rood screen hides the altar, and is only opened to reveal it during the central moments of the mystery of the eucharist. With the heady incense and beautiful garb of the clergy and servers, the church experience appears daz-

Anna Komnene

Among the most famed of the Byzantine historians is the 12th-century princess Anna Komnene. Born in the purple (see Chapter 7: Constantinople, The Porphyry Chamber) in 1083 as the eldest of nine children and the daughter of emperor Alexios Komnenos (see Chapter 2: History), she was blessed with extraordinary talent and ambition. She mastered the usual subjects at a young age, whereupon she secretly sought out Michael of Ephesos for tutelage in certain forbidden subjects, including an advanced study of ancient poetry and Aristotle. Anna plotted against her younger brother John in a bold attempt to become empress; when this scheme failed she was exiled to a monastery, where she was at leisure to concentrate on her scholarly career.

The Alexiad, which was written in the middle of the 12th century when Anna was at an advanced age, is her great work, recounting with great detail and clarity the story of her father Alexios' rule. Written in 15 volumes, this magnum opus hearkens back to the ancient style of the historians

Herodotus and Thucydides, wherein the testimony of eyewitnesses is regularly cited. The Homeric style of the book's title also betrays a clear intention to cast her father in the light of a legendary hero. The work chronicles Alexios' rise to power and goes on to describe his successful campaigns against the Normans, Turks, and barbarian tribes such as the Scythians and Cumans. The detail in the accounts of the battles demonstrates an expert knowledge of military tactics. The emperor's political and diplomatic achievements are also described, including the administrative intricacies of his realm, and the personalities of many of his relatives and select others of lower birth, to whom he entrusted important roles.

The Alexiad is a summa in Byzantium Lore with a level of 5 and Quality of 10. It may also be read (by focusing on particular volumes and chapters) as a Quality 10 tractatus in Divine Lore, Magic Lore, Leadership, Intrigue, or several different (Area) Lores.

Clergy

The major difference between the Latin and Orthodox Churches is the way the clergy are organized. The Orthodox recognize two types of clergy, known by the terms black and white. The white clergy are priests, and expected to marry (as opposed to the Latin Church where clerical celibacy is the norm). The black clergy are the monks, who remain celibate. Only black clergy may be appointed as bishops, so celibacy is a advantage to the ambitious clergyman. Eunuchs may hold either position in theory, though because of their supposedly effeminate and lascivious ways they are often excluded from monastic communities. White clergy and bishops wear elaborate and often beautiful ceremonial clothing. To qualify as a priest or monk, a man must be educated, over 35 years of age, and able to recite the entire psalter by heart.

The clergy answer to a bishop, who in turn is under the authority of the patriarch. A metropolitan is a senior bishop who acts as chairman for a district, and has spiritual authority over the other bishops, including the ability to temper auras (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 38).

zling, almost mystical, to foreigners. Some practices are unknown in the Latin Church, such as the reading out of names of prominent local officials and clergy and others to be prayed for from a wooden board called a diptych. Dropping someone from the diptych list is a serious sign of disfavor from the Church. The liturgical differences are marked, and the elaborate ceremonies of the Church will seem strange to outsiders used to a simpler rite.

Many visitors are, however, scandalized by the irreverent (to their mind) way in which the congregation often talks, fails to pay attention, or only attends the parts they want, drifting in and out of the service throughout. Sermons are, however, a major popular source of entertainment, and a good preacher can keep a crowd enraptured. But there is a very different idea of order between the two Churches, and people gossiping, arguing, joking, or idly dozing is not seen as a sign of particular impiety, or at least not successfully countered despite occasional efforts. Just as baffling to a Westerner are liturgical traditions such as the requirement to pray standing between Easter and Pentecost.

Monastics

The monastic tradition is extremely important in Orthodox life. It differs from Western monasticism in several ways. Orthodox monks derive their traditions from the original foundations — groups of individual hermits who joined together for worship and discipline. These communities were called *lavra*, were governed by a mutually agreed-upon contract (*typikon*), and evolved over the centuries into the monasteries. Each monastery still follows the *typikon* of the founders, and the monks live by the Rule of Caesarea.

The black-clad monks grow very long beards and hair, unlike their clean-shaven and tonsured Western counterparts. The most significant difference between the two Churches is that while Western monks tend to remain within their monasteries, Orthodox monks frequently travel, conducting pilgrimages and moving from monastery to monastery or town to town in a similar manner to the traveling friars of the Latin Church. This leads to a wider monastic culture across monasteries, which share books, insights, and knowledge directly. Perhaps as a result Dominican and Franciscan friars are accorded much respect, even in Orthodox areas such as Nicaea, where they are involved in continued negotiations over Church union with the emperor.

Emperors often founded monasteries as an act of devotion, and bestowed gifts and monies upon them. Nunneries also exist, many serving as retreats for ladies who have been set aside by their husbands or are forced to retire from the political life after some court intrigue. It should be noted that if a husband or wife enters a monastery or nunnery, remarriage for the partner remaining is possible, but severely frowned upon by the Church. Some prominent members of society have sent wives to nunneries against their will to allow for their own remarriage to a new spouse. Being forced to enter a monastery is also a useful way to remove an inconvenient male political figure, as it forces him to renounce temporal life. Imperially endowed monasteries therefore have sometimes been used as effective prisons for inconvenient rivals, or as places of refuge for fleeing exiles.

The greatest concentration of monks can be found on the holy peninsula of Mount Athos, which is the spiritual heartland of monastic life (see Chapter 5: Greece, Mount Athos).

Nunneries take the form of either small houses dedicated by private individuals to religious devotion, with the sisters attending service at a nearby church, or large-scale nun-

neries run by a hegoumene (abbess). There are often three men in attendance; a priest, a doctor, and a male spiritual confessor. Nuns, like monks, take a new Christian name, sharing the same initial letter as their previous worldly name, and are "married to Christ". Fathers and close family members may visit, but the nun effectively removes herself from the mundane world. In the smaller nunneries they may well still be active in day-to-day activities within the community, however, venturing beyond the walls on nunnery business or for charitable works.

Nuns give over their dowry to the nunnery on joining, and have few personal possessions, for like monks they take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They may be placed in a nunnery at the age of ten, but vows may not be taken before age 16. For both monks and nuns the novitiate period before fully entering the community's life lasts six months.

Icons

One of the outstanding features of Orthodox religious life is the beautiful icons that can be found in homes, churches, and public places — some of the largest icons hung above the gates of the city of Constantinople itself. The icons are of two types: *eikons*, piously crafted by craftsmen; and *acheiropoieta*, icons that are spontaneously created in certain very strong auras or that were brought from heaven by angels.

An icon is a two-dimensional stylized representation of a religious figure, usually a saint, the Virgin Mary (called the *Theotókos*, "God-bearer"), or Jesus himself holding the New Testament and administering a blessing, (called Christ *Pantokrator*, "Almighty"). Christ is usually depicted thus, or in majesty sitting on a throne, though crucifixes are found in churches and the cross is an important symbol. The Orthodox tradition tends to depict Christ triumphant, though, rather emphasizing the images of sacrificial death as commonly found in the West.

For further information on the creation and use of icons, see Chapter 11: Divine Landscape.

Inhabitants

This section describes the different peoples who may be found in the lands of the

Theban Tribunal, along with their languages and naming practices.

Ethnic Groups

The extent of the Byzantine Empire at its height encompassed a vast array of different cultures, from Italy to Syria, and Bulgaria to Egypt. The Byzantine people, specifically the urbanites, are unusually tolerant of cultural differences. The medieval empire is much more restricted in size, having lost territory to the Arabs and the Turks, yet this tolerance persists.

VLACHS

In Illyria in the north of Epiros are found the Vlachs, ethnically related to the Serbians, but speaking a language descended from Vulgar Latin, thanks to occupation by the old Roman Empire. Urban Byzantines tend to have a romanticized and inaccurate idea of the Vlachs as a wholly pastoral people, employed mainly in sheep herding in the high mountains.

SLAVS

The northern limit of the Byzantine Empire used to include both Bulgaria and Serbia, and members of these Slavonic lands are still to be found within the empire's boundaries. Bulgarians are generally viewed with suspicion; they are considered innately treacherous by the Byzantines. Serbians are little known outside of their country.

JEWS

In common with much of the rest of medieval Europe, Jews are an urban phenomenon in the empires. The Eastern Church recognizes their religious rites, even in times of persecution and discrimination, and Jewish quarters (*Hebraike*) can be found in many cities. The biggest concentrations are in Thebes, Constantinople, and Thessaloniki, where they are involved in the textile trades or work as glassmakers, smiths (particularly coppersmiths), and tanners, or have learned positions such as scribes, translators, or physicians. In the Hebraike, Jews maintain their own synagogues and cemeteries.

OTHER PEOPLES

The "Franks" (Westerners) form a significant minority in the region, principally as feudal lords set over the native Greeks by the invading armies. The Venetians fulfill the same role on the islands that the Franks do on the mainland.

Arabs from the Holy Land and North Africa mix with the Coptic-speaking Egyptians and Aramaic-speaking Syrians and Palestinians, and form a minority in southern Nicaea and on Rhodes. All these peoples tend to be given the common label of "Arab," even though some of them are Christian.

Finally, the Seljuk Turks are a rare sight outside of Asia Minor, and are generally treated with awe and fear.

Languages

While the language of the imperial administration and the military is Latin, the dominant vernacular language is Romaic Greek, spoken from the Adriatic Sea to Nicaea's shores, and from Bulgaria to Candia. It is a descendant of the Common (Koine) Greek imposed on the land by Alexander the Great, who had this language synthesized from the many dialects of Classical Greek so that his army could communicate. Consequently, Romaic Greek currently has no significant regional dialects, with the possible exception of Yevanic, a version spoken exclusively by Jews.

In addition to the Living Language of Romaic Greek, there is also the Dead Language of Classical Greek, the language spoken by Aristotle, Plato, and other notables. The great literature of Classical Greek was written in Attic Greek, itself a subdialect of Ionic Greek, but because it was the language of Athens, it became the dominant form of ancient texts. Romaic Greek and Classical Greek are mutually intelligible, but they are separate Abilities. Characters with the Educated Virtue may know the language of Socrates and Aristotle, whereas those who are born in the Byzantine Empire or who have traveled there extensively (and thus have the Well-Traveled Virtue) tend to know the Living Language.

Romaic Greek has less of a stranglehold to the north of the empire's former territories. The language of South Slavonic covers a family of languages which in the 13th century are poorly differentiated from each other. Bulgarian has the most speakers, and in-

cludes the emerging Macedonian language. They are differentiated from the Serbian group of languages (including Slovene, Bosnian, and Croatian) in that the former group use the Cyrillic alphabet, whereas Serbian utilizes the Latin script. Church Slavonic is a dialect of South Slavonic used in the Orthodox Church in Slavic lands, and uses the Glagolitic alphabet.

French is the language of many of the "Franks" of the Latin Empire, with Veneto (the language of Venice) as a close second, heard mainly on the islands. In the 13th century Veneto is more similar to French and Castilian Spanish than Italian, and is one of the contributors — along with Occitan and Portuguese and to a lesser extent French, Greek, and Arabic — to *lingua franca*, the pidgin language of trade on the Mediterranean. Also known as Sabir, this is the language of commerce and diplomacy from the Holy Land to the Straits of Gibraltar.

Two other minority languages may be heard. The Vlachs are descended from the Latinized natives of the east provinces of the Western Roman Empire. The language they speak is a variant of Vulgar Latin, and can still be understood by speakers of Classical

Latin. Finally, the Turkic peoples of Asia Minor speak a language called Oghuz.

Other than Romaic Greek, languages commonly consist of several distinct regional dialects, which are given below 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).

- Classical Greek** (Attic, Ionic, Aeolic, Doric, Homeric);
- Romaic Greek** (Yevanic);
- South Slavonic** (Bulgarian, Serbian, Church Slavonic);
- French** (Norman, Orleanais, Lorrain, Poitevin);
- Veneto**;
- Italian** (Tuscan, Neapolitan, Sicilian, Corsican, Istriot);
- Lingua Franca** (Western, Eastern);
- Vlach** (Romanian, Aromanian);
- Oghuz** (any number of tribal dialects).

Even without knowing the specific language, a character who knows a language that is closely related to another language can still potentially understand a speaker:



LANGUAGES	PENALTY*
Same language, different dialects	-1
Romaic Greek vs Classical Greek	-2
Vlach vs Latin	-3
Italian vs Latin	-3
Veneto vs French	-2
Veneto vs Italian	-3
Lingua Franca vs Veneto	-2
Lingua Franca vs Occitan	-2

* Penalty applies to both speakers.

Names

Following the Roman pattern, it is common for Greeks to have a given name (*praenomen*), a family name (*nomen*), and one or two distinguishing surnames or patronymics (*cognomen*). The given name is commonly that of the saint on whose feast day the child is born, although historical names, particularly those of the emperor's family, are also popular. Given names are also occasionally handed down from a father to his children. Family names often relate to a profession or moral character, or, for military families, a posting or ancestral village. Members of the lower classes often omit family names altogether. A son usually takes the family name of his father; a daughter adopts the family name of her husband, unless her own is more distinguished. Surnames are mostly used to distinguish between members of the same family with the same names, although they also relate to local reputations and can distinguish between particularly common given names.

Customs

This section describes family and daily life in the Theban Tribunal, as well as Byzantine law, education, and literature.

Family Customs

Baptism is an important sacrament of the Orthodox faith, and every child is baptized, usually within eight days of the birth. The mother is Churched forty days after the birth — she remains at home to recuperate, before reentering social life and sexual relations. Owing to a widespread belief that women in

MALE GIVEN NAMES

Alexandros, Alexios, Andronikos, Antonios, Athanasios, Bardas, Basileios (Basil), Bartolomaïos, Christophoros, Demetrios, Dionysios, Dositheos, Eustathios, Gabriel, Georgios (George), Gerasimos, Gregorios, Hypatios, Ioannes (John), Isaac, Isaïas, Konstantinos (Constantine), Kosmas, Kostas, Leo, Leontios, Manuel, Michael, Nikephoros, Niketas, Nikolas, Petros (Peter), Palaeologos, Paulos (Paul), Philippos, Psellos, Romanos, Sabbas, Samuel, Stephanos, Symeon, Theodoros (Theodore), Theodoulos, Zacharias, Zeno

FEMALE GIVEN NAMES

Alexandria, Anastasia, Anna, Basileia, Christina, Chryse, Cyra, Dosithea, Eleni, Eirene, Eudokia, Eugenia, Georgia, Helena, Hesychia, Hypatia, Ioanna, Ithamar, Galla, Kalanna, Kale, Loukia, Maria, Marina, Metrodora, Nereida, Nonna, Olym-

Example Names

pia, Pasara, Rosanna, Sophia, Stania, Theodora, Theodosia, Thoma, Velkonía, Veneranda, Xene, Zoe, Zoranna

SURNAMES

Typically patronymics (Demetriou, "son of Demetrios"), toponymics ("of Smyrna", "of Samos"), or descriptives (The Scholar, The Wise).

FAMILY NAMES

Allectoros (negotiator), Aoinos (drink- ing no wine), Apokrisiaros (secretary), Argyros (silver), Chalkeus (smith), Eirenikos (peaceful), Kalligas (shoemaker), Kaloethes (of good character), Kleido- poios (locksmith), Machairopoios (cutler), Monomachos (warrior), Mylonas (miller), Phrangopoulos (son of a Frank), Pistoros (baker), Raptēs (tailor), Trapezites (bank- er), Tzykalas (potter)

this state of impurity are susceptible to the malign influence of the stars and of the evil eye, during this time women never leave the house at night and take particular care not be "overlooked" (suffer the evil eye), many practicing complete seclusion.

A wedding is often a joyous occasion, marked by a church ceremony. Both parties dress in white, and the bride wears a veil (as do all respectable Byzantine women, even the empress, whenever in public). Guests shower the happy couple with rose and violet petals as they leave the church and parade through the streets, and they go to the bride's family's home for the bridal feast. The bride and groom retire early, and in the morning are woken by guests serenading them from outside the bridal chamber. Women can legally marry from the age of 12, and betrothal at that age is not uncommon, men from 14. Apart from important political unions, marriages are not "arranged" but chosen by the parties. The wife gains a considerable degree of financial independence on marriage, for her dowry is hers to administer and half that sum again is also gifted to her by her husband by tradition, so many married women invest in businesses and trade goods, hoping to increase their wealth. Some become many times richer than their husbands.

Divorce can be obtained with the consent of both parties under Justinian Law, but this is a rare and unpopular practice. Annulment on grounds of consanguinity or other legal issues with the marriage can also occur, with less social stigma. Remarriage is acceptable, but only once — while further divorce and remarriage is technically legal, the Church likens a third marriage (while the former partners still live) to bestiality. Widows and widowers often remarry, but the dowry is retained by the woman in both divorce and in the event of the husband's death, granting widows a certain degree of financial independence.

Death is greeted with mourning rites and a funeral service. Black is worn as the color of mourning, for up to seven years for the loss of a spouse. The dead are buried in cemeteries outside of towns, and tombs are illegal in Constantinople, except in the monasteries and churches where elaborate tombs and funerary chapels called *parecclesia* hold the remains of the wealthy. Mourners gather on the third, ninth, and fortieth days afterwards at the grave. Upon the anniversary of a funeral, for so long as family members retain the memory of the deceased (and can afford it), it is customary for the *kollyba* — a mix of grain, nuts, and honey — to be distributed to the poor at the door of the chapel, in his honor. After three years, the

bones of the dead are dug up, soaked in wine, and then placed in a common charnel house, allowing the grave site to be reused. Denying someone Christian burial and a proper funeral is a terrible thing, and the ghosts of those whose remains are lost or scattered often walk the earth, seeking proper burial.

Food and Drink

Byzantine families dine twice a day; a light breakfast and an evening meal, often served as small portions of different dishes. The wealthy might also have a dawn meal. The use of forks is widespread in the empire; they are a rare novelty to the Franks.

Bread, hard tack, and porridge form the mainstay of the Mediterranean diet, with Asian rice available to those who can afford it. Olives and olive oil can constitute up to one third of the total daily meal; beans, lentils, and chickpeas make up a significant portion, along with wild greens. Fresh fish are eaten at the coast and near to rivers; other meat is eaten rarely by the middle and lower classes, and is predominantly sheep and goats, with some pork. Wine is drunk with most meals.

Clothing and Appearance

The basic article of clothing is the *kamision*, or tunic; it is of varying length and made of cotton, linen, or wool. Emblems, stripes, and cuffs are stitched into the fabric for decoration. The working classes simply belt the kamision at the waist, and add a cloak in the cold. For the aristocracy, a long-sleeved kamision is an undergarment; the over-tunic or *dalmatic* is worn along with a cloak (*chlamys*), and the fashion is for long garments made of expensive materials such as silk. Members of the court wear a felt or fur headdress of elaborate design tailored precisely to their rank. Women's fashions are similar, but the garments are usually longer. An ostentatious *enkolpia* (pendant) worn on the breast and bearing a saint's image, inscription, or relic, is a must for the rich woman; other jewelry often bears precious gems.

For men, the current trend is to go clean-shaven; while monks and priests wear beards as a sign of spiritual authority, the prevalence of beards and long hair among the Franks has driven a counter-fashion among the natives. For women, long hair is much admired, but often concealed behind a veil, since exposed

flowing hair is seen as a sign of loose morals. The Byzantine people bathe more often than Westerners, sometimes once a week, and use nitron mixed with vinegar to produce a cleansing foaming soap.

Law

The extensive system of laws in the Byzantine Empire and its successor realms is one of the most uncorrupted versions of Roman law that still exists. Unlike Germanic law, which heavily influenced the Code of Hermes, and the common law of England, where a subjective law is embodied in the person of a judge or magistrate who may set precedents, Roman law is a system of rigid written statutes, requiring highly educated and trained experts, known as *scholastikoi*, to interpret. Many such individuals receive their education at the great school devoted to the study of law in Constantinople, which was founded by Constantine IX in the 11th century under the leadership of the famous philosopher Michael Psellos. Although many emperors have added to the body of law over the centuries, the most important texts remain the ancient *Code of Theodosius* and the *Pandects of Justinian*. Under Byzantine rule, cases are heard by imperial magistrates in local courts, although important persons or cities can issue an appeal directly to the emperor. In the Church, legal cases are brought to the seat of the patriarchy, and are heard in a court presided over by the patriarch.

Among the nobility, castration is often imposed as a punishment, especially to rebellious sons of emperors or failed pretenders to the throne; since emperors are expected to produce heirs, a castratus is prevented from assuming the imperial throne. In recent times, however, blinding has become a more common punishment for traitors and political enemies; a blind (or otherwise unwhole) person is similarly considered ineligible for rule. Under Byzantine law, many different kinds of mutilation are inflicted for serious crimes; these are regarded as a lesser punishment than death. The tongue of a convicted liar may be cut out or the hand of a thief amputated, for example.

Education

Rudimentary literacy is widespread throughout the Byzantine Empire, thanks to an educational policy instituted by both the

Church and secular rulers. Towns and larger villages have an educational program for all children, beginning with small groups of children under the supervision of a teacher (*didaskalos*) who teaches the essentials of the Greek alphabet, moving on to learning syllables, spelling out the names of Biblical figures, and memorizing psalms and key scriptural passages. The limits on the availability of parchment and ink, let alone books, limits schooling to these basics.

At the second stage, students are supervised by a grammarian (*grammatikos*) who concentrates on key works of classical poetry, such as the Homeric epics. Grammatikoi develop reputations for the quality of their students, and influential families pay a premium to have their sons educated by the best. Outside Constantinople, secondary schooling takes place under a private grammatikos in exchange for a fee.

There are no universities in Byzantine lands, but most large cities possess a school, some of which have developed a reputation for the quality of their scholars and attract advanced students from far and wide. In Constantinople there are several palace schools, and the ones in the Magnaura, Chalkoprateia, and Sphorakiou districts are particularly prestigious. These schools teach mathematics, geometry, astrology, and philosophy in addition to grammar, and serve as institutes of higher learning. There is also a patriarchal academy connected to the Hagia Sophia for the instruction of clergymen and monks. These schools allow Constantinople to compete with the universities as a major center for learning. Students pay fees directly to their tutor (*rhetor*), and education typically consists of the seven liberal arts and philosophy. There is no equivalent of academic qualifications such as the Magister in Artibus; such qualifications must be acquired in the universities of Western Europe and are highly valued in the empires.

Literature

Greek literature consists of both the ancient and the contemporary. The great body of work from ancient Greece is widely known and studied; much of it is revered — for many subjects an ancient Greek author is considered the authority — although some of the “pagan” texts are forbidden and many are subject to a Christian reinterpretation. For the Realm associations of Greek legends, see Chapter 1: Introduction.

There are several popular Greek romances

in 1220, which, unlike all other Greek works, are composed in the contemporary Romaic Greek. The earlier of these works are Christian reinterpretations of ancient Greek epics, whereas others chronicle more recent legends and heroes. Among the former, a body of work known as the *Alexander Romance* is especially popular, detailing the legendary exploits of Alexander the Great. These poems may be compared with contemporary Western romances, such as the *Lais* of Marie de France in French or the *Nibelungenlied* in German. The most famous of them is *Digenes Akrites* (see insert); others include *Rhodante and Dosikles*, set on Rhodes, *Drosilla and Charikles*, *Aristandros and Kallithea*, *Hysmine and Hysminias*, and the *Tale of Achilles*. Most of these stories are tales of adventure featuring a hero and heroine as the central figures, who typically fall into the hands of various captors and tyrants, including pirates, despots, and Saracens. Many fabulous locations and exotic beasts are mentioned, and the events mostly take place in the east of the empire or further afield, against a backdrop of conflict with Eastern rulers. The written forms of these poems usually constitute a tractatus in Magic Lore.

The Greek romances are more rhetorical in style than their Western counterparts. They do not focus on the development of their rather typecast characters or the precise physical details of the tale, but stick to a traditional and rigid plot format, emphasizing the structure of the verses themselves over the de-

velopment of the story. The rhetorical nature of Byzantine poetry reflects the importance of rhetoric in Byzantine education. Whereas a Western minstrel might be uneducated and embellish his tale with personal color or innovation, a Byzantine storyteller is schooled in rhetoric and will stick rigidly to the plot.

Trade

In Byzantine lands merchants are generally considered low and contemptible, a prejudice inherited from the old Roman Empire. Consequently, trade is dominated by foreigners, and the Byzantine ruling class almost without exception does not engage in mercantile enterprises. Still, with the many opportunities available in supplying such a huge city as Constantinople, which remains a preeminent center of trade, merchants here have historically been numerous and wealthy. Many ancient compacts and laws protect and regulate their activities; for example, a centuries-old agreement known as the Rhodian Sea Law provides for fixed compensation for merchants for shipping losses, which is paid by the owners of the ships. There are numerous great merchant fairs, which are often associated with church festivals, such as the feast of St. John

in Ephesos in May and that of St. Demetrios in Thessaloniki in October.

Taxation

The Byzantine emperors had an extensive and effective system of tax collection, from which they drew the greater bulk of their income. At its height, the annual income of the empire amounted to more than a million Mythic pounds. There are taxes on both land and goods. Extensive records for each landed noble list the number of olive groves, mulberry plantations, vineyards, stud farms, flocks, and so on in his possession, and the amount of tax payable on each. Villagers are taxed on their yearly harvest. In the last couple of centuries, the emperors sought to restrict the power of the dynatoi — often local landowners who had gradually bought up most of the land in their villages from their neighbors. Byzantine peasants (the *aporoï*, see earlier) thus consist of a mixture of free villagers and the *paroikoi*, landless or impoverished villagers akin to serfs, although the latter enjoy greater protections against the abuses of their landlords than in Western lands. All goods sold throughout the empire are taxed at the rate of 10%, a tax known as the *kommerkion*. Powerful tax collectors, the *kommerkiarioi*, are assigned a region or are stationed at strategic ports and trade posts; they are widely despised and often corrupt. After the tax is imposed on all goods passing through, an official seal is placed on sacks and containers.

Hermetic Correspondence

Many magi and covenants have adopted the habit of employing elaborate rhetoric in their letters to each other, a practice which can be extremely puzzling to the uninitiated. Such letters often contain elaborate and far-fetched stories, especially concerning the deeds of their patron, which may or may not be entirely true. The patron is typically used as a metaphor for the correspondent's covenant, and the story relates to the purpose of the letter. Often other elements of the story will be a metaphor for the recipient of the letter, or her covenant. Tales from Greek legend are also commonly used as a metaphorical or rhetorical device. Reading between the lines, it is thus often possible to intuit subtle hidden meaning, which may reveal the correspondent's true intent or purpose. Composing and scribing such a letter typically takes a day of work. A

Com + relevant Lore roll should be made against an Ease Factor of 6 to encapsulate a relatively straightforward message; higher Ease Factors are required for more sophisticated or subtle constructions. An Int + relevant Lore roll against the same Ease Factor should be made to discern the rhetorical purpose of the story.

For example, Lucian the Scholar of House Merinita (see Chapter 6: The Islands, Aegaea), one of the principal proponents of this tradition of correspondence, writes to the new covenant of the player characters with a colorful but seemingly irrelevant tale in which the patron of his covenant, Triton, meets a hitherto unknown Faerie lord in his explorations, leading to a fruitful exchange of gifts. This may be interpreted as an interest in exploring a trading agreement with the player character covenant.

Coinage

The Byzantine emperors maintained a monopoly on the minting of coins, and thus ensured a prestigious and uniform system of coinage for many centuries. Gold coins are more common and the usage of currency is more widespread than in the West. The old currency, used since Roman times, consisted of the gold *solidus* and other bronze coins. However, the *solidus* gradually became debased in the 11th century until Alexios Komnenos instituted a complete reform of the currency just over a hundred years ago. The principal coin is now the thin gold *hyperpyron*, commonly dubbed the *bezant* by Westerners, equivalent in value to one-sixth of a Mythic pound (one-sixth of a pound of silver, or 40 Mythic pence). The *aspron* is an electrum coin, one quarter gold and three quarters silver, worth one-third of a

Digenes Akrites

The most famous of the Greek romances details the life and exploits of the legendary hero, Digenes Akrites. This epic poem is popular throughout Byzantine lands.

The first part of the tale concerns the hero's birth and parentage. His father is a raiding emir from Syria, who on an incursion into Anatolia ruthlessly kills and abducts many Byzantine Christians. One of the captives is the daughter of a general, and her mother issues an appeal for her rescue. The brothers of the captive maiden answer the call and the youngest of them bests the emir in a great duel. The emir thus acknowledges their prowess and announces his intention to marry their sister, agreeing to convert to Christianity. They settle in Byzantine lands and a son is born to them; he is named Basil Digenes Akrites, Digenes meaning "twin-blooded" and Akrites meaning "borderer". The emir's mother, however, has meanwhile ordered him back to Syria; he returns alone and manages to persuade her and his family to likewise convert. He happily returns to his wife in Byzantium with his Syrian family, who are duly baptized.

The second part of the epic tale recounts in detail the heroic exploits and conquests of Digenes Akrites. At the age of 12 the youth participates in a hunt with his father and uncle, and demonstrates his precocious strength and amazing bravery by

single-handedly defeating numerous bears and lions. Thereafter, Digenes completes his passage into manhood by falling in love and abducting a bride for himself, the daughter of a general. Naturally, the father responds with war, but Digenes slaughters the army of soldiers that are sent against him, forcing the father to accept his marriage. Later, he successfully cleanses the border lands of bandits and invaders and slays a dragon there. This earns him the admiration of the emperor, who comes to pay homage to him, although Digenes refuses the titles and gifts that are offered. Digenes later commits the sin of adultery, including with a legendarily strong female warrior named Maximou who he had bested in combat. To atone for his sins, he valiantly protects his wife against the assaults of bandits and cursed beasts. The pair settle down in a splendid palace by the River Euphrates, at the eastern extremity of the Tribunal of the Levant, and both die in peace together before reaching old age.

Digenes Akrites might be encountered in Anatolia, a powerful Faerie lord, nigh unbeatable in battle, who seeks to either abduct a bride for himself or stalwartly defend the border lands against Saracen incursions. Any mortal descendants of the hero will likely have inherited his great strength and martial prowess, as well as his propensity for trouble- and adventure-seeking.

Byzantine empire began large-scale silk manufacture as an imperial monopoly, and the import of silks from the East thus became less important. Other important trade goods and exports include olives and olive oil, wine, perfumes, spices, wax, and slaves. Grain is also heavily traded, although it is also needed to feed the largest cities. It has long been forbidden to export certain wares considered to be of strategic or military importance or especial value, such as Greek Fire and its ingredients, gold, iron, weapons, wood, salt, and purple silks.

Mediterranean Ships

The standard Mediterranean trading vessel is a ship with one to three masts bearing lateen sails, usually referred to as a "round" ship, in contrast to the northern "long" ship or galley, on account of their rounded profile at stem and stern. Byzantine and Muslim ships are characterized by a widening of the planks from amidships back towards the stern, creating extravagant upswept flanks or wings. Round ships are steered by two oars mounted in the gap between these wings and the hull, rather than using a rudder. They range in size from open boats with only half decks at best, to very large ships with three decks; between sixty and ninety feet long is typical for large trading vessels. The beam is between one third and one quarter of the length. The lateen sails permit round ships to point into the wind fairly well, but because they have no deep keel, they have extreme difficulty maintaining course at right angles to it.

The most common trading ship is the *dorkon* ("gazelle"), commonly around 65 feet long with a capacity of sixty tons. The *phaselos* ("bean-pod") is a longer and narrower vessel, the *kybaia* ("cubic") is wider and deeper,

hyperpyron. The *billon* coin is an alloy of copper and silver and is worth one-sixteenth of an aspron (slightly less than one Mythic penny). The *tetarteron* is a small copper coin worth one-eighth of a billon. All of these coins have a circular patelliform shape (that is, they are shaped like a shell or a shallow bowl).

Latin rulers in Greek lands generally lack a sufficient base of wealth and stability to mint their own currency, and use a mixture of Byzantine and Western coins. The principal currency of trade in the Mediterranean is the Venetian grosso, a silver coin of high purity equivalent to 2 Mythic pence. One bezant is thus worth 20 grossos.

Trade Goods

In the eyes of Westerners, Byzantine lands are fabulously wealthy. Gold, precious

jewels, silks, and other luxuries are relatively commonplace. Silks are the most famous and valuable of Byzantine goods, much prized in Western lands. They were formerly imported along ancient trade routes from far-distant Eastern lands until the secret of sericulture was discovered, whereupon the

The Color Purple

The rarest of all dyes and hues is true purple, a color reserved strictly for the Byzantine emperors. True purple dye may only be harvested from the murex shellfish, a monopoly and secret retained by the emperors. True purple stone is known as porphyry; it is extremely rare and comes from Egypt. Porphyry and purple silks were used for the construction and decoration of the legendary imperial birthing chamber (see Chapter

7: Constantinople, The Porphyry Chamber). The finest silks of true purple may only be worn by the imperial family and are never sold. Occasionally, if the Byzantine emperor wished to greatly honor a foreign prince, he would gift him some of the priceless purple silks. True purple, either porphyry or the Byzantine dye, has the following Shape & Material bonuses: +10 royalty, +7 rulership and authority, +5 control people.

and the *sandalion* is larger and usually used for carrying grain. *Lemboi* (singular *lembos*), typically have just one mast, or a small main mast with a large fore mast. They are considered among the fastest of ships, all-purpose vessels used as harbor craft, fishing dories, cargo carriers, and river boats. The cutting edge of ship design in Mediterranean shipyards is to integrate facets of northern design — cogs with keels, sternpost rudders, and a square sail — to overcome the inadequacies of the traditional design.

In contrast to the round ship, the galley (*galea*) relies on oar power, and uses sail only when wind and circumstances are favorable. The principle, and most feared, galleys of the Eastern Mediterranean were the dromons of the Byzantine navy; huge, battle-ready, and heavily-armed, they were responsible for the empire's maritime dominance. In addition to these battleships, the navy used *moneres*, fast single-level galleys with minimal crew, used for reconnaissance. The Western craft that transported the crusaders eastwards were also galleys, called *sagitta* ("arrow") as a testament to their speed, and prior to the crusades they were the most common corsair ships. The *cat-tus* is a heavier vessel, bedecked with castles fore and aft, designed mainly for troop transport. The native Greek *akatos* is a small galley, sometimes fitted for war, but more often used as a cargo carrier and passenger ship.

Many of the larger ships on the Mediterranean Sea are built in the ports of the great Italian republics on Candia and Cyprus. The smaller vessels are mainly a product of the

maritime tradition of the seafaring people of Asia Minor, where every small town and village along the coast has its own shipyard. Muslim vessels, called *'ulabi* (small boat), *qit'a* (transport ship), *marqib* (ship), and *shini* (warship) also ply the seas.

The Military

The Latin Empire relies on its own Frankish troops, supplemented by those Byzantine forces that they have been able to seize. The original Greek forces, still present to some extent in the Byzantine successor states, are based largely on provincial forces and foreign allies (*foederati*). Soldiers are recruited from the land they are asked to defend, and receive grants of land in exchange for military service. All landowners owe military service that they pay in person or by proxy. The military provinces, or *themata*, were each commanded by a *strategos* (general), but the system of themes has gradually broken down and their number has been greatly reduced due to losses in the last 250 years. In the near-anarchy of recent decades, the Byzantine army has declined greatly, resulting in a heavy dependence on Western mercenaries.

Most of the Byzantine navy has by now fallen into disrepair, although the Byzantine dromons were rightly feared for the *katakora*, the siphon that spews Greek Fire (see lat-

er) by means of a bellows. The Venetians are currently the dominant naval force in much of the Aegean.

Byzantine military strategy placed a great reliance on fortified hilltops, castles, and towers. Small defensive enclosures are dotted all over the empire, many of them abandoned as armies retreated. As a result of this strategy, military architects have also become experts at siege warfare, particularly siege machinery, and have a dazzling array of cunning devices that hurl heavy weights or massive spears intended to destroy walls and decimate ground troops. Other payloads include live scorpions or snakes, or finely powdered quicklime that on impact produces a dust cloud that suffocates and blinds the enemy.

Organization

The original Byzantine land forces — such as still exist — are organized into the frontier troops (*limitanei*) and the cavalry (*comitatenses*). Most commanders of the military are court dignitaries, and while there are many military titles, towards the end of the 12th century these became independent of their military command. Lower-level officers (*pronoia*) have to supply their own armor, weapons, and (if cavalry) a horse, as well as supplies for their attendants, so it is unlikely that a common-born soldier can achieve this rank. Footsoldiers are organized in *taxiarchia* of one thousand soldiers, commanded by a *taxiarch*. Each *taxiarchios* might consist of 400 heavy infantry (*hoplitai*), 300 archers (*toxotai*), 200 light infantry (*pezoi*), and 100 spearmen (*menaulatoi*). Heavily armed cavalry (*kataphraktai*) are one of the most distinctive parts of the Byzantine army, organized into *moiras* numbering several thousand. They are armed with either a curved saber-like *paramerion* or a heavy mace-like *siderorabdion*, plus a 12-foot-long *kontarion*, or polearm.

Greek Fire

One of the contributors to the former naval dominance of the dromons in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, the invention of Greek Fire (*bygrron pyr*, or "liquid fire" in Greek) is attributed to the architect Kallinikos in the seventh century. Few inventions have left such a strong impression on those who witness its use; it is purported to turn stones and



The Imperial Guard

Under the Greeks, Constantinople was guarded by five elite regiments or tagmata, each commanded by a palace official of great favor. These five regiments were (in increasing order of prestige) the Scholai ("Academics"), Exkoubitoi ("Sentinels"), Arithmoi ("Numbers"), Hikanatoi ("Worthies"), and Athanatoi ("Immortals"). Each tagma consisted of 1,500 soldiers divided into squads (banda) of

30. The palace guard was drawn from the tagmata, and consisted of several divisions based on ethnicity. The most famous of these was the Varangian Guard, tasked with protecting the imperial family. Its members were originally drawn from Scandinavia and Russia, but later were principally Anglo-Saxons. Their skill with their distinctive double-edged axes (pelekys) is legendary.

iron to dust, to burn on water, and annihilate all living things. Greek Fire is delivered through ship-mounted kataraks as well as smaller hand-held siphons operated by specialist troops called *naffatun*. It can only be employed in relatively calm weather, because the arcing jets of liquid fire are easily influenced by the wind. To the chagrin of the crusaders, Arab engineers have stolen the secret of the Greek Fire, and have used it against them in siege warfare, such as at the siege of Acre in 1191.

Its composition is a closely guarded secret of Byzantium's alchemists, who toil in workshops under potentially lethal conditions to make sufficient to supply the empire's needs. Greek Fire is an alchemical reagent (see *Art & Academe*, page 76), and can normally only be manufactured in small batches. However, the cunning Greeks have discovered a manner in which it can be mass-produced through a number of workshop innovations and superior raw ingredients (see *City & Guild*, pages 65–67). A master alchemist in such a workshop can coordinate a team of less-skilled subordinates using a lab text of the formula. He can supervise a number of subordinates equal to his Leadership score. Each subordinate receives a workshop bonus to his Lab Total, and can produce two or more doses in a season.

Because of the dangerous nature of the substance, an alchemist must roll a stress die for every season spent in the laboratory manufacturing Greek Fire; this die is only significant if a botch is rolled, in which case the reagent explodes during manufacture. One botch die is rolled for every dose being manufactured (the more Greek Fire present, the more danger), and an alchemist would be well-advised to invest in a Safety bonus for his laboratory (*Covenants*, page 111).

There are a number of different recipes depending on use; the hand-held siphons squirt a lower grade of Greek Fire than that

launched at ships. A hand-held siphon is operated using the Profession: Naffatun Ability instead of a Martial Ability. The siphon is a missile weapon with the following weapon statistics: Init –2, Attack +4, Defense 0, Damage +10, Range 5 paces, Minimum Strength +2, Load 3, Cost Expensive. Shields do not defend in the usual way since the liquid fire splashes around them; add the Defense bonus to the character's Soak instead. Each dose of Greek Fire is good for 10 sprays of the hand-held siphon.

Mass production of other empirical formulae is theoretically possible, but it would need separate innovations and the virtually unlimited wealth of an empire to support it.

Superstition and Folklore

This section details some of the peasant folklore of Europe that is especially prevalent in Greece and Byzantium. For further information on the supernatural in the Theban Tribunal, see Chapters 9 through 12.

The Alaphroiskiotoi

An *alaphroiskiotos* ("light-shadowed one") is a man or woman who was born on a Saturday, which according to folklore grants him or her magical powers. Most alaphroiskiotoi have the Second Sight Virtue, although others possess Dowsing or Magic Sensitivity instead, and some may have no specific powers at all. All those who possess a "light shadow" have special powers over the vrykolakes (see Chapter 12: Infernal Landscape) regardless of whether they have Supernatural Abilities.

Some light-shadowed ones are also sleepwalkers, known as *parmenoi*, or "taken ones" (this term is also used for those abducted or afflicted by faeries). They may accompany nightwalkers on their night battles against witches who

Baskanos

Infernal Might: 5 (Vim)

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

Size: –7

Virtues and Flaws: Hex; Sharp Ears; Restriction (targets of envy); Weak-Willed

Personality Traits: Envious +6, Selfish +5, Petulant +3

Soak: +1

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

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

Abilities: Awareness 4 (compliments), Folk Ken 4 (envy), Hex 10 (destroy prosperity), Penetration 5 (Hex)

Powers:

Coagulation, 1 point, Init –1, Corpus: the demon can obtain a material form, which it may dissolve at will.

Obsession, 1–3 points, Init –5, Vim: The de-

mon can impose the Obsession Trait of Envy. See *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, pages 31–32, for more details

Weakness: Abhorrent Material (amulet against the evil eye)

Vis: 1 pawn of Vim vis, in eye.

Appearance: a tiny wizened man no larger than a rat, with a lidless staring eye instead of a head.

Baskanoi are members of the Order of Tempters (*Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 43), of a type of demon called kakodaemon in Greek. They throng in the air like flies, looking for an opportunity to breed resentment through the evil eye. They use their Hex Ability to curse their victims, although they are restricted in only affecting those who have received a compliment or been the target of envy. They often use their Obsession power to create targets for their malice.

Adelphopoiesis

Adelphopoiesis is a ritual form of brotherhood, acknowledged by a ceremony that evokes the power of oaths. It is an acceptable face for a close spiritual friendship between friends of the same sex while avoiding the stigma of accusations of homosexuality. An adelphos who has undergone this rite becomes a Sympathetic Connection to his adopted brother, and is represented by the True Love/True Friend Virtue or Flaw.

It is not unheard of for magi (particu-

larly magi of House Jerbiton) to undergo this rite, although it is a deeper relationship than swearing an Oath of Covenant, and more akin to the "blood brotherhood" of other cultures. It has even been known for a magus and a mundane to become adelphoi, although this is usually confined to magi with the Gentle Gift. Magi of the Cult of Orpheus (see Houses of Hermes: Societates, page 120) are especially interested in this rite due to their non-Hermetic power over emotional relationships.

threaten fertility, or they may be nightwalkers themselves. For more information on nightwalkers, see Chapter 9: Magical Landscape, Magical Traditions and *Hedge Magic*, Chapter 6.

The Evil Eye

Fear of the evil eye, called either *phthonos* or *baskania* in Greek, and *invidia* or *fascinatio* in Latin, is prevalent throughout the empires. It is transmitted through envy, particularly the malice-filled look of a jealous person; it is the anonymous nature of the *phthonos* that leaves men afraid to enjoy their good fortune lest the envy of their fellows blights them. The evil eye can maim livestock, blight crops, render women and animals barren, strike down children; in short, destroy the home, wealth, and health of the unknowing victim of its attention. The dread of the evil eye is so great that compliments are sometimes neglected where they are due to avoid drawing the *phthonos*; and it is particularly with regard to children that caution is necessary. To praise a child's beauty is a terrible social *faux pas*, as is to boast of a child's talents, for such things can breed jealousy and thus attract the attention of the *phthonos*. It is not unusual for mothers to dress their sons in girls' clothing, or smear soot on their faces to avoid envy.

The power of the *phthonos* is often attributed to the physical emanations from an envious eye, and indeed, some individuals are capable of deliberately casting the evil eye. Typically, they are either capable of a malicious form of Folk Magic (see Chapter 9: Magical Landscape, Magical Traditions) or else possess the Hex Supernatural Ability (*Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 92). However, most instances of the evil eye are caused by a demon called a *baskanos*. These demons delight in nothing better than to

destroy prosperity, virtue, and beauty. The sovereign ward against the *baskanos* is an amulet of blue glass bearing an eye; this is worn around the neck or wrist or hung in a prominent place, such as over the crib or in the cow byre. However, those capable of making these amulets are rare and they are greatly prized. Protection can also be sought by making a horned sign with one's left hand whenever an unguarded complement is given, but such a ward is temporary at best.

The Power of Oaths

As an asseveration of truth, a strengthening of an agreement, or a guarantee of future conduct, the oath is widely used in the private and public life of the empire. A man might be willing to make a false promise, but not when it is accompanied by a solemn oath. Oaths are typically made in the name of a saint, most commonly St. Basil of Cae-

serea, or Saints Theodoros and Theophanes (see Chapter 9: Magical Landscape, Oaths), and the Divine witness may decide to punish notorious oath-breakers at the request of the injured party (see Invoking a Saint, *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 87).

It is commonplace in some areas, particularly on the islands, to swear in the name of the local river. The oath-takers drink from the same bowl of river water to seal the pact between them. This practice stems from the most famous Greek river, the River Styx that flows through the Underworld. When Styx (one of the younger titans and daughter of Okeanos) aided Zeus in the war against her own people, Zeus gave her governance over all oaths. When an oath that was sworn to in this manner is broken, then there is a chance that the genius loci of the river will hear and enforce the oath. The injured party must return to the spot where the oath was sworn, and declaim his former partner as an oath-breaker. Make an Oath Invocation roll. If the name of Styx was invoked as part of the original oath, add 6 to it.

OATH INVOCATION ROLL:

Communication + Charm

+ simple die (+6 if Styx is invoked)

EASE FACTOR: 15 + simple die

If the invocation equals or exceeds the Ease Factor, the complaint has been heard by the spirit who witnessed it. The vengeance of the spirit varies; minor river spirits can't affect anything beyond their own waters, but woe betide the oath-breaker if he approaches those banks. More-powerful spirits have further-reaching powers, and some may be able to call on spirits of vengeance for aid.

Punishments for Oath-Breaking

The most common punishment is the imposition of a Flaw. Any General Flaw is possible; and Lesser and Greater Malediction are also popular. The Flaw normally lasts for a fixed duration dependent on the severity of the oath, but some might require acts of contrition or repentance to remove them. Major Flaws are imposed by powerful entities with a Might of 40 or greater, otherwise the punishment is usually a Minor Flaw. However, some spirits and saints are particularly known for inflicting certain punishments. See the appropriate Realm books for more information on the type of punishments that can be inflicted.

LESSER MALEDICTIONS:

Food turns to ashes in the mouth (but it still nourishes);
Body exudes a mephitic odor;
Clothes rot after a day of being worn;

GREATER MALEDICTIONS:

A toad appears in the mouth every time a lie is told;
Wounds spontaneously open when the character exerts himself — when he gains a Fatigue Level, he takes a Light Wound;
When the character uses a tool or weapon, roll a simple die; on a 1 or 2 it breaks.

Chapter Five

Greece

The west mainland of the Theban Tribunal is the famed land of Greece, home to the titans and gods of old, and liberally dotted with ancient sanctuaries and ruins. Many of the former gods, faeries, and ghosts still haunt the temples, the forests, and the mountains of this richly mythical land. The folk here — pious and superstitious in equal measure — are rightly wary of the various kinds of nymphs, guardian spirits, and restless dead that stalk the land at night. Most common among them are the enchanting nereids (see Chapter 10: Faerie Landscape, Nereids), who may be found in Greece in great numbers.

A thousand and a half years ago, Greece was the intellectual and spiritual heart of the ancient world. In the Byzantine era, and with the rise of Christianity, Greece waned in importance and fell under the shadow of great Constantinople. Historically, it has been a less-than-secure part of the empire. Pagan Slavs and later Christian Bulgarians have invaded from the north, and in the last hundred years or so it has been overrun and ravaged by Norman invaders from Sicily more than once. In the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade, Greece has fractured into four main kingdoms and duchies, with the exception of Epiros, they are crusader realms with Latin rulers.

Greece is bordered to the north by Bulgaria, to the west by the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, and to the east by the Aegean. There are so many gulfs and peninsulas that the coastline is thousands of miles long. There are no great rivers, mostly because there is seldom a place that is more than fifty miles from the sea, but also because the rainfall in summer is rather light, except for west of the Pindos Mountains. Inland, Greece consists mostly of mountains, and is generally forested with some plains. The coastal lands and plains are mostly fertile, and rich in grain and olives; the grain surplus of Greece was, until recently at least, sent to feed Constantinople. In the south, silk farming and production is the most profitable industry.

Epiros

Epiros (meaning “mainland,” as opposed to the Ionian islands) was at the fringe of the ancient Greek world, and so lacks traces of ancient Greece, for the most part. It consists of a large swathe of mostly mountainous terrain in the northwest of Greece, although the port city of Durazzo and the Via Egnatia leading east from it (see later) are of strategic importance.

The Principality of Epiros, currently the largest of Greece’s new kingdoms, is a realm that was formed out of the Greek rebellion against the Latin Empire. Its creator was Michael Komnenos Doukas, cousin to Byzantine emperors Isaac II Angelos and Alexios III Angelos. As his name indicates, he was descended from the greatest families of the Byzantine Empire, and his rebellion against the Latins made him a potent figurehead. Originally serving the Latins in Morea and allied with Boniface of Montferrat, he rebelled and was severely defeated by William de Champlitte in the Battle of the Olive Grove (Koundouros) in 1205. Following this military humiliation, he retreated north to Arta in Epiros, where he founded a new realm.

Michael’s rule was characterized by savagery and treachery, switching allegiances between the Latin and Orthodox Churches, and between his neighbors. In 1210 he attacked Thessaloniki in alliance with Venice, breaking faith with his son-in-law, the infant king Demetrios. He was later excommunicated by the pope after he crucified three Latin priests who had fallen into his hands. Despite several successes in taking territory from the Kingdom of Thessaloniki, he was ultimately forced to submit to Emperor Henry. In 1213 he began seizing territory along the Adriatic and Ionian coast from his former Venetian allies. In 1215 he was finally stabbed by one of his household staff, who was driven to the act by Michael’s intolerable cruelty, and he died unmourned. His

illegitimate son fled into exile, so he was succeeded by his half-brother Theodore Dukas, a recent arrival who had originally fled to Nicaea upon the fall of Constantinople and who defected to Epiros in 1210.

Theodore Dukas maintains the ruthless expansionism, and has taken Ohrid and the region of Pelagonia from the Bulgarians. In 1217 he captured the Latin emperor Peter de Courtenay, who was traveling from Durazzo on the Via Egnatia to Constantinople. Peter’s fate is unknown, but many of his men were murdered or died in captivity, and Peter is presumed dead. Theodore, like Michael before him, has not yet taken on the title of emperor, but as he is moving steadily toward the city of Thessaloniki, it seems that Constantinople and the imperial throne is his ultimate goal. His ruthlessness, cruelty, and naked ambition have not won him many friends, but already much of the Kingdom of Thessaloniki has fallen to him, and with a powerful army of Frankish mercenaries under his command, it seems likely that Thessaloniki’s young king, Demetrios, will soon lose his throne.

Arta

Michael Komnenos, fleeing the aforementioned battle of Koundouros, came to the relatively unimportant town of Arta, which he made the capital of Epiros and of his new realm. It lies on the site of the ancient Corinthian city of Ambracia, named after an Amazon princess and granddaughter of Apollon. Later, in the early Roman age, it was the capital of King Pyrrhus. Over the last 15 years Arta has swelled in size, with a steady stream of immigrants leaving more-troubled lands to the east and south, including Constantinople. Under the new lords of Epiros, a formidable new castle has sprung up; however due to the depravities and excommunication of Michael Komnenos, it has an Infernal aura and is guarded by a flock



of sinister ravens. The Divine auras of Arta's churches are correspondingly weak.

THE BRIDGE OF ARTA

For as long as the citizens of Arta can recall, they have labored to bridge the River Arachthos. A team of 45 master builders, with 60 apprentices, toiled every day, only to find that their work collapsed into the waters at nightfall. After the arrival of Michael Komnenos, a great black raven accosted the chief mason by the river bank, insisting that he must sacrifice his fair wife if he wished to complete the bridge and avoid the wrath of his new master. The master builder agreed, but his plan to outsmart the devilish bird was thwarted. His wife perished in the bridge's foundations, laying a curse that when birds fall from the sky, so shall men fall from the bridge.

The graceful bridge, now completed in a pale stone, crosses the river in several long, slender arches. It has a perfidious Infernal aura of 2, and the great raven still watches over it. Any who cross the bridge have their Greedy Personality Trait increased by two, or gain it with a score of 2, until the following day. With a steady stream of merchants and townsfolk crossing the river, Arta's market has become a grubby and treacherous place.

It might be possible to fight off the foul bird, but this may cause the bridge to fall, earning the wrath of the ruler of Epiros.

Corfu

Corfu, a large hilly island straddling the Ionian coast of Epiros, was until recently under the dominion of Venice, until Michael Komnenos wrested it from Venetian hands in 1214. The main port town is also named Corfu, or Korkyra by the Greeks, and it lies halfway down the eastern shore.

THE STONE SHIP OF CORFU

Odysseus, the legendary hero and king of Ithaca, first arrived on Corfu — then called Scheria — when he was washed up on its shores. Later, he was given a magnificent Phaiakian ship by King Alcinous; it was unsinkable, could navigate through the thickest mist, and could be steered only by the thought of its captain. Poseidon, Odysseus' enemy, punished the Phaiakians by turning the ship into stone. This splendid galley, now

comprised of solid dark granite, still stands above the waves just outside Corfu's harbor.

Each winter, a great storm arises on Corfu's eastern shore, and the ship moves again, seemingly manned by Odysseus and his crew. An army of tritones (see Chapter 6: The Islands, Aegaea) arrives, accompanied by tempestuous waves, and attempts to conquer or sink the ship. The ship is considered a source of vis owned by the Tribunal, since the tridents wielded by the tritones are Rego vis — if they can be claimed from their owners. Few volunteers come forward to gather the vis, however, since doing so requires participating in this stormy and deadly battle. Although the magi of Aegaea would seem most expert in this area, they claim that loyalty to their patron, a ruler of tritones, precludes them from participating. Instead, they seem to delight in persuading other magi to volunteer for this service, only offering cryptic clues as to how the watery army may be bested. Ex Miscellanea magi from the tradition of the Seirenes (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 137) have postulated that a siren song may free the stone ship from its mystical anchor, just as Odysseus himself was tempted by the sirens. The ship is surrounded by a Faerie aura of 2, rising to 4 during the winter storm.

Durazzo

Durazzo, or Dyrrhachium, is the largest city in Epiros, and one of its most ancient. It lies in a naturally protected harbor on the Adriatic Sea, and has thus been an important trading port since time immemorial; nowadays many ships ferry back and forth to Italy and Venice. Since it also lies on the west end of

the Via Egnatia (see insert), the city forms an important link between the realms of Western Europe and the Orthodox East. Straddling these two worlds, it is a bustling and cosmopolitan trading center, with Italians, Venetians, Greeks, Bulgars, Jews, and Vlachs among its colorful and varied citizens. Durazzo fell under the dominion of the Republic of Venice in the wake of the Fourth Crusade in 1204, but it has since been taken by Epiros.

Lakes Ohrid and Prespa

The two largest lakes of Greece are nestled amid the mountains in the north of Epiros. Lake Ohrid, the larger, is over twenty miles long; a passing Bjornaer magus once claimed that its crystal-clear deep blue waters were home to magnificent species of strange and magical fish. The Via Egnatia passes along the northern shore of the lake, through the venerable episcopal city of Ohrid. Ohrid is the former capital of the Bulgarian Empire and seat of an archbishopric, which is blessed with dozens of ancient churches. Although the settlements around the lake shore, including the placid monastery of St. Naum, have a strong Divine aura, a Magic aura prevails at the center of the lake, which is home to a potent genius loci.

A short distance to the southeast is the slightly smaller Lake Prespa. It is located higher in the mountains, and its waters feed Lake Ohrid through underground channels. Mostly uninhabited by humans, it has a Faerie aura and is home to many limniads, a kind of nereid (see Chapter 10: Faerie Landscape, Nereids) native to lakes and marshes. These fair maidens may sometimes be seen dancing on the lake through the early morning mist,

The Via Egnatia

The most important road in the Theban Tribunal is the Via Egnatia, built in ancient times by the Roman Consul of Macedonia, Gnaeus Egnatius. Stretching nearly 700 miles from Durazzo on the Adriatic to Constantinople, the Queen of Cities, it winds its way through the mountains of northern Epiros before passing through the great city of Thessaloniki. It then skirts along the northern edges of the Aegean and the Marmara Sea through Thrace before reaching its destination, the gateway to the Black Sea and Asia Minor. Although the road is mostly in good condi-

tion, having been repaired and maintained by the Byzantine Empire for centuries, it can become impassable in places during rainy weather, especially in the hilly terrain of Epiros. The invading armies of Sicily traveled along the Via Egnatia, and in the wake of the Fourth Crusade the Latin Empire and its vassal states now depend heavily on it for contact and trade with the West. Since Theodore Komnenos, the ruler of Epiros, now controls much of the Western stretch of the road, he is in a position to effectively stifle the Latin Empire, should he so wish.

or bathing or swimming in it. They have been known to seduce travelers on the Via Egnatia, a few miles away. A small handful of such weak-willed men, most struck dumb or witless, may be found living with the limniads in a humdrum lakeside settlement, where many piles of treasure taken from entranced merchants on the road are hidden. Their children with the limniads are mostly ill-formed or ill-tempered. A small island in the lake with a Divine aura, known as Golem Grad (Snake Island), is inhabited by pious folk and is infested with snakes. The limniads fear the snakes and so stay away from the place.

MOUNT PELISTER

A lush, pine-covered peak more than 8000 feet high overlooks Monastiri, an ancient city a dozen miles to the east of the lakes, from the east. The foot of Mount Pelister, by the River Dragor, is one of the rumored locations of the famed Basilica of Ten Thousand Columns (see *Ancient Magic*, page 121), one of the most important temples to Apollon and formerly home to a cult of Hyperborean wizards.

The Pindos Mountains

The Pindos Mountains form the long spine of Greece, running north-south between Epiros and Thessaly as far south as the Gulf of Corinth. Much of it is wilderness, consisting of steep peaks, canyons, forests of pine and beech, and high meadows. The superstitious folk that do live here are earthy Vlachs (see Chapter 4: Culture and Customs, Ethnic Groups), partially nomadic goat and sheep herders, with some farmers, weavers, and traders.

DODONA

High in a valley on the western edge of the Pindos, in a region reckoned by Aristotle to be where the Greek peoples first originated, lies the most ancient sanctuary in Greece, Dodona. In the time before the Olympian gods, it was an oracle dedicated to the worship of the titaness Rhea, identified with the mother goddess. Her priestesses received communications by listening to the rustling of the leaves of the oaks in the sacred grove. The site was later converted to the worship of Zeus, with a grand temple built by King Pyrrhus. A local bishop cut down the last re-

maining oak in the fifth century.

Dodona is a timeless and deserted place, littered with a few ruins from Roman times, most notably a large amphitheater. The grove has a Magic aura of 4. The Seekers of the Fallen (see Chapter 9: Magical Landscape) believe that many ancient secrets of the titans are hidden here; if they are right, then the entrance to the magical Garden of Eden might be located here in a regio. Several decades ago, they replanted the oak trees in the grove. On the far side of the grove, before the mountainside, stands an arch which the Seekers have repaired, flanked on either side by rampant lions of stone. It is reckoned to be a gateway to a Magic regio, guarded by the lions, but the Seekers have not yet managed to activate it.

Macedonia and Thessaly

The northeastern realms of Greece lie between the Aegean Sea and Bulgaria. Macedonia, the more northeasterly region and the homeland of Alexander the Great, is separated from Thessaly by the Cambunian Mountains. Thessaly, including Larissa, has now mostly been conquered by the Principality of Epiros under Theodore Komnenos.

Following his failure to be elected Latin Emperor, Boniface of Montferrat set out to capture Thessaloniki, the second-largest city of the former Byzantine Empire. It proved unnecessary, for he was greeted with joy by the populace. Likewise in Macedonia and in Thessaly, the Greeks treated him as a conquering hero, liberating them from a series of incompetent and corrupt emperors. Many

towns threw open their gates to him and accepted his rule with rejoicing, an auspicious beginning to his reign. He was assisted by holding a legitimate claim to the territory, through his brother Renier's marriage to Maria Komnenos in 1180. His own marriage to Margaret of Hungary, widow of Emperor Isaac II Angelos, further cemented his position. Thus was the **Kingdom of Thessaloniki** founded. Despite Boniface coming close to war with Emperor Baldwin, who also coveted the city of Thessaloniki, the Venetians negotiated peace between the two Latin states.

After his death in 1207 (see Chapter 12: Infernal Landscape, The Fate of the Crusaders), Boniface left as heir an infant son by Margaret, Demetrios. Named after the patron saint of Thessaloniki, the boy was only two years old at the time of his father's death. With a former Angelos as mother, he is popular with the great Greek families and citizens of the city. Margaret's regency enjoyed popular support, though she swiftly married Nicholas St. Omer, one of the lords of Thebes (where she now resides). Upon Margaret's re-marriage, the Latin emperor Henry appointed his younger brother Eustace as regent to protect Demetrios, and married him to the daughter of Michael Komnenos (see earlier) to try and end the conflict between Thessaloniki and Epiros.

Demetrios was crowned at the age of four in 1209. Henry called the Thessalonian lords to swear loyalty to the child, but the Frankish nobles largely ignored this, as many favored the claim of William VI, Marquis of Montferrat. Nevertheless, he forced their submission, and a year later intervened to save the young king from an alliance between the Venetians, Bulgarians, and Epiros. On Henry's death in 1216, Emperor Peter de Courtenay accepted William's claim to the title and Margaret fled into exile, leaving Demetrios in the city. Peter's presumed

Count Oberto

The Latin emperor Henry marched on Thessaloniki to demand its submission in 1209, but the inhabitants closed the gates against him. Margaret had been forced to stand down as regent by Count Oberto II of Biandrate, who was plotting to replace Demetrios with Boniface's son by his first wife Helena del Bosco, William VI, Marquis of Montferrat. It became clear that Oberto was in league with Emperor Henry. Following several days of negotiations, Henry was admitted to the city. Oberto's

plan fell apart immediately, for on speaking with Margaret, Henry saw the justice of her cause and seized the treacherous count. He was loaded with chains and imprisoned in the castle at Serres. Released some years later, Oberto swore vengeance on the emperor, and may have been responsible for his murder by poisoning in 1216. A tireless advocate of the pretender William's claims to the crown of Thessaloniki, Oberto is still a deadly enemy to King Demetrios.

death at the hands of the ruler of Epiros has allowed Demetrios to continue as king, and he is now aged 15. However, Epiros has begun a concerted attack on the Kingdom of Thessaloniki, and much territory has already been lost. It seems unlikely the city can hold out much longer, with the armies of Epiros closing in from the north and the west, and with continual heavy fighting.

The Kingdom of Thessaloniki enjoys much better relations with its Greek subjects than the Latin Empire. Its forces contain a majority of Byzantine troops as well as having numerous Frankish lords and mercenaries of uncertain loyalty to their king, but concerned with their own estates' survival. As the army of Epiros employs large numbers of Frankish mercenaries, this leads to the irony of a Frankish kingdom with a largely Greek army fighting a Greek principality with a largely Frankish army. The system established by Boniface is still in place, all vassals owing one season of garrison duty and one season of military service per year, and giving exactly the same rights and dues to Greeks as to Latins. The Latin archbishop of Thessaloniki is a noted friend and supporter of King Demetrios, having tutored him in his youth, and Thessaloniki has both Orthodox and Latin churches peacefully coexisting, although the Latin hierarchy predominates.

Thessaloniki

The Macedonian king Cassander founded a city near to the site of ancient Therma in the fourth century BC, on the Gulf of Therma at the northwestern corner of the Aegean Sea. He named it Thessaloniki after his wife, who was a half-sister of Alexander the Great. In Roman times the city prospered as a provincial capital at the same time the Via Egnatia was built. Christianity came very early to the city with St. Paul the Apostle, who preached in its synagogues. After fleeing the city, he wrote two epistles (letters) to the pious folk of Thessaloniki, which are now two books from the New Testament named *Thessalonians*. In the ninth century, the gospel was carried from here to Bulgaria by the brother saints Cyril and Methodius.

Visitors from Western lands are astonished to find Thessaloniki a vast and magnificent city of more than 100,000 souls. It is larger than Paris, yet it is only the second city of the former empire. Its size and influence are such that it was dubbed the "Co-Queen" of the empire (the "Queen of Cities,"

of course, being Constantinople). The south side of the city, facing the sea, consists of a great mile-long harbor; the other three sides are surrounded by huge Byzantine walls. Within, this grand city of merchants, scholars, and artists boasts many splendid monuments, including ancient Roman arches and statues, a huge hippodrome, and an imperial mint. The Rotunda of St. George, the oldest church in Greece, has a squat cylindrical shape and excessively thick walls, which has



allowed it to withstand the ravages of time. The Hagia Sophia — a less-grandiose copy of Constantinople's famous church — has recently been converted to the Western Church and is now the cathedral of Thessaloniki. It is, however, overshadowed by Thessaloniki's foremost church, the Hagios Demetrios (Church of St. Demetrios). Built atop the old Roman forum, it is an ancient basilica and shrine of the city's patron saint (see later). The famous Fair of St. Demetrios is held for six days in October, outside the city walls, during which time merchants from far-flung reaches of Europe congregate here to trade with Arabs and Jews from Africa and the Levant. Most of the citizens of Thessaloniki are Greeks, but there are small communities of Italian merchants and Jews.

Thessaloniki was last invaded in 1185, when the Norman ruler of Sicily, William II, conquered Durazzo and subsequently mounted a campaign across northern Greece, in an act of open rebellion against the depraved emperor Andronikos Komnenos. During the looting many thousands were slain, but the city recovered in the following decades. Mercifully, the Fourth Crusade in 1204 bypassed the city, and so Thessaloniki was spared the horrors that befell Constantinople. Despite now being the seat of a crusader kingdom, the city is mostly uncorrupted and maintains

much of its Byzantine grandeur, providing some inkling of what the Queen of Cities must have been like before her downfall.

SAINT DEMETRIOS

St. Demetrios, the patron saint of Thessaloniki, was a martyred Roman soldier. His miracles are credited with saving the city many times against marauding Slavic armies, and he protects his city to this day. If the city is gravely threatened, the saint rises from his shrine in the Hagios Demetrios, where his relics miraculously emit the scent of myrrh, and joins the defenders of the city. Corresponding to this military nature, he is (along with St. George) the patron saint of the Crusades. These two facts may certainly explain why the armies of the Fourth Crusade wisely avoided the city. Nevertheless, the priests of Thessaloniki have struggled to explain the capture of the city by the Sicilians in 1185. Some say that the campaign of William II, nicknamed "the Good," was just and that Demetrios refused to rise up in defense in the name of such a wicked emperor as Andronikos Komnenos, even aiding the attackers. Indeed, in 1185 the defenders were helpless; they inexplicably ran out of ammunition for the catapults and arrows for the archers, and the walls were breached as if by magic. Demetrios will still rise up in defense if the cause is just, however, as he did most recently in 1207. The Bulgarian tsar Kaloyan had besieged the city, but in the first days of October St. Demetrios heard the cries of the citizens, and a shining figure in armor rode out to meet the Bulgarians, slaying the tsar with a spear. While the Bulgarians whisper that Kaloyan was killed by his Cuman cavalry commander in an act of treachery, many on the battlements that day saw the saint save the city again.

THE GORGONA

After Alexander the Great had completed his great conquests, he sought to conquer death itself. He claimed for himself the Water of Life, by slaying the dragon that guarded it. He returned home, victorious, with his prize. While he was sleeping, however, his half-sister Thessaloniki drank the water, thinking it to be normal. Furious, Alexander cursed his regretful sister to dwell in the sea forever, and she became a mermaid. She forms the symbol of her eponymous city: a mermaid with two tails, both curving up so that she grasps one in each outstretched hand.

Bad Boars

Men of Macedonia who have led a particularly wicked life are liable to turn into wild boar at the moment of their deaths. They haunt their relatives and acquaintances for forty days after their death, after which time they retreat to the mountains and live in the wild. This post-mortem transformation results from the possession of the corpse by a wilderness demon called a mazzik (see *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 73).

The mermaid, known as the Gorgona, roams the whole northern Aegean, but is most often seen not far from Thessaloniki's great harbor. Whenever a ship is encountered she emerges from the waves, sometimes in a chariot drawn by dolphins, and accosts a sailor, asking him if Alexander still lives. If he answers that he is dead, then she dives under the ship with a terrible sigh, transforming and growing to a fearsome size before raising a great wave with her hand to capsize the ship; if he answers instead that Alexander still lives and rules, then she lets the ship pass in peace, playing calming music on her lyre to still the waves. The Gorgona has a Faerie Might of 40; she is most often encountered during turbulent seas at midnight.

Mount Athos

Mount Athos is a wooded promontory of the Chalkidiki Peninsula that rises to the peak of Mount Athos proper, more than 6,000 feet above sea level. Its great cliffs overlook the seas below, and huddled on its wooded and rocky slopes are many monasteries that share this sacred space. Nothing female, either animal or human, is able to set foot upon this holy land, for the Divine has warded it against such intrusion and set it aside as a place reserved for lives of piety and prayer. The whole promontory has a Divine aura of 5, with the monasteries and cells often reaching 7, the altars 8, and certain holy spots on Mount Athos itself 9. Heaven is close here.

The communities of monks here take many forms: solitary eremites living as hermits in caves or tiny cells; *lavra* of monks who live independently but come together for the service on a Sunday; and *koinobion* or monasteries of the type prevalent in the West,

where many monks dwell together under the Rule of Saint Basil, observing the Orthodox liturgy under the watchful eye of their abbot (see Chapter 4: Culture and Customs, Monastics). From the eighth century the promontory was a place of spiritual retreat, the first of the great monasteries, Xeropotamou or the Great Lavra, opening in 955.

The Holy Mountain has many monastic foundations, some of which are extremely imposing. From an early time the monks have been partially dependent upon the local lay people for food and other necessities hard to cultivate in the rocky soils. But generous support from generations of the Byzantine upper classes who wanted prayers and masses said for their souls, and from ordinary people who were inspired by their personal piety to donate and labor to feed the monks, has allowed the community to grow. Small boats regularly dock, the monks sometimes leave the mountain to take their spiritual insights to other areas, and a constant stream of male pilgrims floods the mountain.

The Latin rulers of Constantinople have respected the autonomy of Mount Athos, which continues exactly as it did before the fall of Constantinople. It is self-governing, with most monasteries participating in the election of the protos, or "first," who represents the community in negotiations with the outside world. Three of the monasteries — the Great Lavra, Vatopedi, and Iviron — remain independent and their abbots possess considerable influence in their own right, even beyond the protos. The monasteries reflect a wide range of cultures — Iviron is Georgian, Panteleimon Russian, Zographou Bulgarian, and the Serbs have Hilander. Armenian monks are also common, and three Benedictine monasteries following Latin rites have also been constructed over the centuries.

Olympos

Olympos, the greatest mountain of Greece, is the legendary home of the 12 Olympian Gods, who dwell and hold court in crystal palaces in a mighty realm above the clouds. This awesome peak, which dominates the east end of the Cambunian mountains, is habitually shrouded in great dark clouds, and wreathed in lightning. Rarely, the clouds may part to allow a brief glimpse of a majestic snow-capped pinnacle, inestimably high above them.

Here and there on the lower slopes, in a

wilderness roamed by wolves and bears, may be found a particular kind of speckled mushroom that grows in the exact spots where Zeus' lightning bolts have met the ground. By eating such a mushroom (which is worth two pawns of *Creo vis*), which is part of the diet of immortals, a character may receive a -3 bonus to his Aging roll for that year. The secret of these mushrooms is known to only very few persons, since local priests urge villagers to stay clear of Olympus.

As one makes — or attempts — the formidable ascent of the mountain by following the tantalizing glimpses of the peak, climbing into the clouds and through the Faerie regio that blankets the mountain, one eventually arrives at the gateway to the top level of the Faerie regio and the legendary realm above the clouds, which has a Faerie aura of 10 and may be located in the Faerie realm of Elysium (see *Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 34). A great gate of clouds is guarded by the three Horae (Seasons), goddesses and personifications of Spring, Summer, and Winter. Although it is not easy to enter this realm, certain magi have managed it and have returned to tell the tale. Some of them aimed to unobtrusively study the gods, others desired to pit their wits or their magics against them, and others merely found it a potent place to study the Arts. Merinita magi also sometimes journey to Olympus to engage in Mystery initiations.

Through the gate and above the clouds, no wind or precipitation disturbs the majestic peace of the upper peak. The sunshine reflecting from its snowfields and from the great crystal palace at its summit is so bright as to potentially blind mortal eyes. Here and there may be seen celestial steeds, used to draw the chariots of the gods. From the southern end of the crystal complex, within the palace of Zeus and Hera, the entirety of Greece can be seen, far below. In the great hall of the palace is the huge throne of Zeus, made of black marble inlaid with gold and covered with a purple ramskin. The seven steps leading up to it are the colors of the rainbow. The ivory throne of Hera is covered with white cowskin; three crystal steps are before it. Here, Apollon plays his lyre and the Muses sing to the gods.

The northern end of the crystal complex overlooks comparative wilderness; here are kitchens, workshops, armories, and servants' quarters. Lower down the north face are dwellings for lesser gods, and various stables and menageries of fantastic and sacred beasts. At the center, just to the north of Zeus' palace, is a great open court, flanked by the residences of the other 10 Olympian

gods, and at whose northern end may be found a great banquet hall. The ambrosia and nectar of Olympus that is drunk here by the gods, and which is the reputed source of their immortality, is reckoned to be a fabulously potent source of vis.

THE FORGE OF HEPHAISTOS

Hephaistos, the god of smiths and the forge, crafted all the buildings and furnishings of Olympus, and the golden shoes of the gods, with which they could traverse water or air. At the foot of Mount Olympus is one of his most sacred forges, home to several legendary items of his manufacture (see *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 118, for some suggestions). The forge is a cult site sacred to the Mysteries of House Verditius. It has a Faerie aura of 4 and is currently inhabited solely by Theorus the Old of House Verditius, a member of the covenant of Ingasia, which bears responsibility for the site.

Larissa

The ancient city of Larissa, the seat of an archbishopric since the fifth century, lies in the center of the large and fertile Thessalian plain. It is the principal city of Thessaly, but currently falls under the dominion of the rulers of Epiros. The city was named after the benevolent nymph of a local spring; she is still occasionally seen and venerated as a saint by the locals. The nymph is one of Larissa's ancient symbols; the other is the horse, since the surrounding plains have been famed for their horses and horsemen since antiquity.

Meteora

Not far from the northwestern edge of the central plain of Thessaly, where the River Salambria emerges from the Pindos Mountains, may be found a spectacular complex of huge sandstone pillars of various shapes and sizes, some more than a thousand feet high. This holy place is named Meteora (loosely translated as "hanging in the heavens"); from these heights one indeed has the feeling of being on a tiny island closer to heaven, especially when mist shrouds the plains below.

Meteora is home to a *skete* (a small community of hermit monks) named Doupiani,



Story Seed: Twilight of the Gods

A Redcap reports sightings of one of the Olympian gods in several villages not far from Olympus. Although this "god" seemed to be using appropriately godlike powers, he also bore a strong resemblance to a magus believed to have succumbed

to Final Twilight a couple of decades ago. The Tribunal calls for magi to investigate. Is this being really a god, is it magus who has been possessed by a god, or is it a magus or hedge wizard posing as a god to disguise his mundane meddling?

Magnesian Stones

The coast of Magnesia, the southeastern part of Thessaly, has been a noted source of stones and minerals since ancient times, which are prized by alchemists and magi alike. Of particular interest are the stones known as magnes, which come in two types. The male magnes, some of which may be harvested as Terram vis, are dark-colored, powerful lodestones that attract objects of iron (+7 control iron, +3 divination). If such a lodestone is placed on a scrap of parchment and a certain type of powder is added, mystical symbols are formed. The female magnes, slightly lighter in color and a source of Imaginem vis, may be added to glass to make it perfectly clear (+3 purification, +2 invisibility).

after the pillar where the communal chapel of Theotokos is located; it was founded by the first monk, Varnavas, in the 10th century. Several of the hermits live high up in the pillars, secreted in tiny caves and fissures in the precipitous rock faces, where they have painted primitive frescoes. In some places, crude rope pulleys have been constructed, so as to pull food and supplies (and even men) up to the dwellings. The ropes are replaced only when they break, according to God's will. Should a devout and humble man fall from one of the pillars, he may be rescued by one of the giant Divine eagles that dwell among Meteora, and be borne back up to his cave, or to an even more perilous hole higher up. The mercy of the eagles is such

that they often bring scraps of food to starving hermits, although not those engaging in ritual fasting.

With one notable exception, the pillars have Divine auras ranging from 3 to 6. They all have different names — Pillar of Dreams, Pillar of Solitude, and so on — after the various mystical phenomena that one may experience there. The mightiest pillar, Agio Pnevma (Tower of the Holy Ghost), has the strongest aura; its summit is believed to be a gateway to Heaven itself. Its peak has never been reached by any mortal man, at least not by any who ever returned to tell the tale. The one unholy pillar is named Pyrgos Diavoulou (Tower of the Devil) and has an Infernal aura of 4. Unlike the others, it is infested with foul vultures who torment and assault any who attempt to climb it.

Meteora is believed to hold several sources of vis, but magi do not commonly visit the site. The last magus who came here attempted an ascent of the Agio Pnevma. Perhaps in punishment for this act of hubris, his levitation magics inexplicably failed and he fell to his death, whereupon his body was eaten by the vultures.

Mount Pelion

Pelion, a hook-shaped peninsula at the southeastern extremity of Thessaly, is the home of the centaurs, beings with the torso and legs of a horse and the upper body and head of a man. The whole peninsula, a half dozen miles across and twenty miles long, is bereft of human settlement. It consists completely of a labyrinthine and overgrown

mountainous forest, densely packed with tangled undergrowth and fallen branches beneath oaks and beeches. A Faerie aura of 3 pervades the whole forest, and navigating it is difficult. Within, the centaurs — faeries who exhibit both the untamed aggression of the stallion and the civilized nature of man in equal measure — are prone to challenging intruders to vigorous and often deadly contests involving fighting, hunting, or racing, which are celebrated with wild feasts and drunken revelries. Pelion is home to several events recorded in Greek legend, such as the marriage of the hero Peleus to the nymph Thetis, whose union produced Achilles.

THE CAVE OF CHIRON

At the highest point of the forest wilderness, to the north of the peninsula, is Mount Pelion proper. Here, in a cave, may be found the foremost and wisest of the centaurs, Chiron. Chiron's knowledge, especially of astrology and medicine, is unsurpassed and his powers of divination are legendary. He was a tutor to most of the Greek heroes, including Herakles, Asklepios, Achilles, Theseus, Jason, and many more. Accordingly several magi, especially Seekers and magi of House Merinita, have traveled into Pelion in search of Chiron's tutelage. Not all have returned.

Attica and Boeotia

Two city-states at the heartland of ancient Greece, Thebes (in Boeotia) and Athens (in Attica), were once bitter rivals. Boeotia, to the north, is separated from Attica, a peninsula to its south, by the forested limestone hills of the Kithaeron Mountains, forming a natural border which was hotly disputed in ancient times. These hills were the backdrop to many battles and legends, and they are now dotted with faerie sites and the ruins of ancient fortifications.

Otto de la Roche of Burgundy established the Duchy of Athens in 1205 and took the title of Duke after 1208, though the Greeks call him *Megas Kyr*, "great lord." Paying homage at first to Boniface of Montferrat as king of Thessaloniki, Otto supports Demetrios and also paid homage to the Latin emperor.

The Temptations of Christ

Some of the hermits of Meteora attempt an ascent of the Tower of the Devil and dwell there as long as possible as a test of their faith — this might also be a suitable ordeal for a character attempting a Mystery initiation. Over the course of forty days and nights, the duration of Christ's time in the desert, he is tormented by the vultures. A character living in the pillar is also presented with three temptations, mirroring those of Christ. Firstly, the vultures bring stones to the starving hermit, which are transformed into tantalizing loaves of fresh bread. If eaten, the stones are an agonizing poison. Secondly,

when the hermit reaches a great height, one of the vultures counsels him to throw himself off the pillar, assuring him that the Divine eagles will rescue the devout. If he succumbs and jumps, however, he falls to his death. Finally, if the hermit reaches the summit after forty days and nights, a beguiling apparition of the Devil shows him the view from the top — a great vision of all that he desires: lands that he wishes to rule, wealth that he craves to possess, and so on. If he accepts this offer, a suitable Infernal Blessing (see *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 85) is granted.

A pious Catholic, Otto has established a monastic house of Cistercians at Daphni (between Athens and Eleusis). He regards Orthodox priests as heretics and has reduced many to destitution by driving them from their positions, and heaps abuse upon them at every opportunity. So shameful is his treatment of the Greek clergy that the pope has excommunicated him for his crimes, and demanded he make recompense. Whether he will obey the pope remains to be seen, for he claims that many Orthodox priests were simply ordained to excuse them from the labor dues and taxes he has levied upon his population, from which clergy are exempt, so he denies the validity of the Orthodox ordination.

Otto's devotion to the Latin Church remains strong, and he has recently converted the Parthenon in Athens to the Cathedral of Our Lady, within the newly fortified Acropolis where he resides. His brother Guy is joint Lord of Thebes with Nicholas St. Omer. (In 1207, after the death of Boniface of Thessaloniki, Nicholas married his widow, Margaret of Hungary. This was her third marriage, as Margaret was previously the widow of Emperor Isaac II Angelos). Athens is heavily committed to the struggle against both Epiros and the Bulgarians.

Thebes

The ancient city of Thebes, which gives its name to the Tribunal, was founded by a legendary figure known as Kadmus. After consulting the Delphic oracle, Kadmus came to this inland spot at the southern edge of the Boeotian plain and slew the dragon that dwelled there. He sowed the dragon's teeth, as instructed by the goddess Athene, and the Spartoi ("sown men"), fully grown and fully armed magical men, children of Ares, sprang up in their place. Most of the Spartoi fought Kadmus, but five were loyal to him and helped him found his city. The Kadmea — the ancient citadel at the center of the city — is named after him. For a time, Thebes held the upper hand in its struggles against Athens, but the Athenians ultimately prevailed and the race of the Spartoi retreated to a forgotten place in the Kithaeron Mountains, where they may still remain to this day. Thebes' fate was ultimately sealed by Alexander the Great, who razed it as a stern warning to the other cities of Greece to remain loyal.

For more than a thousand years thereaf-

ter, Thebes remained an insignificant town, merely a shadow of its former glory, until the establishment of silk farming in the 10th century. Within two hundred years it then grew to become the preeminent center of silk manufacture in the Byzantine Empire, surpassing even Constantinople, as the famed weavers of Thebes produced fabrics of a legendary quality. Dyes and other necessities were imported from Athens. The silk industry was set back in the middle of the 12th century, when the Norman ruler of Sicily, Roger II, took Thebes and Athens. He moved the industry en masse to Sicily, including all necessary infrastructure and workers. Silk is now also produced in Italy, although to a lesser extent. Thus the secret of sericulture passed into Western Europe.

Thebes and its native silk industry made a complete recovery, however. It is now a sprawling city of 30,000 inhabitants, many of whom are silk growers and weavers, making it easily the second-largest city of Greece. Still, it pales in comparison to the size and splendor of Thessaloniki.

Delphi

High among forested slopes, in an uninhabited upland region to the west of the Boeotian plain, may be found the legendary Delphic oracle, the most famous seer of the ancient world. The oracle can be found in the Temple of Apollon, at the center of a small complex of temples, ruins, and an amphitheater. The site is situated at an idyllic natural sanctuary on a terraced plateau amid rocky crags, below the sacred Mount Parnassos. The oracle was once consulted by kings, emperors, despots, and philosophers alike in matters of politics, war, and religion, and was famed for the veracity of her answers, although they were often cryptic or bore hidden meaning.

The oracle is now under the stewardship of the Theban Tribunal and the Order of Hermes. A lone Criamon maga resides here and serves as the oracle; she takes the name Pythia — the ceremonial name of the ancient oracle — and, in the fullness of time, chooses her successor (often her filia). After being initiated into the oracle's Mysteries, that successor assumes the name and role without any announcement. Thus, although many magae have served as Pythia, she is regarded as a single enduring entity. Traditionally, magi come here to consult the oracle, especially before important ventures

Story Seed: The Absent Oracle

The characters arrive at Delphi intending to seek out the oracle, but are instead greeted by a young girl who claims to be the apprentice of Pythia. The girl only tells them that Pythia is absent, and repeats the last prophecy of her mistress, which seems to presage both her disappearance and the arrival of her rescuers. It is unclear whether Pythia has been captured or is merely being eccentric; in either case, they will need to solve the riddle of this prophecy in order to bring her back.

like the founding of a covenant or the adoption of a patron, and she is often consulted before important Tribunal decisions. It is unclear how much — if any — of the future she can see. Nevertheless, in the fullness of time her enigmatic predictions are almost always found to contain wisdom. Supplicants to the oracle are only allowed between spring and autumn; they traditionally bring a gift of money or valuables, and present further, more substantial gifts later if the oracle's pronouncements bear fruit.

The Temple of Apollon, which is used by Pythia as a laboratory, is richly decorated, thanks to the many gifts. The *adyton* ("inaccessible") is the highly secret inner chamber of the temple, where its greatest relic may be found. The *omphalos* ("navel") is a great hollow egg-shaped stone intricately carved with the pattern of an interweaved net. According to the ancient Greeks, it marks the center of the earth. This is the stone that the titaness Rhea wrapped in swaddling clothes and gave to Kronus (who swallowed all his offspring), pretending it was his son Zeus. A small hole in the omphalos emits heady vapors (*Intellego vis*), which are imbibed by Pythia to aid her with her predictions. In an inner hearth, an eternal flame burns; it is a potent source of *Creo vis* — any new flame lit from it burns continuously without fuel. Pythia harvests the vis from these sources on behalf of the Tribunal, after she has taken what she requires for her own needs. Due to the awesome presence of the omphalos and its association with the titans, Magic, rather than Faerie, predominates here; the oracle proper has a Magic aura of 9 and the remainder of the sanctuary has a Magic aura of 7.

THE CASTALIAN SPRING

At the foot of a monumental pair of cliffs on the lower slopes of Mount Parnassos, where there is a Faerie aura of 4, a pool and its surrounding rocks are dazzlingly bright. Supplicants to the oracle stop here to wash their hair and leave gifts of vis for Pythia in the niches carved into the cliff. After washing, the supplicant's hair seems to have absorbed some of the light; it may be trimmed, yielding *Imaginem vis*. The former guardian of the spring was the she-serpent Python, a daughter of Gaia slain by Apollon.

THE PALACE OF THE LAMIA

Several miles to the south of Mount Parnassos, by the coast of the Gulf of Corinth, is a place where a lamia (see Chapter 10: Faerie Landscape, Lamiae and *Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 68) can be summoned from the sea when

a youth plays a flute on the seashore. She makes the young man an offer: a life of ease and pleasure with her. If he refuses, she rips him apart; if he accepts, she drags him into the water and drowns him. A magus might discover that under some circumstances the man is taken to the lamia's underwater palace and given that life of ease, as she teaches him many secret things she has learned. This is a dangerous way to study, but the rewards are reputedly great. Many lamiae are capable of initiating Mystery Virtues, for example.

Athens

Athens is so old that its founding is unrecorded by history. Two of the Olympian Gods, Athene and Poseidon, both desired to be its patron, and so offered suitable gifts to win its favor. Poseidon created a spring as a symbol of naval power, by striking the

ground with his trident. But the city chose instead the gift of Athene, an olive tree symbolizing prosperity. Thus the city, which in time grew to become the legendary capital of Attica and of the whole of ancient Greece, was named after Athene, and its grateful residents erected a great temple to her atop the Acropolis ("high city"), the naturally defensible hill that is the city's ancient heart and key to its former dominance. To this day, the city is blessed with fertile olive groves.

Athens remained a proud city of scholars and philosophers under Roman patronage, but it fell out of favor as Christianity came to dominate the empire. Under Byzantine rule, Athens was not nearly so significant as it was in the ancient world. Nevertheless it is now still a large and prosperous port city of about 10,000 inhabitants, often frequented by Venetian traders. As well as producing an excess of grain and olives, Athens is known for its fine dyes and soaps, which are needed for the silk industry. In the mountains just

The Cult of Eleusis

For more than two thousand years, a certain number of enlightened Greeks have received initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries at the sacred site named Eleusis, 14 miles northwest of Athens. Here Demeter, the goddess of agriculture and fertility, was reunited with her daughter Kore (Persephone), Queen of the Underworld, and reconciled to her fate. Keleus, an ancient king of Eleusis, was among the first to receive the ancient Mysteries here. Initiates lose their fear of death, coming to view it as merely a gateway to the afterlife, and are assured of the immortality of their spirit. This mystical wisdom enables them to live out the remainder of their mortal lives with a greater clarity and purpose. In classical times, the cult was the foremost among the Greek Mysteries, written about by Homer and Aristotle and sought out by flocks of pilgrims, kings, and scholars as well as low-born folk and slaves, and both men and women alike. Over the last several centuries, the cult has adopted some Christian trappings and beliefs — pious initiates become confident of their place in Heaven instead of the pagan afterlife — but orthodox Church opinion holds belief in the Eleusinian Mysteries to be, at best, heresy. As such, the cult has become much more secretive and the number of initiates has

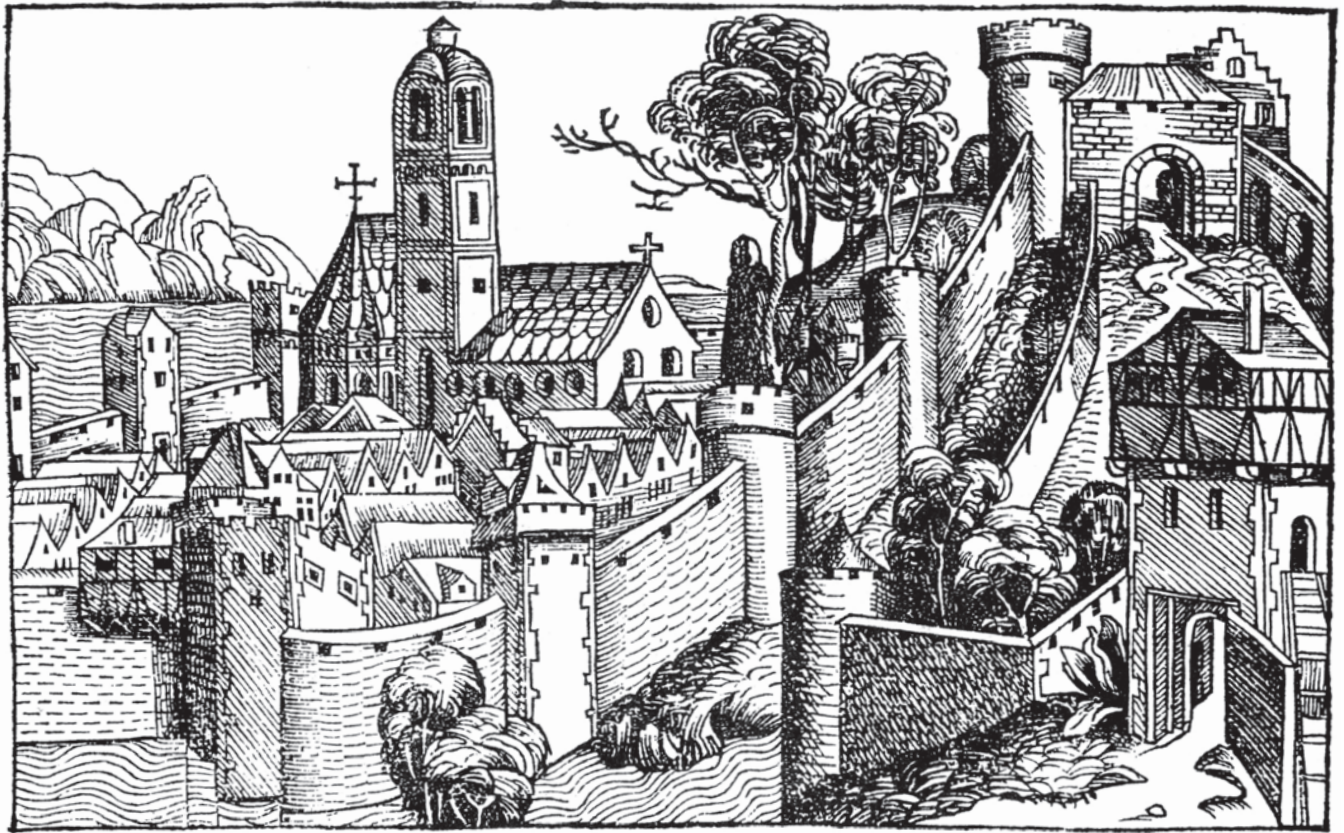
dwindled to a tiny handful.

Prospective initiates to the cult require a sponsor. Barbarians (non-Greeks), those with blood guilt (murderers), and immoral women (prostitutes) are forbidden membership. The initiates gather at the agora in Athens. A band is placed on their right wrist and ankle to protect against the evil eye, and the group proceeds along the Sacred Way, through the Forest of Daphni, to Eleusis. This is a lengthy procession, with much singing and dancing and many ritual stops, one of which is at the Daphni monastery. Here, monks sympathetic to the cult have Christianized a sanctuary to Apollon; some regard them as mystics, but most see them as heretics. The monastery was sacked in 1205 and given over to the Cistercian Order, which has presented the cult with difficulties in recent years.

Arriving at Eleusis at nightfall, the *kykeon* — the sacred barley water of Demeter — is drunk, and the participants gather outside the great 42-columned *telesterion*. Next, the goddess Hekate, the secretive companion of Kore and the exalted guide of initiates, seemingly appears as a crone holding a dagger, a golden key, and a rope in her three hands. These symbolize ritual power, arcane mystery, and the umbilical cord of rebirth, respectively. Some,

the *epoptai*, are given a secret password by Hekate and are allowed to proceed to the final stage of the rite, where they receive the awesome and highly secret revelations central to the cult. Others, the *mystai*, are told that they have to wait another year. Those who are chosen proceed inside and are sworn to secrecy by the placing of the golden key against their lips. Breaking this vow is punishable by death. The mystical revelations, which leave the recipient both awe-struck and enlightened, culminate in the opening of boxes and baskets to reveal sacred relics. Afterwards a celebratory festival, including dancing, feasting, and the ritual sacrifice of bulls, lasting all night is held in the Rharian Field, the place where grain first grew and which is a potent source of *Herbam vis*. Eleusis has a Magic aura of 4, rising to 6 inside the temple.

There are two Eleusinian Mysteries. Initiation into the Lesser Mystery occurs once a year in March, and grants the Virtue Self-Confident (Confidence score increases by 1 and 2 Confidence points are gained), as the initiate loses her fear of death. The Greater Mystery is initiated once every five years, at the end of August. It may grant the Death Prophecy Virtue, as the initiate is given mystical insights into the nature and timing of her death.



outside the city are the famed marble quarries of Penteli. The Acropolis at the center of the city and its new Latin cathedral are the seat of the Duchy of Athens.

Along the road leading to Piraeus — the harbor of Athens — a single column was erected several generations ago by a group of forty women. They bought a cart, some calves to pull it, and a silver vessel upon which they inscribed the names of every disease to which the population was liable. They then buried the vessel, cart, and calves in the ground, and placed the column on top, dedicating it to St. Haralambos, protector against plagues. Since this time, the city has not suffered any outbreaks of disease.

THE TUMULUS OF MARATHON

A small plain in the east of Attica, within sight of the Aegean Sea, is the site of the Battle of Marathon, a decisive Greek victory against the invading Persians in the fifth century BC. Here a large conical tumulus covered with grass and with a Magic aura of 3 is the burial mound of the 192 Athenians who died in the battle. On an ancient stone before the tumulus are recorded the words of the poet Simonides: *The Athenians, as defenders*

of the Hellenes, in Marathon destroyed the might of the golden-dressed Medes.

Every year, on the anniversary of the battle in September, the ghost of the herald Pheidippides appears at the tumulus and repeats his famous athletic feat, running the 26 miles to Athens. He arrives, exhausted, at the foot of the Acropolis, shading his eyes to peer up the hill. If he perceives that Athens is ruled by the Greeks, he proclaims victory with the cry, "We were victorious!", before expiring on the spot in the manner of his original death. He leaves behind only his sandals, each of which contains 3 pawns of Creo vis. If, on the other hand, Pheidippides sees that Athens is in the hands of barbarians (non-Greeks), then he turns away with a grimace, saying nothing before fading away (leaving nothing behind). In the latter case, the ghosts of the 192 Athenian soldiers awaken at the tumulus the next nightfall. With a grim determination, they proceed to battle their way across Attica, taking on any who stand in their way. Unless they are stopped, they arrive at Athens after several days, and mount a furious assault on the Acropolis in an attempt to retake the city. This presents a significant problem for the current Duke of Athens, Otto de la Roche, since the superstitious local Greeks are reluctant to help him

defend his city against their own countrymen. He is instead forced to rely on an army of crusaders and mercenaries several hundred strong to repel the formidable ghostly soldiers. Divine help will not avail him either, since he is currently excommunicated. It has been discovered that the ghostly soldiers, when defeated, leave behind various weapons and outfittings that contain Perdo vis. However, the Tribunal has so far refused to gather this vis, not wanting to benefit from a Greek defeat, even a symbolic one. This vis disappears after a short while, but it is not known who — or what — is harvesting it.

Euboea

Euboea, a narrow seahorse-shaped strip of land in the western Aegean Sea nearly one hundred miles long from northwest to southeast, is technically an island (the second largest of the Theban Tribunal, after Candia), being joined to the mainland only by a bridge. The island has relatively little water, limiting the potential for agriculture, but it is blessed with rich marble quarries. The whole

eastern coast facing the Aegean is rocky and destitute of harbors, and is feared and avoided by sailors on account of its frequent storms and treacherous currents. A large part of the Persian fleet was wrecked here before the ancient Battle of Salamis.

In 1157, William the Bad, the Norman ruler of Sicily, arrived with an army 10,000 strong on 164 ships, mercilessly sacking every coastal town. Formerly modestly prosperous, Euboea never recovered and is now sparsely populated. Shortly after the Fourth Crusade, the island fell into the hands of three barons from Verona, who dubbed themselves the Triarchy. They established a realm of baronies known as the **Lordship of Negroponte** (the Venetian name for the bridge, and by extension the city of Chalkis and the whole island). The central barony is based at Chalkis, the northern barony at the town of Oreoi, and the southern barony at the town of Karystos. One of the three, Ravano della Carceri, later assumed control of the whole island and accepted Venetian overlordship in an act of rebellion against his homeland. Since his death in 1216, Venetian bailiffs have split each of the three baronies into two, dividing the six resulting territories among Ravano's relatives and descendants.

Chalkis

Chalkis, the small city that is Euboea's principal settlement, takes its name from the copper and bronze workers who first lived there. It also lends its name to the peninsula of Chalkidiki in Macedonia, so named on account of the colonists from Chalkis who settled there in ancient times. A sturdy and venerable fortress dominates the town; it is of strategic significance, since Chalkis has often been used as an ideal base for an invasion of the mainland.

THE EURIPUS STRAIT

Chalkis is located at the point where the distance to the mainland, Boeotia, is at its shortest, halfway down the Euboic Sea. The Euripus Strait is little more than a hundred feet across, and can be crossed by a wooden drawbridge. The fierce tidal currents of the strait are unpredictable, changing direction many times a day, often suddenly. Aristotle attempted to explain this phenomenon logically, but he was forced to admit defeat, throwing himself into the waters in despair and exasperation. The strait is home to the

genius loci of the Euboic Sea, which has a great fear that the strait will be filled in, splitting its sea into two. Thus it maintains the violent tides to dissuade mortals from any such impertinent acts. Decades ago, the folk of Chalkis regularly kept the bridge raised and did not sail ships through the strait in order to appease the spirit, but the new Latin rulers of the island are not nearly so superstitious.

The Nature of Herakles

Byzantine philosophers, poring over ancient copies of the works of Homer, Ovid, and Apollodorus alongside the Old Testament, have concluded that Herakles is the Greek name for none other than the biblical figure Samson, whose legendary strength only failed when his hair was cut by Delilah. The 12 Labors of Herakles were obstacles presented to him by the Devil, in order to test his faith and strength. Sites associated with the virtue of Herakles are thus typically Divine, and those associated with his opponents and Labors mostly Infernal.

The Mountains of Euboea

The mountainous region known as Euboea was the honored site of the wedding of Zeus and Hera. Unfortunately, their marriage was so troubled that this honor turned into a curse. In a rage, Hera destroyed the wedding site in a terrible earthquake, which was so violent that it separated Euboea from the mainland and broke the mountain chain down Euboea's length into three separate clumps. These three areas are now home to warring earth spirits and several sources of Perdo vis. Even today, earthquakes are frequent on the island.

AETOS

The villages of Kastania on the east side of the peak of Aetos, not far from Karystos, and Neohori on the west side each have a *koukouvaoun* (see Chapter 10: Faerie Landscape, Stoicheiones). Kastania's spirit takes the form of a cow, and Neohori's the form of a

golden-horned ox. Whenever the villages are in dispute, the spirits go to battle. Last time they disputed, Kastania's spirit was forced over a precipice and buried under a rockslide. Ever since, that village has been wracked by earth tremors as the spirit struggles to escape. In the meantime, Kastania has fallen on hard times, and its crops have failed.

THE BATHS OF HERAKLES

In the of north of Euboea near the coast, on the slopes of Mount Gaetsades, which is more than 4,000 feet high, is a hot spring. Sulfurous waters cascade over the yellowed rocks directly into the sea. This is one of the places where the hero Herakles came to rest, and healing waters sprang up here in order to refresh him. The waters of the spring, which has a Divine aura of 4, are known to cure gout and rheumatism. Medicinal plants grow up among the surrounding slopes.

Morea

The southernmost part of Greece is a peninsula, joined to Attica only by a narrow isthmus. Morea is a fertile land known for its silk production. It is so named because of the large number of *moreai*, mulberry trees used in sericulture, whose leaves are food for the silkworm. It is also sometimes known as Peloponnesus or the Peloponnese, its name from ancient Greece.

Geoffrey de Villehardouin arrived in Greece accidentally, shipwrecked on his way to Syria on crusade. His ship was blown off course and managed to make landfall in the port of Modon, where the local Greek warlord hired him and his contingent of fellow knights as mercenaries. They participated in the conquest of a large area of Western Morea, but after the death of the man who hired them, his successor distrusted the mercenaries and they were forced to flee north. They found themselves at Boniface's camp, and here Geoffrey was reunited with an old friend, William de Champlitte, who was serving in Boniface's army. The two men, realizing that Morea was in a state of near-anarchy, with local tyrants and warlords fighting to gain territories following the collapse of Byzantine authority in the region, set out to carve out their own realm, which became the **Principality of Achaea**.

The principality was created by William de Champlitte in 1204 following the great Battle of the Olive Grove (Koundouros), where his small Latin force decisively defeated an army 10 times larger from Epiros, thereby gaining control of Morea. The principality consists of 12 small baronies in the Peloponnese. William died in 1209 while traveling back to France, leaving Geoffrey de Villehardouin as regent. By the terms of William's will he would inherit the principality if the designated heir, William's nephew Robert, did not arrive from France within a year and a day. Geoffrey schemed with the Venetians to ensure that Robert was delayed en route, hence becoming the new ruler of the Principality.

In 1208, Leo Sgouros, the leader of the local resistance, was trapped with a small group of Greeks in the fortress of Acrocorinth (see later). When he realized that his position was untenable, he mounted his horse, donned his armor, and urged his mount to a suicidal leap off the battlements and down the precipitous cliff. Following Leo's death, resistance faltered and the whole of Morea was captured by 1211. In thanks to God, Geoffrey granted the Cistercian Order lands at Zaraka in Arcadia, where an impressive monastery in the Gothic style is currently being built.

In 1218 Geoffrey died and was succeeded by his son, Geoffrey II. Geoffrey II is married to Agnes de Courtenay, daughter of former Latin empress Yolanda and the ill-fated emperor Peter. He enjoys a good relationship with the Latin Empire and with his Venetian neighbors, who are heavily involved in the trade that is making the fertile lands of the principality rich. Generous to Greeks and Latins alike, he is popular and enjoys much support from his subjects. Unlike the current Duke of Athens, Geoffrey II has a good relationship with the Orthodox clergy and has in fact attempted to restrict Latin gains in the Church, levying taxes on Latin clerical lands that have led to papal displeasure. In contrast, the Orthodox clergy are exempted from taxation and military service.

Corinth

Corinth is named after its legendary founder, Korinthos, a descendant of the sun god Helios. It is located at a strategic spot by the narrow isthmus in the northeast of Morea, benefiting from ports on both the Saronic and Corinthian gulfs. In ancient times it was home

to a great temple of Aphrodite, where thousands of prostitutes were employed. As with Thessaloniki, St. Paul the Apostle wrote two epistles to the early Christian community of Corinth; these form two books from the New Testament named *Corinthians*.

Corinth has suffered repeated disasters under the last thousand years of Byzantine rule. In the fourth century, it was first ruined

The Peloponnesian Labors of Herakles

As well as Lake Stymphalia, where Herakles completed his sixth Labor — the eradication of the Stymphalian Birds — Morea is home to several others of his 12 Labors.

The town of Nemea, between Lake Stymphalia and Corinth, was where Herakles killed the Nemean Lion, his first Labor. Lake Lerna, a smaller lake in the southeast of Morea, bore witness to Herakles' second Labor, the slaying of the Lernaean Hydra. In the north of Morea is Mount Erymanthos, where, in his fourth Labor, Herakles captured the Erymanthian Boar. In the west is Elis, where Herakles' fifth Labor was to clean the Augean stables in a single day.

Emulating one of the Labors of Herakles is a popular choice of Gauntlet for apprentices of House Flambeau in the Theban Tribunal.

by an earthquake, and then, two decades later, the Goths arrived and sold its citizens into slavery. Further earthquakes in the sixth and ninth centuries destroyed it again. Finally, in the middle of the 11th century, the entire peninsula was ravaged by Roger II of Sicily, on his way to conquer Athens and Thebes. Despite this violent history, Corinth today remains a bustling port city of 10,000 inhabitants, making it the largest and most important settlement of Morea. A sprawling ancient fortress known as Acrocorinth is located 1,500 feet up in the mountains a short distance behind the city. It remains in use and commands the Isthmus of Corinth.

THE ISTHMUS OF CORINTH

The rocky isthmus connecting Attica to Morea is, at its narrowest, a mere four miles across. Just to the north of the narrowest

point is the *Examilion*, a great defensive stone wall six miles long erected under Byzantine rule in the sixth century. As well as a strategic land bridge, the isthmus is also an important sea connection — in ancient times triremes used to be hauled by slaves over a paved stone track named the *Diolkos*. Several Roman emperors had grand ambitions to cut a canal across the isthmus. Some even began work on it, such as the deranged emperor Nero, whose plan was brutally simple — send six thousand slaves with spades. His plan died with him. Many centuries later, the appropriately named Severus of House Guernicus resurrected the idea of a canal. He even began to make significant progress by the use of ritual *Perdo Terram* magics, until he was Marched. His great cut in the isthmus remains, however, as does the ruins of the *Diolkos*, which is no longer used. Instead, goods are portaged through the two ports of Corinth.

ANGISTRI

The small island of Angistri, about twenty miles southeast of the Isthmus of Corinth in the Saronic Gulf, is home to a giant hen as big as a cow, which raids crops with its massive brood of chicks and ruins fields with its over-sized droppings. A local witch, exiled from the main village, exacted her revenge by sowing magical grain, which a hen ate before growing to a monstrous size and blighting the island.

LAKE STYMPHALIA

Morea's largest lake is located twenty miles west of Corinth, and is surrounded and hidden by a dense ring of dark forest. Here, Herakles undertook his sixth Labor, the elimination of the Stymphalian Birds. Some time much later the birds returned, and they have plagued the surrounding fields and villages ever since. Their appearance in an area is a terrible omen, often presaging disaster. The fearsome black avians are large enough to carry off a small man, and certainly vicious enough to attack, kill, and eat a fully grown one. Their wings have feathers of brass, with spiked tips that can be launched at their foes, and their horrid metallic screeching sets teeth on edge. Herakles was able to scare them into flight by sounding giant clappers of bronze, which were forged by Hephaistos, and then shooting at them with arrows. The lake has an Infernal aura of 4 and the stench of the poisonous black waters, befouled by the birds, is dreadful.

Arcadia

Arcadia is both the name of the mountainous center of Morea, a sparsely populated forest wilderness, and of a Faerie Realm (see *Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 32). This is not coincidence, since the two places are strongly linked, although it is not clear if the former is named after the latter, or vice-versa. The higher that one ascends into the wilderness of Arcadia in Morea, the closer one approaches to Arcadia, which is the Faerie Realm of new stories and adventures. Indeed, it is one of the easiest places from which to enter this Realm, since there are thresholds and guardians of various types all over. Some are at the tops of peaks, others are hidden in groves and caves, and others might be encountered anywhere. For this reason, central Morea is especially beloved of Merinita magi, who travel here from all over the Theban Tribunal, and from further afield. It is not altogether uncommon to find a confused traveler or magus wandering into Morea from the Arcadian wilderness, not knowing where he is.

VIZIE

Amid the southern foothills of Arcadia, not too far from the ancient town of Sparta, is the village of Vizie. This village is occupied by dog-headed men called *cynocephali*. They grow crops and raise sheep, but their neighbors steal their grain and goats so that the cynocephali are forced to go to war to get what they need to survive. The peasants of

nearby villages claim that the inhabitants of Vizie are monsters who eat people, and so an accord between human and cynocephalos seems unlikely. Were the cynocephali to accept baptism and pray to St. Christopher (a saint born with the head of a dog), however, they would lose their canine aspect.



Zakynthos

Zakynthos — an island in the Ionian Sea to the west of Morea that is nominally under the dominion of Venice — is one of the most superstitious and peculiar islands in the whole of Greece. It is twenty miles long from end to end, and faeries and faerie-blooded folk abound here, as do Gifted children. Magi of the Ionian phyle regularly come here in search of them. Indeed, it is quite rare to

find a native of Zakynthos who does not bear some measure of faerie blood in her veins or who does not have at least some minor supernatural talent.

There are three main types of faeries to be found on Zakynthos (see also Chapter 10: Faerie Landscape). The nereids, while present in many places in Greece, are especially abundant here. A few villages of men have even married nereids en masse, and some such dwellings have disappeared entirely for many years. Unlike elsewhere, the children of nereids here tend to be fair, and nereid blood is often the cause of families famed for their beauty.

The mortal children of the drakoi, on the other hand, tend to be ugly, stupid, huge, strong, or all of the above. The drakoi of Zakynthos have a single eye, burning with fire, and are often endowed with a supernatural sight. Sometimes entire drakos families may be encountered, including mothers, fathers, and children alike. A constant source of grief — or amusement — is the stubborn effort of a drakos father to find a suitable suitor for his ugly and charmless daughter.

New houses are seldom built on Zakynthos, since anyone who passes by the foundations of a house being laid is in danger of leaving his shadow behind, which turns into a *pergalio*. The pergalioi are wandering faerie children with black skin and blue eyes. They do not usually cause harm and can be gotten rid of (eventually) by accepting the help that they offer. However they are prone to jealousy and vindictiveness if their help is refused.

THE QUEEN OF THE NEREIDS

The highest peak at the center of Zakynthos, which has a Faerie aura of 6, is an abode of the nereids and home to their queen. She goes by various names, including the Great Lady and the Mistress of Earth and Sea. She is the largest, wisest, and strongest of the nereids, and may often be seen dancing with her subjects in the streams and pools of her mountain home, or before her simple palace. Like all the nereids she is beautiful, and she wears a white gown with a golden belt. Men whom she hits with her belt are struck dumb, weak, or witless. Children are often taken away to dwell with the queen for many years, although they are not mistreated. Although mysterious, the Great Lady is noble-minded and it is possible to bargain with her for fair treatment or justice.

The Blood of Medusa

Medusa, the fearsome gorgon with snakes for hair, who had the power to turn her victims to stone with a glance, was slain by the hero Perseus. The blood from Medusa's right vein was gifted to Asklepios by Athene. It has the power to heal life, whereas that from her left vein was a deadly poison. This blood is held in a basin-like recess atop an ornate stone stele standing near the statue of Asklepios in the Hall of Repose. It is a potent renewable source of extraordinary Corpus vis (see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 119), yielding 16 pawns per year. If copiously drunk, the imbiber's Incapacitating Wounds are immediately reduced

to Heavy and all later Recovery rolls for all current wounds succeed automatically. Any diseases or ailments are cured. This is almost never allowed, since it requires consumption of an entire year's supply of the blood. According to legend, the blood even has the power to bring the dead back to life, although magi claim that this has not been performed for more than a century. If a smaller dose of the blood (4 pawns) is used in the crafting of a Longevity Ritual, +12 is gained to the Lab Total. If drunk, such a dose immediately effects a Chirurgeon's Healing Touch on the imbiber.

Epidauros

Epidauros, a healing sanctuary dedicated to the god Asklepios in ancient times, is a small but venerable covenant renowned for its service to the Tribunal. It is dedicated to healing the sick and ensuring the longevity of magi; many of the current magi of the Tribunal enjoy the benefits of a Longevity Ritual crafted by one of its specialist magi.



History

The most famous asklepieion — a temple of healing dedicated to Asklepios — Epidauros has a history going back to the fourth century BC. Believed to be where Asklepios himself was born, a cult of *pharmakeutria* ("physician magi") erected the sanctuary and attended to the multitudes of worshipers and pilgrims who came in search of a cure for their ailments. At the end of the fourth century AD, the site was sacked by marauding Goths and subsequently abandoned. Pre-Hermetic wizards of the Theban League resurrected the sanctuary before the founding of the Order of Hermes, and it has had a continuous presence of magi ever since. The site was briefly usurped by Tremere magi in the ninth century, until they were forced out during the Sundering. Since then, Epidauros has had a long and honorable, albeit uneventful, history of service to the Tribunal.

Setting and Physical Description

Epidauros is located on a peaceful hillside not far from the shore on the northeastern coast of Morea. The sanctuary proper — which has a Magic aura of 5 and is where the magi have erected their sancta — consists of a small jumble of ancient Greek buildings in variable states of repair. The central structure, the Hall of Repose or *Enkoimeteria*, is a large communal hall resembling a hospital. The most important or seriously ill patients are brought here. Hermetically speaking, the hall is a laboratory, although it doesn't appear as such to the untrained eye, being

Story Seed: Healing the Realm

Geoffrey II, the ruler of the Principality of Achaea, in whose lands the covenant is located, falls seriously ill, and his wife Agnes comes to Epidauros to desperately beseech the magi for a cure. If they refuse him aid and he does not survive, then they will both make an enemy of Agnes and be responsible for the resulting chaos as rivals struggle for the succession. If they do heal him, then one of Geoffrey's

rivals will accuse him of soliciting the aid of pagan sorcerers. It seems that the magi hold the fate of the realm in their hands, a responsibility that they do not desire but cannot avoid. Either way, Epidauros could legitimately be accused of interfering in the affairs of mundanes. Once the word gets out, the matter might come before Tribunal, or the player characters could be asked to investigate.

highly specialized in longevity and healing. It is shared by the magi of the covenant. It may be used whenever a Tribunal-funded Longevity Ritual is created; the recipient is required to sleep in the hall.

Apart from the sancta of the magi, the remaining buildings of the sanctuary are empty and decaying. One of the outermost is home to a lepers' colony. Set into the hillside nearby is a great theater, disused since Roman times; its acoustics are so perfect that even the tiniest sound on the stage can be heard clearly even from the furthest row. Imaginem vis can be harvested here. Below the sanctuary is a small town, where the covenfolk live among the ordinary inhabitants. Having a church, the town has a Divine aura, but it is not strong enough to disturb the sanctuary.

EPIDAUROS' PATRON: ASKLEPIOS

The principal Greek god of medicine and healing, Asklepios is a Magic spirit associated with Epidauros. He is a willing patron of the covenant, since the magi are respectful of his sanctuary and fulfill its proper purpose. He has no corporeal manifestation and does not communicate directly, but his presence is felt most strongly at one end of the Hall of Repose, where his statue stands. Those who sleep in the Hall often receive visions from the spirit, especially those who are ill, who may receive guidance on how to seek out a cure for their ailments. Sleepers here also gain +12 to their next Wound Recovery roll and a +6 bonus to the Lab Total if a Longevity Rituals is crafted for them here.

Culture and Traditions

The most noteworthy tradition of Epidauros is its selfless devotion to healing the magi

of the Tribunal and providing them with Longevity Rituals, and they are rightly famed for their skill in this. Most of the Tribunal-funded Longevity Rituals are made by magi of this covenant. Many other magi, some even from other Tribunals, come here in search of expert magi to help them stem the tide of years. The great potency of the Longevity Rituals produced here is not just because of the skill of its magi, but is also due to the usage of the Blood of Medusa (see insert), as well as the blessings of Asklepios. The site also has some measure of renown in mortal circles, although much less than the heights of fame it enjoyed in ancient times. Locals know to come here if they are ill, and they will usually be treated. Due to the covenant's extreme focus, its library is highly specialized, containing an unrivaled collection of texts on Medicine and outstanding tomes on Creo and Corpus.

Magi

Epidauros has only three or four magi, all of them experts in Corpus, longevity, or healing. Given the level of service expected from members of the covenant — each spends one season per year working as a physician and healer at the sanctuary, and typically spends another season in the crafting of a Longevity Ritual — it tends to only attract selfless magi who are not obsessed with their own study.

XENIAS THE LEPER OF HOUSE TYTALUS

Age: 165 (Apparent Age: 107)

Personality Traits: Dutiful +3, Calm +3, Driven +2

Xenias, the nominal leader of the covenant by simple virtue of being the eldest, is

a magus aegrotus (a leper magus; see *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 95). Like all the leper Tytalus magi, he has a great affinity for healing and longevity, and is probably the Tribunal's foremost expert in such matters. He appears to be a disheveled old man dressed in slightly tattered leper's robes. The linen veil drawn across his face and his elbow-length gloves disguise just how ancient and withered he really is, and a constantly clanking bell tied to his robes warns people of his status as a leper. Although Twilight-ridden, Xenias is approachable enough, not that many magi do — the prejudices against lepers are not restricted only to mundanes, especially since magic cannot cure leprosy.

GALLA OF HOUSE EX MISCELLANEA

Age: 78 (Apparent Age: 52)

Personality Traits: Careworn +3, Earthy +2, Venomous +1

Galla hails from the herbalist Pharmacopoeian tradition (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 123) — as a Root-Cutter, she is able to reduce the vis cost of healing rituals, which is of great benefit to her covenant. A lame woman with silver hair and wearing a simple gray shawl, she walks awkwardly with the aid of her talisman staff. Her snake familiar sniffs out herbs in the nearby hills for her. Galla tends to be the maga at Epidaurus who deals with visitors.

Covenfolk

The servants and few soldiers of Epidaurus are an odd variety of men and women who were healed or saved by the magi, and who have pledged a lifetime of loyalty and service in return. Many of them came to Epidaurus as their last hope, and many now have nowhere else to go — some are lepers, some are outcasts, and some are rehabilitated criminals. Most bear some physical disability, either as a result of punishment or injury: several have had their tongues cut out; others are missing limbs, or are blinded or castrated.

Erebos

Erebos is an old but relatively obscure covenant consisting entirely of magi from House Ex Miscellanea, dedicated to the preservation of traditions of magic that are native to the Theban Tribunal. Most of its magi, although they live in the same general area, have little to do with one another, or with the Tribunal at large.



History

In the second half of the ninth century, a few decades after the founding of House Ex Miscellanea and shortly after the Sundering of House Tremere, representatives of House Ex Miscellanea came to the Theban Tribunal. Among them was a filius of Pralix, tasked with dealing with the troublesome Witches of Thessaly (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 109, and *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 140). A tiny handful of the witches, led by a maga named Cyra, were convinced and agreed to join the Order of Hermes. Cyra was not minded to move, however, and so founded a covenant in the homelands of her tradition, the Cambunian mountains of northern Thessaly. She decided that her covenant should protect and preserve all the native Greek traditions that had been threatened by House Tremere before the Sundering. She named her covenant Erebos, a synonym for Hades also meaning "blackness" or "shadow." The name proved to be apt, since Erebos is among the most secretive of the Tribunal's covenants.

Over the years since, several new recruits to the Order of Hermes, most from native Greek traditions of magic, have gravitated here, reasoning that a covenant explicitly devoted to the preservation of their tradition would be a welcome home. Most found Erebos somewhat less than welcoming, but stayed anyway.

Setting and Physical Description

The covenant's buildings, such as they are, may be found in a long, largely deserted valley in the Cambunian mountains on the northern edge of Thessaly. There are no communal structures; instead, the covenant

consists of the individual sancta of its members, which are dotted along the valley over the course of several miles. There is no pattern or plan to these dwellings — most of the magi have taken advantage of the numerous hillside and cliffside caves, although some have erected other structures such as cottages or treehouses. Most of the valley has a Magic aura of 2, but other auras are present in a few places. Magi of the covenant have discovered a nearby bat-infested cave complex that is a sanctuary formerly claimed by a chthonic cult of Hecate (see *Ancient Magic*, page 52). The magi harvest Perdo vis from the cave's bats, but have not yet entered on account of the traps laid by the cultists.

EREBOS' PATRON: CYRA

Cyra of House Ex Miscellanea founded the covenant of Erebos, but passed into Final Twilight only a couple of decades thereafter. She did not vanish entirely, however. On occasion she reappears as a cryptic guide and protector of her followers, who have adopted her as their patron spirit. She most often takes the form of her former familiar, a great white owl with bright red eyes, which strongly resembles a kind of protective spirit from northern Greece known as *koukouvaouna*. Otherwise, she appears as a haggard woman with glowing red eyes, dressed in a black shawl and clutching an obsidian staff enchanted with destructive powers. She curses any who enter the valley with malign intent towards Erebos. Cyra is most likely a Magic spirit, but might conceivably be Infernal, given the dark nature of the magics practiced by the Witches of Thessaly.

Culture and Traditions

Erebos has several distinct traditions, namely the magical traditions of its magi. Those traditions with more than one member at the covenant tend to meet with each other, but otherwise the magi do not generally hold council, nor do they even have a council chamber. The leader of the covenant has always been a Witch of Thessaly descended from Cyra, and arranges all practical matters, such as the distribution and collection of books and vis. Magi of House Ex Miscellanea from different traditions do not tend to mix well, and so Destasia, the current leader, is often called upon to rule on the petty quarrels that erupt between them.

Gigas

House Tremere has a checkered history in the Theban Tribunal. And so, the covenant of Gigas was established to remind the magi of Thebes of the strength of House Tremere immediately to the north. While Gigas is often politically at odds with the rest of the Tribunal, it is also seen as neutral ground upon which to conclude peace treaties and pacts of good-will and non-aggression, because of its distance from the other covenants.



normalize the Tribunal and bring its practices back in line with the rest of the Order. They pursue minor objectives to fulfill this goal, such as championing Latin over Greek, setting precedents in the hope of adding to the Peripheral Code, and reviewing as many laws as possible when a member is assigned to the Legislative Board (see Chapter 4). They claimed a minor victory recently when the position of logothete ceased to be elected every Tribunal, although this motion was not proposed by a member of the covenant, they successfully campaigned for its passing. The leader of Gigas is reported to have stated that "even the Roman Republic was brought down by a tyrant." If true, this statement betrays Gigas' (and thus House Tremere's) intentions should the gradual method fail.

Magi

Considered by number of members, Erebos is actually one of the Tribunal's largest, with nearly a dozen magi all of House Ex Miscellanea. Among the native Greek traditions with a presence here are the Witches of Thessaly, the Cult of Orpheus, and the Pharmacopoeians (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates*). There are also one or more magi from Slavic traditions, who claimed to have been hounded out of the Transylvanian Tribunal.

DESTASIA OF HOUSE EX MISCELLANEA

Age: 43 (Apparent Age: 37)

Personality Traits: Overbearing +2, Vengeful +2, Moody +1

A descendent of Cyra, Destasia has recently inherited the rulership of Erebos, despite her relatively young age. Her mater Megethia, the former leader, is still at the covenant, but is increasingly absent due to prolonged Twilight episodes. She is familiar with the magic of defixiones, capable of inflicting curses; correspondingly she specializes in Perdo and Corpus. An elegant and athletic black-haired woman, Destasia would be attractive, were it not for the ritual scars that have marred her face, believed to be due to an ordeal for a Mystery initiation.

Covenfolk

Erebos has no covenfolk as such. Instead, most of its magi have their own servants, guards, and retainers, though some manage without. The autocrat, who controls the limited finances and supplies of the covenant, is directly loyal to Destasia, giving her considerable power.

History

Gigas was established in 1023, initially as a place for recovery by those magi and favored companions who had been wounded in the Schism War. From the very beginning the Tribunal was suspicious of its agenda, particularly when in 1069 it established a policy of admitting only members of House Tremere.

Setting and Physical Description

Gigas is the most northerly of the Theban covenants, at the very north edge of a rich and fertile valley southwest of Sofia. The magi occupy a hunting lodge in a small expanse of forest that has a weak Magic aura. In order to avoid attention in this well-populated area, the lodge itself is kept quite small, and the sancta of the magi mainly are underground.

Culture and Traditions

Gigas is House Tremere's most significant holding in the Theban Tribunal. Its purpose is to report back to Coeris — the Tremere domus magna in Transylvania — all news that could not be obtained through the usual channels.

Several members of Gigas have been outspoken in their condemnation of some of the Tribunal's practices, and feel that the magical tradition of the Order has been debased and usurped by "vulgar paganism." They seek to

GIGAS' PATRON: ČOVEK

Gigas has never accepted the need for a patron spirit or creature, believing it to smack of idolatry. By way of protest against this tradition, the covenant designates the familiar of their covenant's leader as their official patron, even if it is in name only. Čovek is a silver wolf, one of a lineage that has produced familiars for many prominent members of House Tremere, including all of the leaders of Gigas. It is considered an honor to be chosen by one of these magnificent beasts.

Magi

Gigas does not admit members who are not followers of Tremere, and most of the Tremere at Gigas are the Hermetic descendants of its leader Boustaphan. Gigas will also offer support and even temporary membership for any Tremere magus who wishes to join the Theban Tribunal from another Tribunal. Gigas usually has six members, although it occasionally plays host to Tremere from outside the Tribunal and can comfortably accommodate nine members.

BOUSTAPHAN OF HOUSE TREMERE

Age: 114 (Apparent Age: 64)

Personality Traits: Level-Headed +2, Wolf +2, Close-Mouthed +1, Jovial -1

The leader of Gigas is Boustaphan, the senior member of House Tremere and one of the few to hold his own sigil. He acts as the House's Tribune in Thebes, and uses the



proxy votes granted him by the younger Tremere to attempt to reform the Theban Tribunal in the manner dictated to him by Coeris. Boustaphan has been careful to remain aloof from the arguments generated by his covenant and House against the traditions of the Tribunal, but he is almost certainly supportive of many, if not all of them.

Boustaphan appears to be a robust man in his sixties, and he dresses in the fashion of a minor noble. He is often seen hunting with a hawk on his wrist, and most locals believe him to be an exile from the fall of Constantinople. He seeks immortality through his line, and has consistently trained apprentices since he was able to Open the Arts. When looking for a new apprentice, he is willing to accept those that no-one else wants at the Apprentice Presentation (see Chapter 4), and give them a purpose and place serving House Tremere.

MONORCHIS OF HOUSE TREMERE

Age: 58 (Apparent Age: 42)

Personality Traits: Stubborn +3, Zealous +3, Mystical +1

The parents of the young man who became Monorchis arranged for him to become a eunuch to increase his chances of a good career as a palace bureaucrat. The boy's rapidly emerging Gift proved to be the savior of his manhood, and he was able to interrupt the surgery before the castration was complete. He was discovered by Boustaphan, who maintained several spies in the imperial palace, and was brought to Gigas for training.

Perhaps due to his narrow escape from a life of parchment and ink, Monorchis has adopted a fervent anti-intellectual approach. He refuses to read, and studies the Hermetic Arts principally from vis. He believes that the Order has placed too much emphasis on the written

word and become distracted by tiresome logic and endless philosophy. He feels that magi have lost a vital intuitive connection to their magic, and has made several contacts within House Criamon and, it is rumored, some esoteric Mystery Cults. His magical expertise is in the Form of Ignem, which he sees as a metaphorical quest for the light of the soul.

ALLECTORES OF HOUSE TREMERE

Age: 46 (Apparent Age: 33)

Personality Traits: Reasonable +3, Silver-Tongued +3, Calm +1

Allectores is the chief negotiator and ambassador of Gigas, and the most approachable of its members. While his role might seem contrary to the martial nature of his House, the Tremere recognize the need for diplomacy as much as the need for readiness for war, and he is a valued member of the covenant. However, he tends to play up his apparent mis-fit to the military structure of the House to gain sympathy among those with whom he deals. Allectores has reportedly received a faerie blessing that causes everyone he meets to see him in a favorable light.

Hedyosmos

Inhabited by House Guernicus and House Tytalus in what some call a sinister alliance, the covenant of Hedyosmos deserves its ominous reputation. By all accounts the covenant squats over a portal to



the Underworld, and its members are expert wielders of magic associated with stygian forces — the earth, the dead, and malicious magic. In practice, Hedyosmos has been a strong supporter of the Hermetic polity throughout its existence. While some question their motives, no-one could question their loyalty.

History

Hedyosmos is one of the oldest covenants in the Tribunal. Wizards dwelled on the site for at least a century before the Order was founded, and possibly longer. In antiquity, the site was the site of a temple of Hades, the god of the Underworld. Indeed, it was one of the few cultic centers of this god, since the Eleans were the only men who were known to worship Hades.

Three members of the original Theban League hailed from Hedyosmos, and Guernicus himself taught the youngest of them Hermetic magic. Already allied to the veneration of chthonic spirits, its membership welcomed Guernicus' restored Terrae Cult (see *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, pages 36 & 68, and the insert), and the covenant became one of its most important seats.

It is commonly believed that magi of Hedyosmos were pivotal in the Sundering of Tremere in 848 (see *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, page 113). It is certain that the alliance of Guernici and Tytalan theurgists that constituted the covenant were both motivated and appropriately skilled to conduct a campaign that destroyed Tremere's plans to dominate the Order. Although officially House Tremere has no interest in the details of the Sundering, individual members of the house would be very interested to read Hedyosmos' records for that period. But Tremere magi are not welcome at Hedyosmos.

The covenant weathered the Corruption of House Tytalus and the Schism War with equal nonchalance, and has remained unperturbed through mundane conflicts and Hermetic turmoil alike.

Setting and Physical Description

The slopes of Mount Minthe in Elis bear the ruins of a *nekyomanteion* (a shrine to the dead), beneath which is the covenant of Hedyosmos. The covenant is entirely under-

The Cult of the Earth

The Founder Guernicus was the last member of a cult dedicated to the mysteries of the earth. In the Founder's last years, he reconstituted the cult among some of his apprentices, and revealed to them some of its secrets. Over time, the cult has adopted members from other houses, although it is always headed by a member of House Guernicus. In Greece, the *theskeia geine* ("cult of the earth," called the *cultus terrae* or *Terrae Cult* elsewhere) has suborned the traditional functions of Hades, the principle Underworld god, without offering him any veneration. In fact, as the epicenter of Kampe's Lovers (a faction seeking to undermine the gods), it specifically seeks to weaken the power of Hades over the prison of the titans, and restore them to prominence, starting a golden age of magic. This goal is described in detail in Chapter 9, although it should be noted that these are not the goals of the *Terrae Cult* as a whole, just those in the Theban Tribunal.

The *theskeia geine* of Hedyosmos has Initiation Scripts for the following Virtues:

Divination and Augury using the Geomancy Method (*The Mysteries Revised Edition*, Chapter 7), Summoning (see below), Dowsing, Puissant Terram, Silent Magic, and Spirit Familiar (principally earth spirits; *The Mysteries Revised Edition*, page 66).

Ordeal Flaws typically bestowed by these Scripts include: Restriction: feet much be touching bare earth; Afflicted Tongue (through mutilation), Deficient Auram, No Sense of Direction.

The *Terrae Cult* teaches a variant of the Summoning Virtue described in *Realms of Power: The Infernal* (pages 114–115). Rather than summoning any non-corporeal entity, it can instead summon any creature with a Magic Might that is aligned to the Form of Terram, including certain spirits, but also some magical animals and elementals (see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 135). When summoning elementals, the character must use the scouring mechanic to create the elemental *de novo*. This version of the Summoning Virtue is not tainted by the Infernal.

world, which is believed to be a way to gain entrance to the Magic Realm. For many centuries the inhabitants of Hedyosmos have venerated Minthe rather than Hades. Since she is set over a gate into Tartaros — where the titans are imprisoned — she is vital in the plans of Hedyosmos to restore the dominance of the Magic Realm over the lands of the Tribunal.

Culture and Traditions

No light or speech is permitted in the common areas of the covenant. Magi and companions may light the caves assigned to them however they wish and can speak freely in them, provided that no light or noise seeps into the corridors or shared chambers. Even the kitchens have no source of light; all food is prepared outside or bought from the nearby village, and warmed using hot rocks in covered baskets. In some areas it is actually impossible to make light or noise due to age-old enchantments. The covenfolk and magi communicate through a unique form of sign-language in which the speakers press their fingers into the hands of those to whom they are talking. The Hedyosmos Lore Ability is essential to avoid getting lost in the dark.

Hedyosmos is a vocal proponent of the Theban polity. Its members often advise on the judicial and legislative boards (see Chapter 4), and their votes at Tribunal are invariably biased towards the solution that does the least harm. It is well known that those in need of a skilled debater for a decree at Tribunal can often secure the services of a magus of Hedyosmos, at the cost of neutralization of one of its member's shards. However, the magi here have been known to turn down requests that they feel

ground, in a series of labyrinthine caves connected by twisting passages. Each cavern has several entrances, and it is easy to get lost in the lightless depths. Each magus has a cavern (or several caves) set aside as a sanctum; such caves are always blocked with a door. To the touch of anyone with Magic Resistance, a sanctum mark is briefly revealed in a silver glow to prevent accidental violation of sanctum law.

Beneath the occupied levels of the covenant is a labyrinth of passages and caverns. The Magic aura of this labyrinth is aligned with Terram (see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 16), and as one progresses further into the maze of passages, the strength of the aura increases. It is widely believed that an entrance into the Magic Realm can be found within the labyrinth, specifically one that leads to the Underworld prison of the titans. The covenant strongly discourages people from entering the labyrinth, although it utilizes several chambers for its cultic practices.

Several of the covenfolk have the Dowsing Virtue. Through its use the covenant has located several seams of gold, silver, and gemstones, leaving them fabulously wealthy. All these mines are operated through intermediaries to avoid accusations of meddling with mundanes.

HEDYOSMOS' PATRON: MINTHE

According to legend, Minthe was the lover of Hades. When the Underworld god abducted and ravished Persephone, Minthe boasted that Hades would return to her and banish Persephone from his halls. This angered Persephone's mother, Demeter, who trampled Minthe to dust underfoot. From this dust grew the mint plant, and the mint became Hades' sacred herb.

Minthe, who is a magical Daimon, guards one of the entrances to the Under-

Rumors

The sinister reputation of this covenant has contributed to a great deal of rumor and speculation regarding its history and practices. Many of these rumors are propagated by followers of Tremere who have especial reason to suspect the covenant.

- During the Sundering, Tremere's senior lieutenants were imprisoned and interrogated at Hedyosmos, and the knowledge gained was used to pro-

duce the mighty rituals which broke the house. Some of their ghosts are captives to this day;

- Tremere magi deliver their dead through the Gate of Eurydice at Coeris. Some claim that these remains, or their spirits, emerge in the labyrinth beneath Hedyosmos;
- Hedyosmos' wealth derives from the alchemical transformation of human bones into gold.

Story Seed: The Estate of Hades

Askalaphos has plans for Vrakos and his nascent cult. The faerie intends to reclaim the covenant as a temple to Hades and rid it of the enemies of his lord — the magi. This plan will develop over many years, as presently Vrakos is the only devout follower of the god, and further re-

cruitment is a tricky business in a covenant populated by inquisitive Guernici and scheming Tytali. The biggest impediment to the scheme is the covenant's Aegis of the Hearth, and Askalaphos is considering ways in which he could be invited into the covenant and take part in the ritual.

are detrimental to the polity. Likewise, their magical assistance is also easily obtainable; Aiakia (see later) knows a number of ritual spells including *Conjuring the Mystic Tower*, and is willing to cast them on behalf of others for simply the cost of the ritual in vis and the neutralization of a shard (one of hers, or those of her sodales).

Magi

Hedyosmos has eight magi: four from House Guernicus; three from House Tytalus; and Celaenea of House Bonisagus. All eight magi are members of the *theskeia gene*. Porphyron of Tytalus was a member of Hedyosmos until 10 years ago when he left for Rome. After a brief stay there, where it is rumored he found the infamous Jar of Pandora (see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 107), he moved on to the Normandy Tribunal. It is suspected that he will make a play for primus of Tytalus if he sees an opportunity to best both of the current primi (see *The Lion and the Lily*, page 132).

AUSCULATOR OF HOUSE GUERNICUS

Age: 162 (Apparent Age: 88)

Personality Traits: Patient +6, Discreet +3, Stubborn +2

Ausculator "The Listener" is the leader of Hedyosmos, and has held that position since his mater vacated the role five decades ago. Despite his extreme age, his body is still healthy thanks to a remarkable Longevity Ritual. Ausculator has a strong, statuesque profile, snow-white hair, and white eyes with no iris or pupil — he is completely blind, and often paints eyes on his eyelids as is commonly done to marble statues. His skin is cool to the touch, and he prefers to wear a simple tunic with an embroidered hem. Ausculator uses the minimum of bodi-

ly gestures and movements, and can freeze into total stillness; those unfamiliar with him could easily mistake him for a statue. He can remain standing in the same position for many hours, even days. The fact he has been doing this more frequently lately suggests to some that Twilight is consuming his life. His familiar is an imago, a spirit of sound (see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 105), summoned through the Mystery of the Spirit Familiar.

Ausculator is widely recognized as the Tribunal's foremost expert in the Art of Teram, and is the leader of the Terrae Cult in the Theban Tribunal. His fame as an author is wide-reaching, and authentic copies of his work (signified by the glitter of mica dust impregnated in the parchment) fetch high prices for their exceptional quality. Ausculator's mater has vanished from the Tribunal, and Ausculator says that she will not return. But whether she has died or entered Final Twilight he is not saying. The most common opinion is that she entered the labyrinthine lower passages of the covenant and did not return.

AIAKIA OF HOUSE GUERNICUS

Age: 61 (Apparent Age: 53)

Personality Traits: Loyal +2, Touchy +2, Friendly -2

Aiakia is the youngest filia of Ausculator, and she is being groomed to take over from her pater when he is finally claimed by Twilight. She is not the most powerful of the cult's members, but has the greatest knowledge of its rituals and therefore is best suited to the role. Aiakia's specialty is caverns and underground passages. She has extensively explored many cave complexes throughout the Tribunal and beyond, and brought back secrets from them that she only partially comprehends. Her other interest is earth elementals, over which she exerts remarkable control.

TISIPHON OF HOUSE TYTALUS

Age: 70 (Apparent Age: 51)

Personality Traits: Vengeful +3, Champion of Other's Woe +2, Dependable -1

A member of the Tytalan Mystery Cult of the Titanoi (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 94), Tisiphon is a Quaesitor with a misguided sense of honor. He takes special interest in Hermetic cases where a magus has appeared to escape the Order's just punishment. He attempts to put right such injustices through vehement oration at Tribunal; by obsessively reviewing the law through multiple petitions to the Legislative Board; and, if all else fails, by declaring Wizard's War on the perpetrator. Tisiphon's spirit familiar is an Aspect of the Erinyes, the tripartite Daimons of revenge. He has little time to devote to the Terrae Cult due to his membership of the Titanoi, and is a member in name only.

CELAENEA OF HOUSE BONISAGUS

Age: 48 (Apparent Age: 44)

Personality Traits: Proud +3, Idealistic +1, Calm -2

Celaenea is a Seeker in the direct line of Lucian Triamonae, the magus who founded the Seeker movement, and believes that this should earn her the respect of her fellows (it doesn't). She is obsessed with the legends of Hermes, and has set up a covert laboratory on Mount Cyllene, where the god was purported to have been born. She believes that by divining the character of Hermes she can uncover the roots of magic itself (see Chapter 10: Faerie Landscape, The Problem of Hermes insert for discussion of this).

Covenfolk

The covenfolk are forced to operate in total darkness for most of the time, and have developed different ways to cope. Most are fluent in the covenant's sign language. Valued servants are given enchantments that allow them to overcome their blindness. All the covenant's grogs, regardless of whether they possess one of these enchantments, are trained to combat opponents who they cannot see, and are sometimes loaned to the Tribunal's polemarch (see Chapter 4) for Wizard's Marches conducted against opponents prone to using invisibility.

Characters born at the covenant often possess the Dowsing Virtue in response to its strongly aligned aura.

VRAKOS

Vrakos is the covenant's cook, who is wholly beneath the notice of the magi. This is probably why he has been targeted by Askalaphos, a faerie in service to Hades. It was Askalaphos who revealed that Persephone had eaten pomegranate seeds while in the Underworld, thus dooming her to spend some of the year at her abductor's side. Demeter cursed the tattletale Askalaphos to be forced into the shape of a screech owl, and he remains that way to this day. Vrakos was befriended by the talking owl when abroad from the covenant, and was gradually won over to his cause. The cook has become a priest of Hades by conducting secret rites in the depths of the covenant, and has begun to subtly recruit from among the serving folk. Presently, he asks little more than votive offerings of milk, honey, and blood from a black ram, but plans to create a hidden cult to the Underworld god.



The Theban Tribunal

Oikos tou Eleous: The Ladies of Thessaloniki

Few of the House Jerbiton covenants of the Tribunal remain, but one of the few that does is that of the House of Mercy (Oikos tou Eleous), situated in Thessaloniki. On the fall of Constantinople, the covenant's three male magi chose to leave for Rome rather than face the end of civilization in the Theban Tribunal, but two nuns remained within their convent and have recruited new members to the covenant, all



of whom are holy magae (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 66). The covenant's patron is Saint Demetrios.

History

Oikos tou Eleous is situated in the city of Thessaloniki. In 1185, five thousand citizens were slain by the invading Sicilian army, and a strong Infernal aura arose over the desecrated holy places and ruined streets.

The covenant was founded by two holy magae in response to that outrage. The sack of the city was marked by atrocities against the religious, and deliberate sacrilege and desecration of holy places. The covenant soon uncovered evidence of a widespread diabolist group in the city, linked to the Paulician heresy. They set about defeating this evil, and attempting to uncover the demonic influence that was corrupting the citizens, as well as actively preaching against and debating the Paulicians who still legally dwell within the walls today, their evil unsuspected by most who assume the nuns are religious bigots. While the Infernal auras have greatly diminished, the struggle for the soul of the city continues.

The covenant did what it could to help with the healing of the physically and spiritually wounded. When the tragedy of the sack befell Constantinople, the example of Oikos tou Eleous showed what could be done to restore a wounded city. Yet even in Thessaloniki some despaired, and three of the magi decided these things were signs of the end times, and set off for Rome believing they were needed there. Only the sisters remained to continue the struggle in Thessaloniki. They successfully invoked Saint Demetrios in 1207, calling for him to save the city from the Bulgarian Tsar, and believe it was the saint himself who slew the tsar on the fateful October day.

Since 1205 the city has become the capital of the new Kingdom of Thessaloniki, and has come under attack from both the Bulgarians and Epiros. Furthermore, the city is rent by political struggles, mainly focusing on the boy-king Demetrios and his regency, and the rival claim of William of Montferrat. It is likely that within a year the city will be under siege, unless the new Latin emperor intervenes.

In 1207 a pair of twins from Lesbos, who belong to the Ex Miscellanea Seirenes tradition (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 137), were attracted to the covenant. They

immediately involved the covenant in royal affairs by their covert support of Queen Margaret of Hungary, whose son (also called Demetrios) was already a great favorite of the nuns.

Setting and Physical Description

The covenant is not a single location, but consists of an alliance of maga bound together by a typikon (charter) for the mutual defense and restoration of the spiritual and physical health of Thessaloniki, in a similar manner to a lavra.

Sisters Anna and Theocharista maintain the tiny convent of Koukoubiou, housed in a walled villa with a small orchard and beautiful flower garden within the city walls, with six nuns loyal to them. Their personal chapel with a Divine aura of 4 serves as their laboratory, and their prayers and liturgical chanting act as the focus for their magical tradition. The rest of the villa has an aura of 2, the walled gardens 1.

The twins reside in the royal palace, with just four slaves as personal attendants, and have a room in their apartments that serves as a cramped laboratory. They are actively seeking better facilities, especially given their tendency to argue with each other.

Culture and Traditions

The covenant is dedicated to the protection of King Demetrios and the veneration of the saint of the same name, and the protection and spiritual and physical survival of Thessaloniki. All of the magae are holy magae, and maintain vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and a demanding schedule of personal devotions. Being holy magae of three traditions, the women have little use for vis, or books and lab texts, and do not hold many common resources at all, making them very different from most Hermetic covenants.

Magi

Oikos tou Eleous has four magae, and as a result is often referred to in the Tribunal as the "Ladies of Thessaloniki."

ANNA PSELLUS OF HOUSE JERBITON

Age: 112 (Apparent Age: 62)

Personality Traits: Pious +6, Devoted to Thessaloniki +3, Brash +1

Mother Anna is the spiritual leader of the convent of Koukoubiou — a tiny religious retreat of the type sometimes created by Byzantine ladies who choose not to join a large convent. Along with her sister Theocharista, she founded this convent in the immediate aftermath of the sack of 1185. She labored hard to rebuild the city and heal the wounds, especially the spiritual injuries, inflicted in that atrocity. She is very much a strong-willed woman with a clear agenda, and she rules her nuns with a rod of iron, having seen first hand the consequences of sin and the influence of the Infernal. Regarding herself as a spiritual warrior, she has no time for stupidity, cowardice, or compromise, and suffers fools badly. Anna can, however, be civil when the occasion calls for it, pretending to be weak and servile, yet mercilessly satirizing her betters all the time with her dry wit, which she inherited from her grandfather, a famous scholar and courtier. She serves only the city, and God, and some say in that order.

THEOCHARISTA PSELLUS OF HOUSE JERBITON

Age: 109 (Apparent Age: 63)

Personality Traits: Peacemaker +3, Humble +2, Scholarly +2.

Theocharista is the younger sister of Anna, and has always lived in her sister's shadow. Where Anna is brash and bold, Theocharista is kind and self-effacing, but she is not without considerable personal strength. She is a brilliant scholar of Neo-Platonic philosophy, with a great understanding of theology — in particular the writings of the Cappadocian Fathers on the Holy Trinity. Her patience and calm, loving strength hold the covenant together.

NEREIDA EX MISCELLANEA

Age: 31 (Apparent Age: 22)

Personality Traits: Fearless +6, Romantic +3, Vain +2

Nereida is the twin sister of Nonna, and like her is a member of the Seirene tradition. Her music deals with the emotion of cour-

age, and she suffers from a Restriction that prevents her from ever employing it on men to whom she is personally attracted. This is a major problem considering her romantic nature. She currently is a lady in waiting at the royal court.

She has used a Longevity Ritual since just after her Gauntlet to preserve her looks, and her vanity earns the disapproval of the other magae who see it as sinful.

NONNA EX MISCELLANEA

Age: 31 (Apparent Age: 31)

Personality Traits: Courageous +3, Nurturing +2, Assertive +1

Nonna is as different from her twin sister as chalk from cheese, though physically they are almost indistinguishable except for their apparent ages, leading to many confusions at court. She has no romantic interest in men at all. A true and close friend of Queen Margaret of Hungary, who is now living in Athens, she is genuinely fond of King Demetrios but still would have preferred to see Queen Margaret rule Thessaloniki.

Nonna has just returned after several years of service in Constantinople at the court of Empress Yolanda, and her strong commitment to empowering women and thinly disguised contempt for the foibles of men may yet lead to more clashes with her sister and fellow magae. She would actively oppose any male being admitted to the covenant.

Covenfolk

The covenant does not have any covenfolk as such, or grogs, instead relying upon the magae themselves and their personal staffs for any services necessary. The convent is run by Anna as mother superior, and her six novices are mainly widows of the recent wars. One, the obstreperous and surly Gemma, has been here since 1185. Gemma is well aware that the sisters are much older than they appear, but puts it down to God's grace — not that she doesn't whine loudly about the injustice of it at every opportunity. Surviving from their personal wealth, the nuns perform their own domestic duties with only one hired helper, John the gardener.

Chapter Six

The Islands

The legendary sea at the center of the Theban Tribunal — the backdrop to the epic voyages of the Greek heroes — is strewn with hundreds of islands, among them the birthplaces and sanctuaries of gods and the refuges of saints. The sea goes by several names, but is most commonly called the Aegean Sea, after an ancient king of Athens, Aegeus. His son Theseus, returning home from his battle with the minotaur on Creta, had forgotten to raise a white flag on his ship to indicate victory. In despair, Aegeus cast himself into the waters. It also takes its name from the underwater palace of Poseidon, Aegaea. The Bulgarians call it the White Sea, reckoning it to be more hospitable than the stormy Black Sea beyond the Sea of Marmara. It was also known in antiquity, and still is today, as the Archipelago, due to the great abundance of islands found in its waters.

The Aegean islands were notionally divided between the Republic of Venice and the new Latin Empire in the wake of the Fourth Crusade and the defeat of the Byzantine Empire. However, the practical influence of the Latin rulers over the islands varies considerably, and control over many of them during the last decade and a half has been in a state of flux. Some are currently ruled by local despots or even pirates. In 1204, Venice claimed the most strategically important ports: those of Candia, Rodos, Karpathos, and the Cyclades. Among the islands of the north Aegean, they curiously only claimed Lemnos, the home of the covenant of Ingasia. Some magi in the Tribunal thus suspect that House Verditius may have come to some kind of secret commercial arrangement with the former doge, and suspect them of having aided the crusade.

The Aegean Sea contains a great variety of islands, from the tiniest rocky islets to grand domains covering hundreds of square miles. Many are surprisingly green and fertile, depending on the presence of springs and rain-giving mountains, while others,

especially the smaller ones, are mostly barren and unfit for agriculture. The more verdant of the isles are typically covered with vineyards, orchards, olive groves, or fields of grain, with sheep and goats in the mountains. A small few are volcanic, and others are rich in marble, precious metals and stones, or ore. Due to the generally reliable and constant winds, windmills, a relatively recent innovation copied from Muslim lands during the crusades, are employed to mill the grain harvest. Any settlement of any consequence is a port, and there are no large cities.

The North Aegean

The northwestern stretches of the Aegean Sea are mostly free of large islands, except for the clump known as the Sporades, modestly-sized isles covered in verdant forest, farms, and vineyards. To the east, a chain of several larger islands extends along the coast of Asia Minor, apart from Lemnos, they owe nominal loyalty to the Latin Empire. Most

Piracy in the Aegean

The countless islands and wealth of shipping in the Aegean have made the Archipelago a haven for pirates since antiquity, and the practice of piracy has continued more or less unchanged for millennia. As well as the obvious profit obtained from captured booty, it is also not uncommon to hold worthy persons captive for ransom. Long ago, the god Dionysos was captured by bold Tyrrhenian pirates, who mistook him for the relative of a wealthy merchant. The god found this turn of events amusing and turned the oars of the ship into snakes and the pirates into dolphins. Rulers throughout history have tried to bring the pirates to heel, with mixed success, but on occasion have also solicited them as mercenaries and allies.

Especially on some of the smaller and more barren isles, where tiny port towns struggle to eke out an existence, piracy is a way of life and a practical necessity. Such communities do not necessarily regard piracy as a dishonorable profession, although all lords of any stature regard pirates as criminals, and treat them accordingly. The current upheaval in the Aegean

in the wake of the collapse of the Byzantine Empire has proven a boon to pirates, and their numbers have grown rapidly. Some pirate lords have even become despots of local ports. This bold expansion is, however, tempered by the arrival of the crusaders and the fearsome Venetian fleet, who are eager to protect their new trading interests. Still, some Venetian captains are willing to deal with pirates, provided that they prey on their rivals.

Piracy might be a viable source of income for a Theban covenant. Although the Tribunal has strictly forbidden magi and covenants from preying on each other's ships, this doesn't stop pirates who know nothing of the Order of Hermes, nor does it forbid a covenant from piracy against mundanes, although this practice is likely to be viewed dimly. Pirates are also a staple of many kinds of stories, either as villainous enemies — perhaps preying on the covenant's shipping and holding magi or covenfolk hostage for ransom — or alternatively as swashbuckling heroes who stand up to the excesses of overbearing lords and greedy captains.

notable among the supernatural beings that may commonly be encountered in the northern half of the Archipelago are the Gorgona (see Chapter 5: Greece, Thessaloniki) and magi of the underwater covenant of Aegaea (see later) and their attendant tritones.

Lesbos

Lesbos, the third-largest Greek island, after Candia and Euboea, is a green and pleasant place, full of gardens and flowers. It has two large sea inlets, two principal mountains, and several hot springs. It is known as an abode of minstrels, poets, and lovers, where, most unusually, women are afforded a higher status than men. Five of the original towns of Makaria (as the island was once known) — Mytilene, Mithymna, Issa, Antissa, and Avrisi — were named after the daughters of King Makaras, a son of Helios. Each daughter ruled her home, and the women of Lesbos have held dominion over the men ever since. The island was later named after Lesbos, one

Islands of Exile

Throughout history, the islands of the Aegean have been places of exile, both for undesirable and troublesome individuals, and for all manner of cursed beasts and spirits. In the Roman era, early Christians often fled here; later under Byzantine rule, pagans, heretics, criminals, and traitors were banished to certain of the isles. The islands were also places of refuge for malicious hedge wizards and the beasts and demons that they summoned, many of which were trapped or bound by the Byzantine magicians of old. However, with the recent failure of ancient Byzantine magics throughout the Tribunal in the wake of the fall of Constantinople, many of these old menaces are now released from their bondage.

Today the islands remain convenient hiding places for those engaged in unholy acts; several of the smaller isles are infested by covens of stringles (see Chapter 12: Infernal Landscape). Wise islanders also take care to bury certain cursed or evil persons on small uninhabited and isolated isles and islets adjacent to the settled islands, lest they become a vrykolakas (see Chapter 12: Infernal Landscape). Many such islets are home to ramshackle graveyards with an Infernal aura and are blighted by these vampires; in most cases, the water prevents them from accessing settled areas.

of Makaras' sons-in-law. In ancient times the mother goddess Cybele was worshiped here; her male followers ritually castrated themselves and adopted female identities.

The most famous woman from Lesbos was the sixth-century-BC poetess Sappho, who wrought wondrous tales of love and desire. In antiquity she was regarded as the greatest lyric poet of her age, with many even hailing her as the 10th Muse. Unfortunately, her works were written in the relatively obscure Aeolic Greek, and therefore she is now mostly disregarded by contemporary Byzantine scholars. The spirit of Sappho still endures on her island, however, and is often encountered in gardens and other romantic places, inspiring lovers and poets alike. She would likely be a suitable patron for any covenant sited on Lesbos.

Later, in the fourth century BC, Aristotle came to Lesbos, where he wrote his famed *Historia Animalium* ("History of Animals") and four related works, in which he describes many locations in Lesbos and the rich variety of fauna that he found there. Under the Romans and the Byzantine Empire, Lesbos was relatively neglected and was used as a place of exile for undesirables, the most famous of which was the Byzantine Empress Irene of Athens, who was exiled here in 802.

Characters hailing from Lesbos — either domineering women or submissive men — who have not adjusted to the reversal of gender roles elsewhere should take the Social Handicap Flaw. The Enchanting Music and Free Expression Virtues are very common.

ORPHYKIA

Orpheus, the legendary minstrel whose singing and playing could entrance all manner of beasts and plants, even rocks and streams,



was slain by the maenads. His decapitated head and his lyre fell into a river and thence into the sea, before finally washing up here on the westernmost shore of Lesbos, near to the town of Antissa. The people of Lesbos afforded his remains great honor and respect, burying the head in the center of an ornate shrine. Terpander, the greatest minstrel of his day, born in nearby Antissa and credited with inventing the seven-stringed lyre, took the lyre of Orpheus. This sacred grove, Orphykia, which has a Magic aura of 4, is now an idyllic garden where nightingales sing more splendidly than anywhere else known. Doubtless the poetess Sappho came to Orphykia during her life, and her spirit often lingers here. The site is now sacred to the Cult of Orpheus (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 120), and is tended by a lone Ex Miscellanea magus from that tradition, Zacharias.

THE PETRIFIED FOREST

Among the western stretches of Lesbos is a place where the remains of a forest have been turned into stone. Upright stone tree trunks of various sizes stand in a blasted and desolate vale. A few of the other stone pillars look suspiciously like woodcutters that have been likewise cursed. This place is home to a particularly malevolent group of kalotyches (see Chapter 10: Faerie Landscape, *Stoicheia*), spirits of trees that avenge their own felling. The deserted petrified forest, which has a feared reputation on Lesbos, has a Faerie aura of 3, and the stone roots of the trees may be harvested as *Perdo vis*, although so doing enrages the spirits. To avoid angering the kalotyches and suffering a similar fate, the folk of Lesbos take care to honor their trees and do not fell them, which is perhaps one reason why there are so many carefully tended gardens and groves elsewhere on the island.

The Cyclades

The Cyclades, also known as the Encircling Isles since they were spun around the legendary birthplace of Apollon and Artemis on Delos, are a cluster of several dozen islands in the central Aegean Sea, southeast of Attica and Euboea. Many cypress trees sacred to Artemis may still be found on the isles; they are also associated with Hades and resur-

Apart from Lesbos, the largest, other major islands of the northern half of the Aegean are as follows, in order of size:

KHIOS

Khios is a mostly dry and mountainous land, although vineyards are located in the most fertile spots and the aromatic mastic shrub, a prized spice from which chewing gum can be obtained, grows only here. The medicinal black wine from Khios, first cultivated here by the legendary King Oenopion, a son of Dionysos, is among the finest in the Theban Tribunal. The island is home to the great monastery of Nea Moni ("new monastery"), founded by Constantine IX, which is one of the largest in the former Byzantine Empire.

LEMNOS

The fertile and volcanic island of **Lemnos**, as well as being rich in grain, olives, and sheep, is also home to one of the Forges of Hephaistos, which is a House Verditius cult site and the site of the covenant of Ingasia (see later).

SAMOS

Samos, a verdant island thickly covered with vineyards and olive groves, was the birthplace of the goddess Hera. Accordingly, it is home to the ruins of her great sanctuary temple, the Heraion. The Tunnel of Eupalinos, a miraculously straight ancient aqueduct running more than a thousand yards beneath a mountain, was constructed with the aid of Pythagoras, a native of Samos.

rection, and are thus most commonly found near graveyards. An ancient plane tree may be found in the center of every Cycladic village, carefully tended by the locals. This tree is home to a kalotycha that blesses the settlement with fragrant vines, herbs, and flowers for so long as the tree lives unmolested. The Etesian winds, which prevail from the north, keep the islands cool in summer. They were generously provided by Zeus, after sacrifices were made to him on Keos.

THASOS

Thasos, only four miles south of the shore of Macedonia, is rich in silver, gold, and lead mines and marble quarries.

IMBROS

Just off the coast of **Imbros**, not far from the narrow entrance to the Marmara Sea, is rumored to be a great underwater cave that is the stable of Pegasus, the winged horse and son of Poseidon.

IKARIA

The island of **Ikaria** is named after the legendary Icarus, who fell to his death after his wings fashioned of wax melted when he flew too close to the sun. It has famed healing springs known to cure infertility, where *Creo vis* may be harvested.

SAMOTHRAKI

Samothraki (Samothrace) is a mountainous granite isle lacking natural harbors. It is home to the partially ruined Sanctuary of the Great Gods. In antiquity this was the center of the Cult of the Great Gods, a mystery cult that rivaled the more secretive Cult of Eleusis (see Chapter 5: Greece, Attica and Boeotia) in popularity. Off the east coast is a sunken city. It is well known to the local sponge-divers, who used to harvest here until one of their number strayed too close to the city and was eaten by the monster who guards it. The locals are aware of occasional visitors to the island who are always dripping wet, and suspect them of being inhabitants of the city.

These islands currently comprise a new realm known as the Duchy of Naxos. The inaugural duke is Marco Sanudo, a Venetian and nephew of Enrico Dandolo, the famed Doge of Venice during the Fourth Crusade, who seems to have inherited much of his uncle's charisma and common sense. Marco was tasked with suppressing piracy in the Cyclades, so he borrowed galleys from the Venetian navy, with which he attacked the Aegean island of Naxos in

1207. Despite heavy fighting, he soon conquered it. He subsequently took almost all of the rest of the Cyclades by 1212, and divided the islands into more than fifty lordships owing allegiance to him, many ruled by his relatives.

The Duchy is a successful realm, paying homage to the Latin emperor but generally being left alone by all parties in the constant fighting and political maneuvering. While nominally a vassal of the Latin Empire, Marco's lands are held in his own right, independently of Venice and the current doge, but closely allied with Venetian interests. While he introduced the Western Church and barred Greek Orthodox individuals from high office, the Orthodox churches and clergy were left largely unmolested, and perhaps as a result Marco Sanudo has a largely peaceful and prosperous duchy whose inhabitants seem mostly

content to continue as before, with new lords ruling them.

As noted, Marco is nephew of the former Doge Dandolo. His brother, Pietro, was the black sheep of the family and a rather unsettling youth, whom Marcus never really felt comfortable around, despite their shared blood. Pietro was a mere boy, pleasant enough, and intelligent and scholarly, but there was something profoundly strange about him. In one of his last acts, Dandolo arranged a position for him somewhere, and Marco often wonders what happened to him, hopes he is doing well, and hopes for word. In fact, Pietro was apprenticed in House Verditius at the covenant of Ingasia and is now named Satabus; he has just moved to the covenant of Polyaiigos (see later) where he has learned of Marco's rise to power. He has not yet contacted him, although he retains a strong affection for his mundane family.

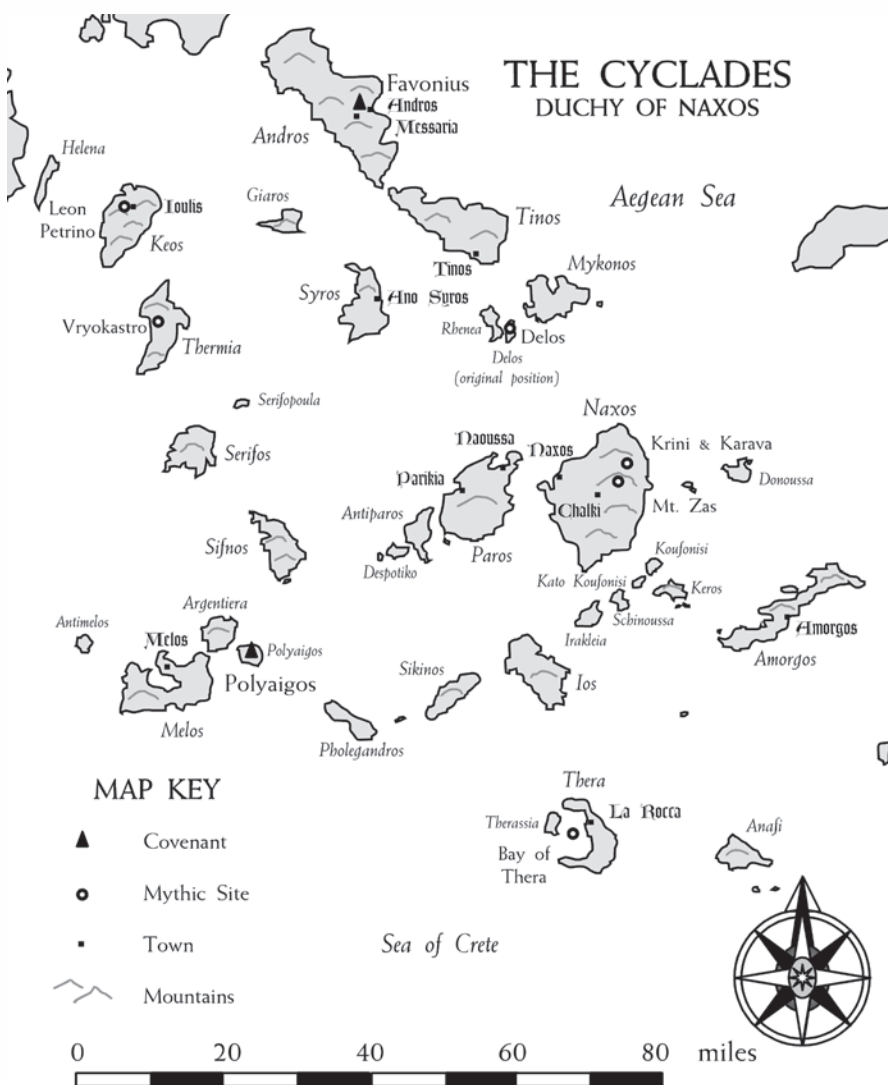
Delos

For such a relatively barren and small island — it is only a mile or two across — Delos has had an important role in the history of Greece. It lent its name to the Delian League, a consortium of city-states that ruled much of ancient Greece. These days, it has all but been forgotten. With no natural resources or inhabitants, it has no strategic importance. Its insignificance to mundanes is the reason why few have realized that the island has uprooted, and drifts on the currents of the Aegean and Kretan seas. It is of importance and interest to the Order of Hermes however, since Delos is where the meetings of the Theban Tribunal are held.

THE LEGENDARY ORIGINS OF DELOS

Asteria and Leto were the daughters of the titans Koios and Phoebe. Asteria was the mother of Hekate by the titan Perses, but was also pursued by Zeus. To escape the amorous attentions of the chief of the gods, Asteria transformed herself into a quail and leaped into the sea, where she became the island of Delos (which also bore the names of Asteria and Ortygia, after ortyx meaning "quail"). Delos was not fixed to the ocean floor, but instead floated on the sea. Asteria's sister Leto later became pregnant by Zeus, and jealous Hera sent the Python to pursue her, declaring she would find no rest on either land or sea. Her savior proved to be her sister, who, as a floating island, was neither. Leto gave birth to the twin gods Apollon and Artemis, and in gratitude to her sister, Leto caused the floating island to be fixed to the sea bed with four immense columns. Zeus decreed that no one would ever be allowed to be born there again, nor die on its shores.

Naturally, Delos was a sacred place, holding temples to Artemis, Apollon, Leto, and Dionysius, but it was Apollon who was held in the highest regard. Only the priests of these shrines were permitted to live on the island, whose only other residents were three nymphs sent by Apollon from the mythical land of Hyperborea, who were worshiped as goddesses. Quails were — and still are — numerous on the island, and dogs, cats, hawks, and other predators were forbidden there to prevent the accidental deaths of these sacred birds. The temple to Apollon was the meeting place for the Delian League and the loca-



tion of its treasury prior to the Peloponnesian War. During the high point of the league, Delos boasted both a commodities and a slave market. But with its decline, the island was soon abandoned. Despite being periodically inhabited throughout the Roman period, it had no capacity for food or timber production, and only limited water. So it remained largely free from permanent human settlement. It has been abandoned for at least a thousand years.

THE HYPERBOREAN NYMPHS

The nymphs Arge, Opis, and Loxo came from Hyperborea to Delos with Artemis and Apollon, and now guard the shrines on Delos. They are the personifications of archery: Opis presides over the aim, Loxo over trajectory, and Arge over distance. A further two nymphs, Hyperoche and Laodice, traveled from Hyperborea to Delos with a tribute of sacred relics, but after they left Delos to

return home, they disappeared. Their sisters are keen to hear news of them.

The three Hyperborean nymphs still guard the shrines on Delos. Their appearance is provoked by disturbing the structures or relics left on Delos, and vandals have just a few moments to explain themselves before they begin to shoot. Trespassers typically receive mortal wounds, although they never die until they have left the island.

The Nymphs Arge, Opis, and Loxo

Magic Might: 30 (Corpus)

Season: Winter

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

Size: 0

Confidence Score: 3 (8)

Virtues and Flaws: Daimon, Magic Spirit, Great Dexterity x 2, Improved Characteristics x 2, Puissant Bows, Self-Confident, Driven, Fury, Magical Air (free)

Magical Qualities and Inferiorities:

Greater Power (*Donning the Corporeal Veil*), Greater Power (*Strike of the Cornered Game*), Greater Power (varies*), Improved Dexterity, Major Virtue (Essential Virtue), Improved Attack, Improved Confidence, Improved Damage x2, Improved Defense, Improved Initiative, Mentem Resistance, Minor Virtue (Keen Vision), Minor Virtue (Improved Characteristics) x4, Minor Virtue (Inoffensive to Animals), Minor Virtue (Tethered Magic**), Minor Virtue (Voice of the Island)

* Arge knows *Outstanding Distance*, Opis knows *Unequaled Aim*, Loxo knows *Peerless Trajectory*.

** From *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, page 107; this allows the nymphs to use their powers on their arrows, which then deliver their effects.

Personality Traits: Archer* +6, Wrathful* +3, Dutybound* +3

Reputations: Guardian of the Shrines 3 (Local)

Combat:

Short Bow: Init +5, Attack +25, Defense n/a, Damage +14

Dodge: Init +3, Attack n/a, Defense +11, Damage n/a

Soak: +5

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

Abilities: Classical Greek 4 (sacred hymns), Athletics 5 (running), Awareness 5 (vandals), Bows 12+2 (short bow), Brawl 4 (dodge), Delos Lore 5 (birds), Hunt 6 (quail spirits), Hyperborean 5 (warriors), Hyperborean Lore 3 (archers), Leadership 4 (intimidation), Magic Lore 4 (wizards), Mentem Resistance 5 (deception), Penetration 4 (*Strike of the Cornered Game* power), Swim 4 (coastal waters)

Powers:

Donning the Corporeal Veil, 0 points, Init +2, Corpus: The nymphs can form a body with the statistics presented here. They can dissolve this body at will, but if it is slain, it contains the vis listed below. This does not slay the spirit itself, merely its current Aspect.

Strike of the Cornered Game, 2 points, Init +4, Corpus: The nymph can paralyze any individual struck by one of her arrows. The paralysis lasts until the nymph decides to cancel the power, or until the sun crosses the horizon. ReCo 25 (base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 canceled at will) Greater Power (25 Levels, -1 Might cost, +4 Init)

Outstanding Distance, 3 points, Init +5, Herbam: (Arge only) Arge can shoot an arrow that can hit any target up to seven leagues away. She must hit the target with a normal missile Attack Total, but ignores range increment penalties. She must be capable of seeing her target to strike them, and so there cannot be any intervening obstacles. ReHe 25 (base 3, +1 Touch, +4 magnitudes for seven leagues) Greater Power (25 levels, +5 Init)

Unequaled Aim, 1 point, Init +9, Corpus: (Opis only) Opis can shoot an arrow that, if it hits, strikes a part of the body designated by her. Damage from the arrow is delivered as normal, and the

body part is also left unusable. The target temporarily acquires a Minor Flaw such as Missing Eye, Missing Hand, or Lamé; this Flaw disappears once the wound that inflicted it has healed. If the hand is struck then the target drops whatever he was holding in that hand. PeCo 15 (base 5, +1 Touch, +1 Part) Greater Power (15 levels, +7 Init)

Peerless Trajectory, 0 points, Init +10, Herbam: (Loxo only) Loxo can shoot an arrow that flies around corners, over obstacles, and behind shields. Cover is no impediment to such an arrow, if the nymph knows the location of her target, she can still make a normal missile Attack roll against it. Range penalties apply according to the actual path of the arrow. The target's Defense Total must be calculated excluding a shield, as Loxo's arrow strikes around even these obstacles. ReHe 5 (base 3, +1 Touch, +1 complexity) Greater Power (5 Levels, -1 Might cost, +8 Init)

Equipment: Short bow, full heavy leather armor

Vis: 6 Rego, in bows.

Appearance: Three stern-looking maidens with hair drawn back into severe pony tails. They wear leather armor and each carry a bow of ivory. They radiate a sense of displeasure. The three nymphs are difficult to tell apart.

These nymphs are actually Daimons, a type of spirit that resides in the Magic Realm. The guardians of Delos are Aspects of the Daimons, so if they are slain they can simply reform a new Aspect a day later. (See *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 102, for more details). They typically dwell in the shrines where the Magical aura is highest, to preserve their Might from Acclimation.

Hyperborean Magic

Characters interested in Hyperborean magic (see *Ancient Magic*, Chapter 8) may naturally be drawn to Delos in search of secrets. Undoubtedly there are answers to be found here, but they are not easily yielded. There may be information hidden in the temple to Apollon, but the shrine's guardians are strongly resistant to those who would disturb the ruins. The nymphs themselves are a potential source of information as they originated in Hyperborea and speak its language, but they are not the most friendly of beings, and seekers may need to prove themselves worthy.

DELOS TODAY

Delos today nominally belongs to the Duchy of Naxos. However, this is perhaps a technicality only, since somewhere between 1200 and 800 years ago, Delos became a floating island again. Hermetic investigations have suggested a failure in the spells that bound the island to the sea floor, suggesting a weakening of Leto's magic. But the magic of the titans is largely a mystery to the Order, and this is mere conjecture.

Both Magic and Faerie are strongly

present on the isle, although Magic predominates, since the titaness Asteria was aligned to that Realm. The whole island has a Magic aura of 3, although there are certain places, such as the sacred lake (see Chapter 3: The Order of Hermes, The Ceremony of Propitiation), where the Magic aura rises as high as 8. There are also a number of Faerie auras or regiones on Delos, such as the abandoned shrines of Apollon. The Magic aura is aligned to the emotion of restlessness (*Realms of Power: Magic*, page 15), imposing the Personality Trait of Restless +1 on anyone who sets foot on the island (where the aura is greater than 3, this trait rises to +2). Unusually, magi also seem to be affected. The fauna of the island, most notably quail, hare, and lizards, are constantly on the move. Even the vegetation is transient; the plants grow new shoots, provide fruit, and die back with no respect to the seasons. Humans who come to the island have no desire to remain there, recognizing that they are only ever visiting. Magi attending the Tribunal meetings (see Chapter 3: The Order of Hermes) find it difficult to sit for the entire day, and often pace up and down, or leave the agora for short periods. There is usually little desire to linger once the Tribunal has closed.

The mount in the center of the isle is named Kynthos, and is home to the ruins of the Sanctuary of the Foreign Gods, where visitors from distant lands erected shrines

to Egyptian and Eastern deities in antiquity. Here are a small number of houses where guest magi (metoikoi) traditionally stay during Tribunal gatherings.

Delos' most notable feature is, of course, its migratory movements. The currents of the Mediterranean are predominantly south in the summer, and east-northeast in the winter, and this seems to determine its course through the Cyclades archipelago. It rarely travels outside of the area roughly described by the islands of Astipalaia, Thera, Melos, and Andros, and travels roughly in a clockwise route through this region. It returns to its original position between Mykonos and Syros every 19 years. The Tribunal's Redcaps are asked to keep an eye out for Delos every time they pass through the Cyclades, so its position can be roughly charted by the Tribunal.

It is generally believed that Zeus' ban on births and deaths on the island is still in force. It has been many generations of magi since a slaying was attempted, and all present intervened to prevent it for fear of risking the notorious wrath of the Lord of Olympos. In line with the ban, no pregnant women or animals are permitted on the island during a Tribunal meeting, and the magi continue the ancient practice of forbidding all predatory animals; anyone with such a familiar or animal companion must leave it behind. Bjornaer magi with predatory heartbeasts refrain from changing form on Delos if they can avoid it.

Delian Stories

Characters will certainly visit Delos at some point during their lives, to attend a Tribunal meeting. The biggest potential for stories comes when it is the characters' phyle's turn to prepare the agora for an upcoming Tribunal. Naturally, this task will be delegated to the younger members of the phyle. In addition to the practical issues of supplying food for sixty or more magi plus their servants for a week, they must deal with seven years of neglect at the Tribunal site. Typically, all of the houses require new furniture and roofs, since the impermanent nature of everything on Delos is particularly harsh on perishable goods. Damage to the structures must be repaired with caution, since the Hyperborean nymphs strongly resent any physical changes to the island at the hands of humans.

More significantly, Delos is prone to gathering magical beasts on its wanderings around the Cyclades. They are attracted by the Magic aura, and then often find it difficult to leave once the island has moved on. Creatures of a predatory nature do not often linger long, as they are struck by the wanderlust engendered by the island, but these and other potentially dangerous creatures may still be present when it is Tribunal time. To make matters worse for the characters, these creatures must be driven off rather than killed; and they must be prevented from returning to the agora for the duration of the meeting. This requires knowledge of appropriate warding spells, which a phyle always ensures that the characters know prior to their duties on Delos (alternatively, they are provided with Casting Tablets for the requisite spells).

THE HERMETIC AGORA

The Tribunal of Thebes has met on Delos ever since its inception. There were other suggestions — the site of Thebes being the most notable — but all were championed by one faction for some political advantage. Delos was chosen because of its historical significance, lack of a resident population, and its Magic aura.

The meeting itself takes place in the agora — an assembly place built and used by the Delian League. A natural hollow forms an amphitheater, and the sides are faced with marble steps. The agora is surrounded with carved marble pillars. Some way from the agora itself are the walls of four large buildings and a number of smaller huts. These are provided with roofs and necessary repairs are done to house the four phylai and their auxiliary staff during the Tribunal meeting. All members of each phyle are expected to share one of the four buildings; tables, chairs

Other Cycladic Islands

Other islands of the Cyclades include, in order by their size:

NAXOS

Naxos, the largest and most fertile of the Cyclades, is centrally located and is the seat of the duke of Naxos. He has just completed a sturdy fortress, the Kastro, and is beginning work on a new cathedral. A giant cathedral-like cave in the side of Mount Zas, the highest peak of the Cyclades, was sacred to Dionysos as the site of his marriage to Ariadne after she was abandoned by Theseus. The spring of Krini at Apeiranthos, in the northeast of the island, has a shapeshifting stoicheion (see Chapter 10: Faerie Landscape, Stoicheia), whereas that of the nearby spring at Karava always takes the form of a white cat. The two stoicheia are rivals of one another; Karava is the stronger faerie, but Krini has more adaptable powers. When someone takes an interest in the springs, Krini will take the form of a white cat and pose as Karava, granting permission to harvest vis from the spring.

ANDROS

Andros is the other major port of the Cyclades, famed for the skill of its shipbuilders. It is the home base of the shipborne covenant of Favonius (see later).

PAROS

The quarries of **Paros**, which yield the famed translucent white Parian mar-

ble, were worked by tens of thousands of slaves in antiquity, although they are now mostly disused.

MELOS

Melos is the only other volcanic island of the Cyclades, apart from Thera. Rich in obsidian, it is a fertile land dotted with hot springs, strange caves, and dramatic rock pillars. Its smaller neighbor **Polyaigos** is home to an eponymous covenant (see later).

KEOS

Known for its fine sweet black wine, the island of **Keos** is blessed with many springs, which were formerly home to nymphs until they were driven away by a huge lion, Leon Petrino. The stone lion, seemingly carved out of the mountainside itself, will animate in defense of its island. If it can be bested, stones may be cut from its mane that are Rego vis.

IOS

Ios, the burial place of Homer, is covered with a dense forest of oaks and is the best source of timber for shipbuilding among the islands.

THERMIA

Named after its thermal springs, the barren island of **Thermia** is home to a

ruined town named Vryokastro, which is made of massive stones and was originally built by the drakoi (see Chapter 10: Faerie Landscape, Faeries of Greece). Now it is the haunt of many vrykolakes (see Chapter 12: Infernal Landscape, The Vrykolakes); they are more numerous here than anywhere else in Greece. They used to dwell on the island of Hydra, in the Saronic Gulf to the west, but were banished here by a local bishop. These vampires wear human forms and dwell unseen among the local inhabitants. But on one night each year, they travel from nearby islands and gather on Thermia, revealing their true forms to each other, to the horror of the hapless innocents they have tricked into accompanying them. Although most of their victims are devoured, some are driven mad and allowed to escape, in order to ensure that the people of Thermia are kept in constant fear of their demonic neighbors. Given that these predators blight the whole island, interest might potentially be attracted from magi of the Donatores Requietis Aeternae (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 115).

MYKONOS

The island of **Mykonos** is littered with large boulders, the petrified remains of giants slain by Herakles. It is infested with several covens of stringles witches (see Chapter 12: Infernal Landscape) and is suspected of being the capitol of their "kingdom." Witches in other parts of Greece are said to be able to summon a Mykonon stringles demon to assist in their evil deeds; in return, the witch must tithe one infant to the witches of Mykonos each year.

and bedding have to be supplied from beyond Delos.

THE TRIBUNAL TREASURY

Harkening back to the communal treasury of the ancient Delian League, the Theban Tribunal has its storehouse of treasure in exactly the same spot on the isle of Delos. The small temple-like building is empty on the ground floor, except for a large leaden door set into the ground. This is a copy of the one in the Tower of Bonisagus at Du-

renmar (see *Guardians of the Forests: the Rhine Tribunal*, page 57). This magical trapdoor, which has never been breached, may only be opened with a large iron key that is entrusted to the archon. The possession of this key is largely ceremonial, since the treasury is rarely accessed in between Tribunals, except in case of emergency. The steps below lead to a series of dusty chambers dozens of feet underground, where several hundred pawns of vis, as well as many ancient items and texts, are carefully stored and cataloged. Due to the presence of such a large quantity of vis stored in close proximity, spontaneous

magical effects are quite common (see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 123.)

As with all the sacred sites on Delos, the treasury benefits from the protection of the Hyperborean nymphs. Nevertheless, it would not be extremely difficult for a resourceful magus to steal vis from the treasury, or for a clever arche to embezzle vis from it. However, it is believed that such crimes have never occurred. Plundering the treasury would surely be viewed as a grave offense.

Thera

Thera, the southernmost of the Cyclades, is a rocky crescent-shaped island that partially encircles a central lagoon, forming a huge natural harbor. However, the dramatic steep slopes and cliffs leading down to the bay severely limit the potential for a port of any size. Instead, a few small settlements are perched atop the black cliffs, overlooking the lagoon. The new Latin name recently given to Thera is Santorini (St. Irene).

THE BAY OF THERA

The eerily still blue lagoon of Thera, which is accessed by one of two wide entrances from the sea, is several miles across. It is precipitously deep, except for at its very center where the peak of a volcano simmers just beneath the surface. This part of Thera was originally land, but was obliterated in a cataclysmic eruption during the age of the titans, more than a thousand years before the birth of Christ. This caused a giant wave, which battered the nearby Cycladic islands and Candia, wrecking their coastal settlements. This disaster was a result of the final battle between the titans and the Olympians (see Chapter 9: Magical Landscape, The Titans). Zeus cast the mightiest titan, Typhon of a hundred serpent heads, down into Tartaros. Typhon remains trapped in the volcano at the center of the lake, but he occasionally spews forth a swirling cloud of dust and fire, which ravages the whole of the Aegean Sea. This cloud scatters burning fragments of pumice, which are Perdo vis. The Seekers of the Fallen (see Chapter 9: Magical Landscape) believe that freeing the entrance to the underwater volcano will open up a portal to Tartaros, which is part of the Magic Realm. The lagoon has a Magic aura of 7.

Outside the bay, in the seas surrounding Thera, is one of the most common haunts of the Warrior of the Sea, the Thalassomachos (see Chapter 10: Faerie Landscape, Faeries of Greece). He steals the nets of local fishermen and summons winds to thwart them. However, he does not venture into the bay, and his sudden flight from Thera may herald the imminent arrival of a mighty storm from Typhon.

The Dodecanese

The Dodecanese are a chain of a couple of dozen islands in the southeast of the Aegean, a region which in antiquity was at the extremity of the Greek world. Christianity took root here earlier than anywhere else in the Tribunal, thanks to several missions by the apostles St. Paul and St. John. Some of the islands later felt the influence of Muslim rulers, although the Byzantine Empire has left by far the stronger and more recent influence, leaving the isles liberally dotted with many fortifications, monasteries, and churches. Apart from Rodos, Karpathos, and their immediate surrounds, which were nominally claimed by Venice after the Fourth Crusade, the Dodecanese fall under the dominion of the Latin Empire, despite the fact that the closest shores of Asia Minor are divided between the Empire of Nicaea and the Seljuk Sultanate.

Patmos

This small island at the northern end of the Dodecanese is the holiest in Greece, being the place where St. John the Apostle was exiled, the horrors of the Roman emperor Nero's persecution of the Christians still fresh in his mind. A baptismal font still stands at the spot where he alighted on the shore. Apart from the monastery of St. John the Divine, founded at the end of the 11th century and later fortified against the attacks of pirates and local despots, Patmos is uninhabited, although it is visited by a great number of pilgrims.

THE CAVE OF THE APOCALYPSE

Some way up the side of Patmos' highest peak is a small cave where St. John received his apocalyptic visions from Jesus, which were written down by his disciple Prochorus. These words are recorded in the Bible's Book of Revelation, also called the Apocalypse of John, foretelling Armageddon, the fall of Satan, the second coming of Christ, and God's final judgment upon the earth. In the cave can be seen the rock that the apostle used as a pillow, the cross he carved into the rock, and the triple fissure in the rock wall through which he heard the voice of Jesus. Several monks from the island's monastery have

claimed Divine visions of their own here. More prosaically, a visiting magus of House Criamon once managed to successfully capture the murmuring echo that he heard from the fissure, placing it in a velvet bag. It turned out to be Intellego vis. The cave has a Divine aura of 7; the fissure, if it could somehow be navigated, is a gateway to a terrestrial regio (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 13) depicting Armageddon, which is also linked to Mount Megiddo in the Holy Land.

Kos

During the ancient war between the titans and the Olympians, Poseidon chased the titan Polybotes across the sea and ultimately defeated him by ripping off a part of the island of Kos and hurling it at him. Polybotes remains trapped under this rock, Nisyros, a small isle just to the south of Kos that has a Magic aura of 3. Kos was one of the wealthiest ports in antiquity, famed for its wines. In the fourth century BC the islanders forged an alliance with Egypt, and it became a favored city of the Egyptian rulers, Ptolemeos II being born here. Under Byzantine rule, Kos has remained an important port, and is home to many rich farms.

THE TREE OF HIPPOCRATES

In the center of the town of Kos is an ancient plane tree, the oldest and largest in the Theban Tribunal. Settlers from Epidaurus (see Chapter 5: Greece, Epidaurus) had established an asklepion here, an offshoot from the original of Epidaurus. Here, a native of Kos named Hippocrates, later known as the father of medicine, first learned the secrets of the art from Asklepios. He then taught it to his students in the shade of the local plane tree, which was named after him. Later, St. Paul also delivered sermons from beneath the tree. Every year, in autumn, the womenfolk of Kos make a wreath from the leaves of the tree, which is then blessed and hung among the icons in the local church. The previous year's wreath is carried down to the shore in a procession, and ceremonially cast into the sea. A magus is usually waiting inconspicuously in a boat, however, since the old wreath is worth 8 pawns of Creo vis. The womenfolk return to the town center and embrace the tree, and are blessed with long life and vigor. The tree has a Magic aura of 4, although a Divine aura pervades throughout the rest of the town.

Story Seed: The Despot's Advisor

The closest confidante and advisor of the Despot of Rodos is a hedge wizard of highly dubious moral character, likely corrupted by the Infernal, who bends the ear of his master to suit his own selfish ends. He has written the only books to be found on the island, which are corrupt and

tainted works including a perverted copy of the Bible. And he is greedily gathering all the island's vis, while his demonic patron secretly looks on with satisfaction. After hearing rumors of depravities and wizardry on Rodos, the Theban Tribunal asks for volunteers to investigate.

Rodos

Rodos (Rhodes), the largest of the Dodecanese islands, is named after the beautiful nymph Rhode, a daughter of Aphrodite and a consort of the sun god Helios. Both Rhode and Helios were worshiped as protectors of the island, and to this day the rhoda, a pink hibiscus gifted by Rhode, blooms all over its shores. In antiquity, the city at the northern end of Rodos was home to the Colossus, an epic statue of Helios bestriding the harbor's entrance, which was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. This marvel stood for less than a century before collapsing after an earthquake, breaking off at its knees. The remains of the bronze torso lay there for many centuries, until the invading Saracens broke it up in the seventh century, selling the pieces to a mysterious Jewish merchant claiming to be from the Holy Land, who hauled it all away with a thousand camels. Even now, small bronze shards of the Colossus may still be found — given that they are Ignem vis, the supposed merchant might have had an arcane use in mind.

Rodos was ruled by the Saracens for centuries, who fortified the city with sturdy walls and divided it into several districts, including one that to this day has a large Jewish presence. A separate district was created for the city's rulers. The First Crusade restored the city to Byzantine ownership. During the Third Crusade in 1191, Richard the Lionheart conquered Rodos and recruited its sailors to his cause. After the Fourth Crusade, the island was claimed by the Republic of Venice, which has had a naval base here since 1082. It is now ruled by Leo Gavalas, a wealthy and corrupt dynatos from Constantinople who arrived here shortly after that city fell, rather presumptuously establishing the Despotate of Rodos and declaring himself despot. Among his peculiarities is a great fear that the "freedom of reading" will lead his subjects to re-

bellion; as such, one of his first acts was to confiscate all the island's books. Only texts that he has personally approved, and which portray him in a suitably favorable light, may be sold here.

Candia

Also named Creta in Latin, Candia is the largest island of Greece and the second-largest in the Eastern Mediterranean, after Cyprus. It is the southernmost territory of the Theban Tribunal, lying between the part of the Aegean Sea known as the Sea of Creta and the Mediterranean proper, about two hundred miles north of the coast of Africa. It is mostly rocky and covered with mountains, whose waters selectively feed the greener of its various plains and plateaus, where many olive groves may be found. Sheep and goat herding is prevalent in the hills.

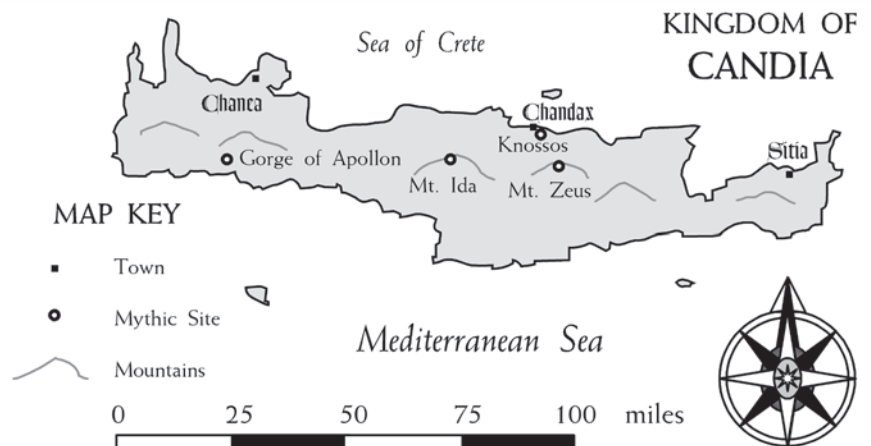
Candia was home to the ancient Minoan civilization, founded by the legendary king Minos, a son born to Zeus and Europa, who was made one of the three Judges of the Dead in Hades upon his death. Idomeneus,

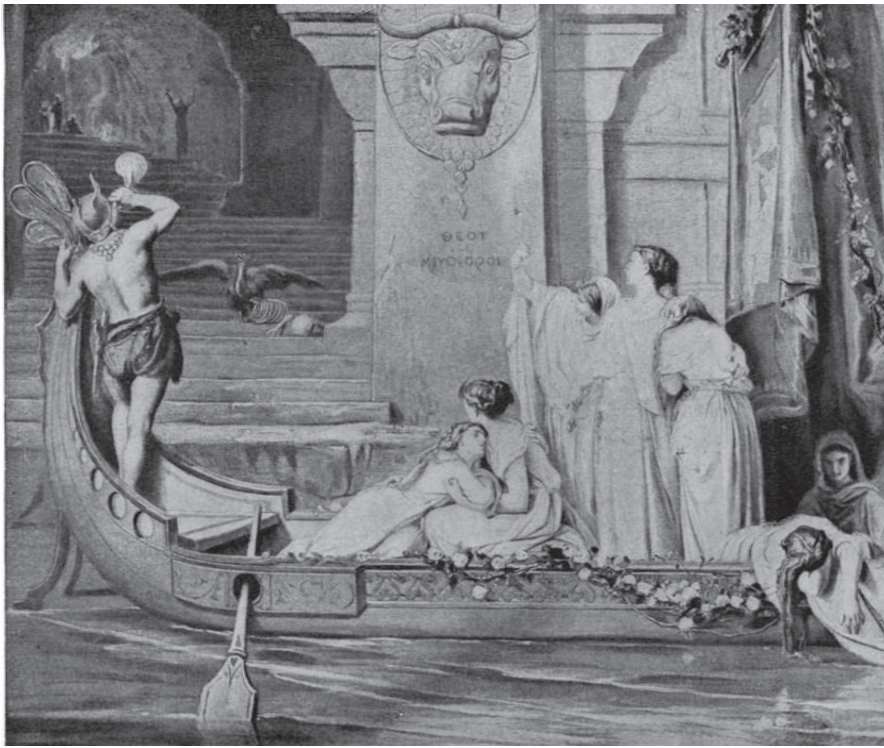
his grandson and also king, was one of the leading Greek generals in the Trojan War. He and his island were cursed after he slew his own son in fulfillment of a promise made to Poseidon; after the god had saved his ship from a terrible storm, he swore to sacrifice the first living thing he saw upon his return, which turned out to be his son.

After successively falling under the dominion of Rome, the Byzantine Empire, and the Saracens, Candia was recaptured from Muslim hands under the rule of the Byzantine emperor Nikephoros II in the 10th century. In the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade, became the possession of Boniface of Montferrat, who was persuaded to sell it to the Republic of Venice, the doge viewing it as a strategic asset, for 1000 marks. A Genoese pirate by the name of Enrico Pescatore ruled for several years until Venice managed to assert its authority in 1212, whereupon the Kingdom of Candia was established. In the eight years since, Venetian families have been encouraged to settle on the island, and there has already been a succession of four different doges (dukes) installed as ruler, each serving a two-year term. There is currently a rebellious atmosphere as the locals chafe under the higher taxes and tariffs that the Venetian rulers of the ports have imposed.

Chandax

The principal city of Candia and the largest amid the Greek islands, Chandax, which the Venetians have taken to simply calling Candia, is located halfway along the northern coast of the island, at the site of the ancient port city of Iraklion. The settlement was reestablished by the Saracen rulers of





the heavens. Nowadays, the Christian folk of Candia prefer to think of Mount Zeus as bearing the profile of God, however. Acorns from the sole oak on the mount are a potent source of Vim vis.

A short distance to the west, in the center of Candia, is the island's highest peak, Mount Ida (Mount of the Mother Goddess). Somewhere on its slopes is the Cave of Zeus, which has a Faerie aura of 8. The great god was born here and was hidden away from his father Kronos by his mother Rhea. He was then nurtured by three nymphs, who clashed their spears on their shields to disguise the cries of the baby. The cave is guarded by a golden dog, and the great eagles who gave Zeus the gift of thunder also patrol the surrounding heights. According to the ancient beliefs of Candia, Zeus is reborn every year in his cave, is nurtured and grows to maturity, and then dies in winter on Mount Zeus. Lucian the Scholar of House Merinita (see Aegaea, later) claims to have encountered the nymphs and the infant Zeus on his travels in Candia.

Candia in the ninth century, who erected a moat around the city for protection and used it as a base to attack Byzantine shipping. After it was conquered by the Byzantines, Chandax was razed and rebuilt. It is now the seat of the Kingdom of Candia and an archbishopric. The new Venetian rulers are busy strengthening the old Saracen defenses with a sturdier wall, and a new fortress protecting the harbor is beginning to rise.

MOUNTS ZEUS AND IDA

Candia has a profound association with Zeus, the king of the Olympian gods, as it is the island of his birth and the place where he was raised as a youth. This is immediately clear to any visitors approaching Chandax by sea, for when they look up at the mountain behind the city they see that it has the giant profile of Zeus' head, facing up into

THE LABYRINTH OF KNOSSOS

On the hillside a short distance from Chandax lies the remains of the ancient capital of Candia, the legendary city of Knossos, home to many epic Greek legends. The Cretan Bull was a splendid white beast, gifted to Minos by Poseidon, but the king refused to sacrifice it as intended. In revenge, Poseidon made Minos' wife Pa-

The Tales of Knossos

The legends of the Labyrinth of Knossos include the following; any of these characters or stories might be re-created inside the Faerie regio:

snake came along with a herb in its mouth and touched it against the body of the first, reviving it. Polyeidus used the magical herb to resurrect Glaukos.

with his sword and retraced his way out, escaping from the island with Ariadne and the 13 Athenian children. Theseus later abandoned Ariadne on Naxos.

RESURRECTION OF GLAUKOS

Glaukos, the young son of King Minos, was exploring the cellars of the palace when the boy climbed into a giant jar of honey and drowned. When the wizard Polyeidus discovered the body, Minos ordered him to bring his son back to life, and imprisoned him in the cellar until the job was complete. Trapped there, Polyeidus killed a snake that he saw slithering across the stones of the cellar, whereupon another

DEFEAT OF THE MINOTAUR

The hero Theseus volunteered as one of the 14 sacrificial victims from Athens. Minos agreed that if he could conquer the Minotaur with his bare hands, the annual tribute from Athens would end. Ariadne, a daughter of Minos who fell in love with Theseus, gave him a ball of thread so that he could trail it behind him and thus find his way out of the labyrinth. After besting the Minotaur with his fists, he then slew it

DAIDALOS AND ICARUS

The labyrinth's creator, Daidalos, gave the ball of thread to Ariadne that let her and Theseus escape. Minos punished him for this treason by imprisoning him, along with his son Icarus, in the labyrinth. Daidalos crafted two pairs of wings so that they could escape by flight. Icarus flew too close to the sun, however, so that his waxen wings melted and he fell to his death in the Aegean Sea near the island of Ikaria.

siphae enamored of the bull. The legendary craftsman Daedalos built a wooden cow for her to hide in so that she could approach it; the Minotaur, a fearsome beast with a bull's head and a man's body, was born of their union. The Cretan Bull wrought havoc on the island; it was later captured by Herakles, in his Seventh Labor.

The great palace at the center of the city, the labyrinth, was built by Daedalos to hide away the Minotaur. It had more than 1000 rooms and was built in the form of a maze. The Minoans gained the upper hand in their war with the Athenians after Minos implored Zeus to intervene. As a result, Athens was forced to send a yearly tribute of seven youths and seven maidens, who were placed into the labyrinth to feed the Minotaur. Minos also set prisoners loose there; they were freed if they managed to escape.

The ruins of Knossos have a Magic aura of 3, which supersedes a weaker Faerie aura. The site is of particular interest to Marcus Tauros of House Cramon (see *Magi of Hermes*), who has seemingly received visions of a past life as a Minoan priest. He might well be encountered here, as he investigates the catacombs beneath the ruin in an attempt to unearth the secrets of a magical Minoan Cult of the Bull. He has yet to discover that the intact labyrinth may be found inside a regio, the highest level of which has a Faerie aura of 6. Inside the palace, two symbols may be seen throughout: the bull, symbolizing the Cretan Bull and the Minotaur, and the *labrys* (from which the word "labyrinth" derives), a double-headed axe and a symbol of protection.

The Gorge of Apollon

The greatest gorge in Europe, stretching is more than 10 miles long, was cut by a river rising in the White Mountains in the west of Candia. A journey through it — from an altitude of more than 4000 feet at its northern end, down to sea level on the south coast of the island — is a perilous trip of two or more days traveling along the sides and bottom of the chasm. A Magic aura of 2 pervades the whole length. The route is dotted with many caves and springs — the abodes of nereids — as well as ancient cypress and pine trees. Here may be found many mountain flowers with medicinal properties. One such plant is the paeonia (peony), which was named after the god Paion. Paion was the physician of the Olympian gods who used it to heal the wounds of Hades and Ares. Also found here is the dittany, which is

Talos, the Protector of Candia

The mythical protector of Candia, Talos, is a giant bull-headed man of bronze (not to be confused with the Minotaur) who was forged by the god Hephaistos as a gift to King Minos. He was first defeated by Medea, the sorceress-protector of the Argonauts. She removed the bronze nail in his ankle, allowing the green ichor from Talos' single vein, which ran from his neck to his ankle, to bleed out.

A local alchemist later restored Talos by brewing new blood for him; if drained, the ichor amounts to 7 pawns of Ignem vis. During the Byzantine era, Talos was bound for many centuries into one of the cellars in the ruins of the Labyrinth of Knossos, but he was recently released when the ancient spell failed.

The giant bronze man, which has a

Magic Might of 35 and a Size of +3, has resumed his protection of the island. He circles it thrice daily — a legendary feat, given that this is a distance of hundreds of miles — and hurls huge rocks at any enemy ships he encounters. Should enemies disembark on the shore, Talos makes himself red-hot and grapples them in a fiery death grip.

Unsurprisingly, Talos has proven himself a menace to Venetian shipping, and the new rulers of Candia have announced a handsome reward for the capture or slaying of this "demon." This might attract the interest of magi, and the true nature of Talos, if discovered, would be of great interest to House Verditius. Equally, Talos might make a suitable patron for a covenant on Candia.

chewed by wild ibex to heal their wounds. In contrast, the dragon arum with its dark brown flowers is a deadly poison to all except snakes, and is associated with Hades.

At the center of the gorge, in a place where the two cliff walls loom more than a thousand feet above, yet are only a dozen feet apart, a pair of great bronze gates bars the way, forming a high impregnable barrier. Beyond the gates is a tiny settlement called Keno, which has a Faerie aura of 4. Here an ancient race of Cretans endures who worship Apollon at the temple at the center of their village. They speak Classical Greek with a Doric dialect, and are brilliant archers and hunters, although they know almost nothing of the outside world. Here, Apollon hid to escape the wrath of his father Zeus after slaying Python, the protector of Delphi. He fell in love with a local nymph and forgot himself as the sun rose late; even now, the sun does not reach the center of the gorge until midday.

palace of Poseidon at the bottom of the Aegean Sea. It has dedicated itself to the preservation and study of legends native to the Tribunal, both contemporary and ancient. Although it is an Autumn covenant with potent magics at its disposal, its members are believed to project little power beyond their underwater domain, and are consequently dismissed by many in the Tribunal — especially given Aegaea's Faerie aura and the strong Faerie bent of most of its magi.

History

The covenant was founded approximately two centuries ago by a Merinita maga named Orithyia. According to her story — she wrote several colorful accounts of her various fantastical travels, which have since become semi-legendary in the Tribunal — she was led through the seas to the site of the covenant upon her return from Arcadia by a powerful golden man with a dolphin's tail. She believed him to be none other than Triton, the herald of Poseidon, and negotiated a pact with him for her and her followers to stay there. The magnificent underwater palace that she had been brought to could be none other than that of Poseidon, she reckoned, which, according to Homer, was named Aegaea. Thus was her covenant formed under the same name, with Triton as its patron. The Tribunal was initially sceptical of Orithyia's claims, but Redcaps attested

Aegaea

One of the Theban Tribunal's most splendid covenants, but also one of its oddest and most inaccessible, Aegaea is an underwater sanctuary, occupying the supposed



to the existence (and splendor) of the site and its patron.

Since its founding, Aegaea has remained a poorly understood and somewhat withdrawn presence in the Tribunal, mistrusted by many. Apart from Redcaps, very few magi have ever seen the site, although most of those who have speak warmly of their reception. Under the leadership of Lucian, it has earned a not-undeserved reputation for being a somewhat unreliable ally. Shrewd observers have noted that Aegaea's allegiances appear to be as changeable and unpredictable as Poseidon and the seas themselves. Still, Aegaea has occasionally proved its worth to the Tribunal by dealing with underwater menaces.

Setting and Physical Description

The covenant occupies the supposed palace of the god Poseidon, which is located in a Faerie regio at the bottom of the Aegean Sea, not too far from the coast of Euboea. Inside the regio, the top level has a Faerie aura of 8. It contains a grand and elegant palace located on the sea floor, amid sumptuous gardens. Between the rocks are beautiful sea-flowers of innumerable hues, and other splendid plants whose foliage shimmers sea-green. The palace is a sprawling, open structure of numerous courtyards, buildings, and towers, Greek in style, but whose composition and ornate gardens are more reminiscent of a sultan's palace. The buildings are made of white coral and shells lined with silver and gold, and the floors are of a creamy pearl-like stone, inlaid with precious gems. The magi of Aegaea have established their sancta in some of the grandest rooms and towers of the palace. Honored visitors may be received in the largest and most central chamber, which resembles an airy throne room and is lined with Doric columns. At the far end, the majestic throne of Poseidon sits empty.

The water in the top level of the regio is surprisingly airy; mortals can breathe unhindered, ink dries on parchment, and fires can even be lit. It presents some resistance to motion, but not as much as normal water. With practice, one can either walk or swim through it equally well. Peculiarly, the realm is brightly lit by constant sunshine penetrating the waters above, as if the surface was

only a few dozen feet from the top of the regio, although the covenant is in fact many hundreds of feet underwater. The palace is attended by tritones — mermen with green hair and eyes. Here and there, a beautiful sea nereid (see Chapter 10: Faerie Landscape) — a half-maiden, half-fish — may be found in repose. Sea lions, dolphins, and all kinds of strange fish and sea serpents swim nonchalantly through.

AEGAEA'S PATRON: TRITON

Aegaea is unusual in that its patron — likely one of the most powerful of all the covenant patrons — has a Faerie Might. Triton, the son and herald of the Olympian god of the sea, Poseidon, has the seeming of a great golden-skinned merman bearing a trident and carrying a conch shell trumpet with the power to calm or embolden the waves. Sometimes he is physically present at the covenant; at other times he may be far away in the Aegean Sea.

He is attended by a multitude of tritones (see also *Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 90), likewise mermen with the upper body of an athletic man and the lower body being a dolphin's tail. They have green hair and eyes, and most of their upper bodies are covered by small, hard, shell-like scales. The swiftest of the tritones, the centaur-tritones, have a horse's forelegs instead of arms. The tritones fulfill the role of warriors, messengers, and servants.

Culture and Traditions

Aegaea stands greatly on ceremony and is influenced heavily by ancient legends, particularly those of the Olympian gods, and most especially Poseidon. Visitors to the covenant — who are few — are often invited to participate in elaborate ceremonies or reenactments of these tales upon their arrival, for which they will find themselves assigned a particular role. If Lucian, the covenant's leader, is feeling particularly eccentric, he may require some small story or quest to be completed before he will receive the visitors. Most Redcaps have managed to compress these tiresome welcome rituals to a tolerable level of nuisance, although Lucian still insists on naming each of them after one of the children of Hermes (Pan, Tyche, Hermaphroditus, Rhodos, and so on). They often

travel to the covenant using the glass submarine owned by the covenant of Alexandria. The more adventurous may borrow one of Aegaea's several items designed for visitors to use. One such device is a necklace that transforms the wearer into a sea lion. Another is a floating orb surrounded by a bubble of air. The Tribunal's Redcaps also have a magical conch shell on permanent loan from the covenant, which allows them to alert Aegaea to their presence from above the waves up to a league away.

The covenant has almost no need for contact with the mundane world. It appears to be fabulously wealthy — or at least, the countless precious jewels and utensils of gold appear genuine, so long as they are not removed from the Faerie regio. When it comes to eating, fish and seaweed is the order of the day, with other more exotic dishes also presented by the faerie servants. The tritones appear to take care of the furniture and bedding materials, and provide the magi with basic tools and items of clothing. The only goods needed from outside are parchment and inks, and certain items of laboratory exotica. Over the years, Aegaea has built up a surprisingly good library. As one would expect, it has an excellent collection of tomes on Faerie Lore and Aquam. But besides the Hermetic books, it has also amassed a peerless collection of poetry, both ancient Greek and Byzantine. Horses of various fine types, but invariably with some measure of faerie lineage, are bred in the grand stables attached to the palace. They are occasionally presented to other magi and covenants as gifts, and once on dry land their faerie nature may manifest in unexpected ways.

Due to their inveterate and eccentric scheming, the magi of Aegaea — and especially Lucian — have acquired a reputation for being untrustworthy, and even treacherous. Only on matters concerning the Fay, where they will rigorously defend the sanctity of Faerie sites and castigate those who abuse them, are they predictable. On all other matters, they change their allies and friends seemingly on a whim. Shipwrecks are invariably blamed on them — several other covenants, perhaps overestimating Aegaea's power over the waves, have accused them in the past of all sorts of mischief at sea. In fact, they probably could cause huge problems for the other covenants' ships, if they could ever be bothered to.

Magi

Lucian, the unchallenged leader of the covenant, has assembled a group of magi that he imagines as appropriate for various roles in Poseidon's court and retinue. The membership numbers about a half-dozen, and is dominated by magi of Houses Merinita and Bjornaer. Some proficiency with the Art of Aquam is a practical necessity for every magus, for obvious reasons, although once one is safely inside the regio, it is not really needed. For magi not of House Merinita, the downside of continued presence in such a potent Faerie aura — eating faerie food, using faerie ingredients in the lab, and so on — is a rapid accumulation of Warping. All such magi who have lived here for a significant time have become heavily Warped.

LUCIAN THE SCHOLAR OF HOUSE MERINITA

Age: 112 (Apparent Age: 65)

Personality Traits: Scholarly +4, Whimsical +3, Treacherous +2

Lucian, the last filius of the covenant's founder, Orithyia, is renowned among magi for his scholarship; he is especially interested in the literary traditions of the Byzantine Empire and ancient Greece. He can recite dozens of lengthy poems from memory, and seeks to explore the power of stories and rhetoric. Among the several Mysteries into which he is believed to have been initiated is the Folk Mystery of Story Magic (see *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 98).

A white-haired man with a benevolent countenance, Lucian habitually wears excessively gaudy dark blue robes that have been embroidered with several scenes from Byzantine and Greek legend. In surprising contrast to most of Aegaea's magi, he is well-traveled and not especially attached to aquatic living. He is also an active politician, although his plans and motives often appear to be obscure and eccentric. He may suddenly offer or switch his support to any magus who he perceives as behaving heroically, or acting in accordance with ancient traditions or stories. Unfortunately, his influence is somewhat hampered by the reputation of Aegaea for unpredictable, even treacherous, acts.

Lucian has several Twilight Scars, al-

though they are not readily apparent: he has acquired a few mental defects, including an occasional difficulty remembering his own identity. He may often claim to be someone else, typically a figure from Greek legend.

LEUKOTHEA OF HOUSE MERINITA

Age: 73 (Apparent Age: 25)

Personality Traits: Withdrawn +3, Tempestuous +2, Regal +1

Charming and beautiful, Leukothea's strong faerie nature can easily be guessed at from her appearance — most obviously from the tailfins that she has in place of feet, and from her purple eyes. Although born with the blood of the sea nereides, her Twilight Scars are gradually making her even less human and more like a nereid, a side effect of which is that her apparent age is actually decreasing. Her most recent transformation has given her a crab's pincers attached to her temples, which are mostly hidden beneath her greenish-blue-tinted hair. Lucian has proclaimed this as sign that she is destined to become the faerie Amphitrite, the bride of Poseidon. Although she may indeed eventually pursue the Inner Mystery of Becoming (see *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 93), as Lucian urges, she has mixed feelings about this supposed fate. Nevertheless, she has recently taken to wearing gold-trimmed white robes befitting a queen. She may often be seen riding her dolphin familiar, whom she has named Hippothoon, after a mortal son of Poseidon.

DELFINI OF HOUSE BJORNAER

Age: 62 (Apparent Age: 43)

Personality Traits: Gregarious +2, Curious +2, Fierce +1

As her name suggests, Delfini's heartbeast is that of a dolphin. Her decision to join Aegaea was thus more a practical matter of suitable aquatic surroundings, rather than being due to any particular interest in Faerie. A plain but earnest woman, she is friendly and inquisitive, and loves to swim alongside ships bearing Redcaps and exchange gossip with them — in mundane circles at least, a dolphin accompanying a ship is considered fortuitous. She is mostly well-regarded due to her outgoing nature, although some magi consider her nosy and view her with suspicion.

KRUM THE SWIFT OF HOUSE BJORNAER

Age: 57 (Apparent Age: 40)

Personality Traits: Competitive +3, Naive +2, Changeable +2

Krum is a tall, athletic Bulgarian magus, with the heartbeast of a stallion. As a young magus he was a member of Moero's Garden in Constantinople, where he delighted in running races in the capital's great Hippodrome. After the sack of the city in 1204 and the subsequent move of that covenant to Nicaea, he met with Lucian at the Tribunal of 1207. Lucian regaled him with colorful tales of Poseidon, the god who was the creator of the horse and the inventor of the art of riding and horse-races. Persuaded and enthused by these legends, and in a rather drastic change of scenery, Krum promptly joined Aegaea. His current idea is to develop his inner heartbeast into one of the great golden-maned sea-horses that drew Poseidon's chariot.

Covenfolk

Being self-sufficient in most regards, and relying on the palace's attendant tritones, the magi of Aegaea have almost no human servants. Neither do they have a mortal turb to speak of, but can instead call upon an army of warrior tritones in case of need.

Favonius

Favonius is an unconventional covenant — a flotilla of four main ships accompanied by a host of others, in constant movement around the Aegean Sea. It is the creation of Memnos, one of the most famous Verditii alive, and is driven to constant movement by its thrill-seeking patron spirit.



History

Some fifty years ago, Memnos of Verditius conceived a daring plan for a new covenant. In his travels through mainland Greece

he encountered Dryops, a genius loci (a magical spirit of a place) who was dissatisfied with its lot. Infected with the dreaded disease of boredom, the spirit desired to travel and see the world. Memnos agreed to give the spirit what it desired, in return for a portion of its magical power. He arranged for the spirit's mountainside forest of oak trees to be felled and brought down to his island workshop on Andros, carrying the spirit with it. It took him decades of planning before he began his *opus*, a ship made from Dryops' wood. The spirit would inhabit the ship, and as part of the deal, use its powers create a Magic regio in which to set up a laboratory. The ship was enchanted with protective spells, and prepared for its launch. Unfortunately, during the construction of the ship, Memnos acquired a deathly fear of the sea, so it was his apprentice who became the first captain of the covenant. Named *The Philomela*, the ship sailed the Aegean for many years, gradually accumulating a number of other vessels that housed the companions and grogs of the covenant. When a second ship (*The Procne*) from Memnos' shipyard was launched and joined *The Philomela*, the covenant's name was changed to Favonius after the favorable west wind. Two more ships have since been added, *The Tereus* and *The Halcyon*. Memnos is currently building a fifth and final magical ship for the covenant.

Setting and Physical Description

The covenant of Favonius consists of four round ships, and a dozen or so auxiliary vessels. Two of the main ships are constructed

The Enchanted Ships

Each of the four main ships is a structure of Excellent Quality (*City & Guild*, page 69). Because of the quality of workmanship, pilots receive a +2 to any navigation rolls, and captains receive a +2 bonus to any ship-handling rolls. *The Tereus* and *The Halcyon* are both Size +9 and have 16 damage levels (*City & Guild*, page 77); *The Philomela* and *The Procne* are Size +8 and Size +7 respectively, and have 12 damage levels each. Typically, damage levels are only lost from storms, fire, naval combat, and magical attacks. In

addition to the enchantments mentioned earlier, all four ships have enchantments granting protection against fire and the ability to repair damage by incorporating new wood. These ships are bought with the Magical Fortress Boon, and their enchantments do not cost covenant Build Points. Additionally, *The Philomela* and *The Tereus* have been outfitted with a total of five laboratories. The new ship, should it join the covenant, will have an additional three laboratories.

from Dryops' wood, and bear both an aura and a regio that are exactly the same size as the ship itself. The magi's living quarters are on the mundane level of the regio, in a Magic aura of 2. However, each is configured with a secret way into the regio, which has a Magic aura of 3. This extra space serves as the magus' laboratory.

The four main ships are:

The Philomela: The first of Memnos' creations, *The Philomela* is 72 feet long, and houses the laboratories of two magi. Its captain is Verecunda of Verditius. *The Philomela* sets the pace and direction of the fleet, since its timbers are enchanted with magic that compels and directs the wind under the control of its captain.

The Tereus: The second of Favonius' magical ships, and at 18 feet longer than *The Philomela*, big enough for three laboratories. Its captain is Aeliophanes of Flambeau.

The Procne: The principle trading vessel of Fa-

vonius, *The Procne* is a typical example of the round ships that ply the Aegean Sea. It is 60 feet long with one deck devoted nearly entirely to hold space. Its captain is Basil of Andros.

The Halcyon: This ship is little more than a barge, at 115 feet long and 40 feet wide, it is the largest and least maneuverable of the covenant's vessels, and serves as the common space for the magi to hold meetings. When the magi are not using it, the hold of *The Halcyon* is used to store the most expensive and delicate supplies of the covenant. Kept at the center of the fleet, *The Halcyon* is enchanted with spells that quell violent waves in its immediate vicinity, and thus is important to the safety of the covenant.

Some of the other ships are Memnos' early creations. Some have Sails and Rudders of Quality, others have minor enchantments to enhance speed or maneuverability.

Favonius' Patron: Dryops

Dryops was once simply a woodpecker spirit (one of the Fauni, see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 103), but its ambition and restlessness soon brought it the status of a genius loci of the wood on a mountain. Yet Dryops was still dissatisfied: as a bird spirit it has been able to move, but now it was fixed to a location. When Memnos suggested his plan, Dryops was eager to partake. Through Transformation (*Realms of Power: Magic*, page 52), Dryops surrendered its role as a Daimon and a genius loci, and once more became a wan-

dering spirit. Favonius currently owes a major debt to Dryops, whose powers gave the covenant its life. Every time the spirit uses its *Regio* power, it permanently loses 15 points from its Might. However, the adventures it experiences as the spirit of the covenant's fleet makes it content to shoulder this burden.

To those with Second Sight, Dryops appears as a goose-sized woodpecker, with a black-and-white-spotted body and a red face. He is normally seated in the rigging of one of the ships.

Culture and Traditions

Favonius keeps clear of the major shipping lanes so as to keep a low profile, and is constantly on the move. It is most commonly found in the Aegean Sea, but has made journeys to the Black Sea, to Cyprus and Egypt, and to Sicily. Most of the time the ships remain together, but the smaller cogs that sail with it are often outriders that keep an eye on local traffic — particularly naval vessels. Favonius is usually amenable to giving passage to magi from other covenants if it does not take them too far out of their way, but since they rarely have a destination in mind they rarely refuse such a

request. If it is inconvenient or distant, they may ask for the neutralization of a shard for one of their members, but even this is occasionally waived if the journey takes them somewhere new.

Although Dryops has never complained about the loss of Might it suffered to create new regiones for the covenant, the magi have agreed to devote time and effort to find ways to restore this lost Might to their patron. This means that they are often slaves to the whim of the spirit, who has different ideas than they do about what constitutes excitement and adventure; such escapades often place the covenant in not-inconsiderable danger. However, the spirit has recovered sufficiently to entertain the suggestion put to it by Memnos of adding an additional sanctum ship to Favonius, allowing new members to join the covenant.

Magi

The founder of Favonius is Memnos, who remains on land at his shipyard. Memnos' filia Verecunda is the *de facto* leader of the covenant, and has her sanctum on *The Philomela*. Aeliophanes is in charge of *The Tereus*. The other two magi (one on *The Philomela*, one on *The Tereus*) have been left for the storyguide to describe. Alternatively, one or both of these sancta could be vacant, and with the imminent addition of a fifth ship to Favonius, this could be an interesting home covenant for the player characters.

MEMNOS OF HOUSE VERDITIUS

Age: 92 (Apparent Age: 58)

Personality Traits: Hubris +4, Fearful of Open Water +3, Diligent +2, Talkative -2

Memnos is the founder of the covenant and architect of its marvelous vessels. He is a member of the Mystic Fraternity of Samos (*The Mysteries Revised Edition* pages 126–129); or, if your saga does not include this Mystery Cult, a suitable alternative that teaches Hermetic Architecture. He has always been fascinated with ships and boats, and is specialized in their enchantment. However, an unfortunate incident during a Mystery Initiation left him with a Death Prophecy that he would die "with the sky above him and the sea beneath him". He has never actually sailed on any of his ships for fear of the prophecy's completion. He has become famed as a builder of sea-going vessels and is

nearly always busy working on one commission or another.

Memnos is a healthy man apparently in his fifties, with curly black hair and a full beard. His skin has turned nut-brown from his outdoors life on the seashore. His work with hefty beams of wood has left him massively muscled, and he is an expert climber with a good sense of balance. He is best skilled in the Art of Rego, and is particularly accomplished in craft magic, which he uses to lighten his work. He has a team of 4 forge-companions (see *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 113), and his laboratory on Andros contains many specializations and enhancements.

VERECUNDA OF HOUSE VERDITIUS

Age: 51 (Apparent Age: 38)

Personality Traits: Avaricious +3, Uncompromising +2, Careless +1, Hubris +1

A limber woman who typically dresses as one of the sailors — which is far more practical than robes on deck — Verecunda holds the title of Gubernatrix, the chief helmsman of the fleet. Unlike her master Memnos, her enchantment skills are specialized in ropes, knots, cords, and twine; a focus which proves very useful aboard ship, but not one that has led to a steady client-base for enchanted items. Her familiar is a monkey, which she picked up on one of their more long-distance journeys

when the covenant was smaller. He can often be seen in the rigging of *The Philomela* keeping watch.

AELIOPHANES OF HOUSE FLAMBEAU

Age: 32 (Apparent Age: 19)

Personality Traits: Adventurous +2, Proud +2, Careful -3

Aeliophanes has his sanctum on *The Tereus*, but he spends little time there. He spends the majority of his hours on his personal vessel, a one-man sailing boat commissioned at his own expense from Memnos. He is a monster hunter, delighting in chasing down creatures purely for their vis. It is well-known in the Tribunal that if a covenant has a problem with a monster with which the magi cannot themselves cope, Aeliophanes will dispatch it for them — if he can be found to ask. His motivation is a lust for glory rather than a desire to help. But despite this, Aeliophanes is a likeable person and a favorite among the grogs thanks to his gung-ho attitude and Gentle Gift.

Aeliophanes appears to be in the prime of his life (he has the Unaging Virtue); a dark-haired young hero with a neatly trimmed beard. His spear is his talisman, and it is enchanted with several effects to enhance its use as a weapon without being stopped by the Might of the creatures he hunts.



Covenfolk

The covenfolk of Favonius have been gathered from all over the Mediterranean Sea, and use the Lingua Franca (see Chapter 4: Culture and Customs) to communicate with each other. The number of covenfolk varies with the season; some overwinter with their families on various islands. A dozen small cogs and scores of skiffs and rafts comprise the flotilla.

BASIL OF ANDROS

The most important of the covenant's companions, Basil of Andros ensures its flow of supplies. He is a merchant-adventurer (*City & Guild*, page 108) well on his way to establishing his own trading house. He has a fiery temper and argues constantly with Verecunda about the need for profitable journeys rather than adventures.

PETER MONOCHEIROS

Peter "One Hand" is a pirate who owns two of the vessels of the flotilla, and has the allegiance of eight of the covenant's most capable warriors. Peter owes his life to Aeliophanes, and is utterly loyal. In return for the protection of the fleet, Peter offers one third of his plunder to the covenant; anything identifiable or sensitive is passed on to Basil for trading in distant ports. Peter takes pains to ensure his predations cannot be linked back to Favonius; he and his crew wear masks when at "work," and their ships are enchanted to take on different appearances.

Ingasia

If a House's domus magna is defined as the home of the primus, then Ingasia — an autumn covenant on the island of Lemnos — is the domus magna of House Verditius. Having recently become primus, Stouritus of House Verditius has decided to remain at his home covenant instead of relocating to Verdi. Typically self-consumed, most Verditius magi aren't particularly concerned with where the domus



magna is, and Stouritus' decision has not had any effect. As 1234 draws closer, the date of the next Verditius Contest, this issue will become much more important.

History

Ingasia has housed Gifted enchanters for centuries, since long before the Order of Hermes existed. During the heyday of the Greek gods, Hephaestus built a forge on Lemnos and gathered and trained Gifted individuals to assist him. The Gifted wizards remained after the god's departure, living apart to mitigate the innate hostility and suspicion they felt for each other, but continuing to work at the forge. Though never prosperous, the wizards of the forge endured, training apprentices and continuing their tradition of magical enchantments.

With the introduction of the Order of Hermes and Parma Magica, the wizards could truly work together, and membership blossomed from two to three to six and more. Legally, Ingasia was founded after Verdi; but historically, Ingasia was the first forge created by Hephaestus. This has given Ingasia's members the idea that the covenant is older and more venerable than Verdi.

As the Order grew, so did Ingasia. It remained neutral in the many mundane wars that scarred Thebes, and in the various strifes that rocked the Order. Manufacturing and selling enchanted items to both sides of any conflict, Ingasia avoided favoring one faction over another. The fall of Constantinople has complicated the situation, however. Lemnos was awarded to Venice as one of the spoils of the crusade, and has been under her control since 1204. The Venetians naturally wanted to claim the whole island and all of its products, including the valuable Lemnia Sphragis (Lemnian Earth) — reddish earth mined near the city of Hephaestia and used as an astringent for hemorrhages and snakebites. The seizure of this profitable resource has diminished Ingasia's finances, forcing the magi to raise their prices on sold enchanted items.

Setting and Physical Description

Lemnos is shaped like an upside down "U," with a deep natural bay on the southern side of the island. Most of the island is

flat and covered in fertile grain fields, gently sloped pastures, and olive tree groves. Several sandy beaches and port towns house a sizable population. The two largest towns are Myrina on the western coast, and Hephaestia on the northeastern coast. The northwest corner of the island is rockier. Its two highest peaks are Mt. Vigla and Mt. Mosychlos, the second of which is an active volcano. While it hasn't erupted in centuries, Mt. Mosychlos is the site of the ancient Forge of Hephaistos and the location of the covenant of Ingasia.

Ingasia is a collection of stone houses that dot the slopes of Mt. Mosychlos. One large stone building serves as the covenant's meeting hall and entrance to the labyrinth that lies underneath the side of the volcano. Each magus has his own above-ground residence, but the laboratories, vis stores, and libraries are located underground in the labyrinth. The labyrinth runs throughout Mt. Mosychlos, with many hidden tunnels and secret caverns. While past residents may have explored all of it, the current magi haven't, and only use the tunnels that lead to familiar rooms. In the center of this labyrinth is the Forge of Hephaistos, the center point of the covenant's Magic aura of 4, near the molten core of the volcano. The forge has been converted into a Hermetic laboratory, specialized to provide a +8 bonus to Rego magic and a +5 bonus to creating enchanted items. The magi share this space, besides using their individual laboratories.

STATED PURPOSE

Ingasia's stated purpose is to continue the traditions of House Verditius. It serves the Tribunal as a whole by strictly retaining its neutral position and continuing to sell manufactured enchanted items to all parties who can afford the cost.

PATRON SPIRIT

Ingasia's patron spirit is Mosychlos, the volatile genius loci of the volcano that bears its name. The spirit has little interest in the magi, and the magi were happy to parasitically live in the spirit's Magic aura. When the Thebes Tribunal was founded, however, and every covenant was required to have a patron spirit, the magi of Ingasia created a formal pact with the spirit.

Mosychlos is cantankerous and ornery. His grumbling can shake the ground, sometimes collapsing some of the labyrinth's

tunnels, and in his ire he can send molten lava flooding into the tunnels nearest the volcano's core. Through the oath of his formal binding, he has promised to minimize these occurrences, but they still happen periodically. The magi have reacted by creating several enchanted devices that will prevent the magma flow and shore up the tunnels. As long as the devices are in place, there is nothing to fear from Mosychlos.

Culture and Traditions

Ingasia's schedule is as regular as a weaver's guild house. Forge-companions and magi work during the day, Stouritus and his autocrat plan the future, and vendatores broker the sale of enchanted items. Redcaps visit regularly, keeping Stouritus informed of the needs of the magi of the Tribunal, distant news from Verdi, and gossip and tales of the other Verditius magi of the Tribunal. Stouritus oversees all of the covenant's interior and exterior concerns, leaving the magi to work in their laboratories and forges.

With his recent ascension to primus, Stouritus has building plans for Ingasia. Determined that the Contest will be held here, he has drawn up plans for larger, more-prestigious buildings above ground, and additional laboratories below. No ground has been broken, but shipments of Egyptian marble and Trebizond oak are due, and gangs of masons and laborers have been recruited from the villages.

Stouritus has recently announced that Ingasia will welcome new members of House Verditius. He is trying to show the Tribunal and the Order that Ingasia is welcoming, well-run, and magnanimous. At the same time, he hopes to show how conservative, close-minded, and rife with internal conflict Verdi is.

Magi

Ingasia has six members, all of House Verditius. Stouritus is the eldest, followed by Theorus the Old, Hydatius, Eudoxia, and Bobila and Gemma.

STOURITUS OF HOUSE VERDITIUS

Age: 178 (Apparent Age: 93)
Personality Traits: Driven +3, Humble +2, Hubris +1

Stouritus is a rare magus among House Verditius; he is humble. Long suspecting that he would one day be primus, he avoided the majority of the House's Inner Mysteries that would foster his pride, and concentrated on the House's history, members, and legal rulings. To his mind, House Verditius is the one House that can withstand the tests of time; no matter how old a magus grows, he will eventually cease to exist, while the enchanted items of House Verditius can be eternal. He has focused on making Ingasia a shining example of a model House Verditius covenant, and has succeeded.

As eldest magus and ruler of Ingasia, Stouritus would like to forbid vendettas among the covenant's members. He has no legal authority to do so, however, and so he leads by example, refusing to engage in what he sees as a violent and fractious custom of his House. Luckily, Hydatius follows this example, reinforcing Stouritus' peaceful posture. Stouritus has participated in the Tribunal's government for seventy some years, and has a reputation as an honest, fair-minded magus.

Stouritus' long-standing concern has been the number of magical items members of his House can sell to mundanes. The Order's only rule concerning the sale of enchanted items is that magi must use intermediaries when selling to mundanes; the number of items sold has never been definitely set by a Grand Tribunal, though many Tribunals follow the example of the Roman Tribunal, allowing one enchanted item annually. Through the years, Stouritus has managed to increase the number of items sold to five. He has also convinced the Theban Tribunal that Items of Quality (*Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 124) are not enchanted items per se, and do not count against the total number of enchanted items sold.

EUXODIA OF HOUSE VERDITIUS

Age: 57 (Apparent Age: 42)
Personality Traits: Hubris +3, Unpleasant +2, Gossip +1

Eudoxia is a maker of enchanted mosaics and a member of the Confraternity of Irene (*Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, page 122). Spiteful and full of hubris, Eudoxia is exploring the mysteries of automata, having recently been initiated into the Inner Mystery. She has managed to acquire two of the statues that used to line the Hippodrome, and works to unlock their secrets.

GEMMA AND BOBILA OF HOUSE VERDITIUS

Age: 89 (Apparent Age: 35)
Personality Traits: Hubris +3, Diligent +2, Bickering +1

Gemma and Bobila are conjoined twins, attached at the spine so that the sisters are always facing away from each other. Trained by Stouritus, they craft the majority of Ingasia's enchanted items, always working in their labs making magical things. They have grown used to their deformity, and work around it. Their labs are connected, with forges, workbenches, and other work stations mirroring each other, separated so that both magae can work on different enchantments at the same time. Of course, they must both work at their forges at the same time, or their workbenches, etc. Each has her own vendator and group of forge-companions, and lead separate Hermetic operations. They are surprisingly efficient and constantly work, taking seasonal breaks only to increase their understanding of the Arts by studying raw vis.

Unknown to Stouritus, Gemma and Bobila are selling more enchanted items than they legally should. To make matters worse, they are favoring the Byzantines of the Nicaean Empire, the sworn enemies of the Venetians. As Stouritus is occupied with his building plans, they have escaped their parents' detection. This has bolstered the covenant's finances, meaning better food and better materials. But the sisters are crafty, slowly increasing Ingasia's wealth to avoid notice. Their long-term plans have yet to be revealed.

Covenfolk

Few of the forge-companions and covenfolk are island natives. Most are *karkinoi*, descendants of a tribe of creatures found by Hephaistos when the god first fell to the island. Karkinoi are amphibious, born and raised in the water before walking on land, and have pinchers instead of hands.

The covenfolk live nearby the covenant in three stone buildings set near the coast, connected to Ingasia by underground tunnels. Two of the buildings house the karkinoi and the third is the home to the mundane forge-companions.

A dozen covenfolk live at Ingasia, serving as maids, cooks, and servants for the resident magi. The autocrat, Theodorus, has

a private residence, and is responsible for the covenant's accounting of both money and vis. Because vis is necessary for the magi's many enchanted items, Ingasia keeps a large store of it on hand, an anomaly in the Thebes Tribunal. Theodorus has noted that Gemma and Boblia are generating increased revenues lately, but because the money will pay for Stouritus' proposed building plans, he has not said anything about it.

Polyaigos

A robust Autumn covenant, Polyaigos has dedicated itself to the protection and defense of the Theban Tribunal and its magi. Correspondingly its members, the undisputed masters of their island home on the Aegean Sea, possess a considerable degree of martial and magical prowess. Rather than posing a threat to the Tribunal's other covenants, however, they are widely appreciated and respected for their



tireless service. Whenever magi are threatened by war, conflicts, or renegade magi and hedge wizards, magi from Polyaigos are first to stand up in defense of the Order. Due to this positive reputation, their famed apprentice school, and their closeness to the Tribunal gathering site of Delos, Polyaigos tends to receive many visitors.

History

During the 11th century, the small Cycladic island of Polyaigos became infested with a nest of stringles witches (see Chapter 12: Infernal Landscape). These tainted crow-women plagued the Cyclades, including Delos. When it was discovered that a renegade Flambeau magus was hiding in their midst, aiding their depravities, the People's Assembly of the Tribunal called for action. The hoplite Quaesitor Laskaris battled his way onto the island, whereupon he encountered a native drakos (see Chapter 10: Faerie Landscape), Varazes; he hastily negotiated an alliance with the faerie giant against their common enemy. Laskaris engaged the renegade in a magic duel and managed to protect Varazes so that the giant was able to blud-

geon the Flambeau to death. After having killed or evicted the witches and cleansed the site, he decided to found a covenant on the spot, which he named after the island. Resolving that the Tribunal must respond more forcefully and swiftly against such enemies in the future, Laskaris pledged his covenant to this purpose.

Since then, the magi of Polyaigos have notched up several successes against various enemies of the Tribunal, earning the respect and trust of most — but not all — of the Theban magi. In the course of gradually building up their own strength, which is by now considerable, they have made a point of collaborating with nearby covenants instead of antagonizing them.

Setting and Physical Description

Polyaigos is a small island on the western edge of the Cyclades, four miles by three miles across. It is rocky and mostly barren, with two thousand-foot-high peaks. The higher peak is the focal point of the covenant, atop which the magi have constructed



a watchtower that also serves as the council chamber and library. Further downslope, eight dragonhouses (drakos-houses) are equidistant from the peak, arranged in an octagonal shape. One is directly north from the peak; its neighbor is northeast from the peak, and so on. The dragonhouses are crude-looking but very solid structures, squat and conical, made out of large boulders and slates. The covenant's founder, Laskaris, sought out the aid of an expert in Hermetic Architecture (see *The Mysteries Revised Edition*, page 97), both in determining the best arrangement of the buildings and to instantiate a Magic aura to replace the Infernal one. Most of the labor was undertaken by the giant Varazes, who heaved the boulders for the houses from all over the island. Each dragonhouse has two floors, consisting of the living quarters and laboratory of its resident. Over the years, the Magic aura surrounding the peak and the sancta has strengthened to 4.

The lower peak, Stroggylo, is topped with a larger dragonhouse that houses the covenant's patron, Varazes. It has a Faerie aura of 2. Dotted around the isle are the remains of other such houses; some are by now reduced to merely a few clumps of great boulders. In the center of the island, in a flat and greenish spot, is a small village of stone buildings that is the home of the covenfolk. At the center of the village is a square bell tower, surrounded by four pavilions which are used for military practice and communal teaching. The pavilions are surrounded by barracks, kitchens, stables, and other workshops and lodgings.

Apart from the covenant and its patron, there are no other settlements on the island — it is a rocky wilderness overrun by wild goats (the name Polyaios means "many goats"). Three miles to the west lies the significantly larger and greener inhabited island of Melos, where the covenant sources many of its basic goods.

POLYAIOS' PATRON: VARAZES

Polyaios is unusual in that it has a Faerie patron, yet the covenant itself is strongly associated with Magic. Indeed, it has a Magic aura, with few, if any, of its magi showing a deep interest in the fay. Varazes is a huge drakos — a faerie giant possessed of immense bravery and strength — who considers himself the island's protector. While he is a formidable ally, his stupidity and clumsiness sometimes make him a bit of a liability to the covenant, which he

visits when bored and lonely. He tends to become hopelessly infatuated with any attractive female visitors, which is always an awkward situation requiring some delicate diplomacy to resolve peacefully. The magi some time ago promised to find Varazes a suitable wife, but seem to have thus far made little progress towards this goal. If offended, he may take the form of a huge serpent, although his blocky human-like head doesn't change shape.

Culture and Traditions

Magi of Polyaios, several of whom are hoplites, are often called upon when a battle is expected. The covenant is thus run with military precision and discipline; its leader, elected from the council of magi, assumes the role and title of general. The covenant is well-known for the two large schools that it operates. One of these is a military school where grogs are constantly drilled; its reputation is such that several other covenants send their soldiers and captains here for training. The other school teaches classical Greek, Latin, philosophy, and the liberal arts. Its principal function is to educate Gifted children who are waiting to be assigned a master in the Tribunal's apprentice auction. Many such apprentices-in-waiting are sent to Polyaios; during the seven-year period between Tribunals, the dormitory set aside for Gifted children gradually fills up, housing up to a dozen such children and adolescents. A small number of un-Gifted persons are also schooled here; They are destined to serve this or another covenant as autocrats, stewards, or scribes. The covenant only receives a small stipend of vis from the Tribunal for these services.

Maintaining these famed schools, in addition to the sancta of the magi, is an expensive business, which has required the covenant to invest heavily in its sources of income; These are predominantly mining and quarrying. Just over a mile to the northwest of Polyaios is the island of Argentiera, so named on account of its prized silver-colored stone. The covenant has established a quarrying monopoly there. It has also secretly reopened the ancient gold and silver mines on the island of Sifnos, a little further to the north.

Relations with the outside world are currently in a state of flux. Since the Fourth Crusade, the Cyclades have nominally fallen under the dominion of the Venetian duke of Naxos. He has heard rumors of the wealth of the school of Polyaios and is envious.

Magi

Given the predetermined number of sancta, the membership of the covenant tends to stay at eight. Houses Flambeau and Guernicus each have more than one magus here, and Polyaios unsurprisingly tends to attract magi with a predilection for either fighting or teaching.

MARIA LASKARINA OF HOUSE GUERNICUS

Age: 94 (Apparent Age: 58)

Personality Traits: Warlike +2, Stubborn +2, Pedantic +1

Maria is a sturdy-looking grey-haired woman who tends to wear a soldier's garb in the ancient Greek style. She is the filia of the covenant's founder, Laskaris, and is named after him. She is an experienced hoplite with a reputation for ruthless efficiency, and is the current polemarch of the Tribunal, having been elected in 1207 and 1214. A master of Rego and Terram magics, one of her trademark attacks is to rain a mighty hail of stones down on her enemies. Her familiar, Hadrianus, is a fearsome wild goat native to the island, which is adept at negotiating its way through its stony terrain. Woe betide any ill-prepared trespassers on Polyaios, for Hadrianus makes a habit of patrolling his domain vigorously, violently headbutting any suspect arrivals down the steep rocky shores back into the sea.

GERASIMOS THE SIMPLE OF HOUSE FLAMBEAU

Age: 54 (Apparent Age: 44)

Personality Traits: Dim-witted +3, Courageous +3, Pious +2

Having the blood of the drakoi in his veins, Gerasimos is characteristically huge, strong, and brave. Furthermore, he is reckoned to be the actual grandson of the giant Varazes, and has inherited his mythic strength. Unfortunately, he has also inherited the woeful stupidity of the drakoi; one would be hard-pressed to find even a grog at Polyaios less intelligent. Compared to most magi, he is a lackwit, and he drove his long-suffering and patient master to tears. Gerasimos has had to dispense with most book learning, and subtle Arts such as Mentem and Vim are almost completely beyond him, but he compensates for his profound handi-

cap with the raw power and simplicity of his primal earth and fire magics. Like many of his House, he is honestly pious. Despite his legendary stupidity, Gerasimos has proven his worth to the Tribunal, successfully participating in more than one Wizard's March.

IOANNES OF HOUSE BONISAGUS

Age: 49 (Apparent Age: 41)

Personality Traits: Organized +3, Shrewd +2, Effeminate +1

Purchased as a castrated slave, Ioannes was educated and originally destined to serve, like many eunuchs, in the imperial court. Until, that is, he was discovered by a Jerbiton maga from Moero's Garden. She wished to adopt him herself, but he was instead claimed at Tribunal by a Bonisagus magus from the lineage of Trianoma, who immediately recognized his exceptional intellect. Since becoming a magus, Ioannes has already served twice on the Council of Magistrates and has proven himself to be a brilliant administrator, both on the Council

and at his covenant, so much so that on the occasion of his second term, he was elected as archon — a rare honor for a relatively young magus. He is lanky and blond-haired, wearing simple white robes.

CATERINA DA VIGONOV OF HOUSE JERBITON

Age: 53 (Apparent Age: 53)

Personality Traits: Opulent +2, Elegant +2, Vain +1

Caterina, a Venetian maga apprenticed in the Roman Tribunal, has recently arrived in the Theban Tribunal — a marked contrast to many in her House who have migrated in the opposite direction. Her apparent link to Venice, which was largely responsible for the Fourth Crusade attack on Constantinople, causes other Jerbiton magi here to regard her with considerable mistrust. At Polyaios, Caterina has been assigned the job of overseeing and expanding the covenant's mining and trade enterprises, for which she has a typical Venetian talent. Also, she has met with the Duke

of Naxos under her guise of a wealthy noblewoman, and has begun laying the groundwork for a discreet arrangement. Until recently she had resisted taking a Longevity Ritual, like many in her House, but her fading vigor has forced her to accept the need for one. She is hoping that the Tribunal may sponsor her; to that end, she is busy trying to build up a positive reputation and gather tokens.

Covenfolk

Polyaios has a large number of covenfolk, and a formidable turb that is exceptionally well trained and outfitted, and renowned for their strength and fitness. Three or four of the soldiers are huge, undoubtedly also having drakos blood. A crew also serves aboard the covenant's warship, which is stationed at the island's small harbor. Given the martial and scholarly bent of the covenant and its servants, the covenfolk are predominantly male. Several have wives and families on Melos.

Chapter Seven

Constantinople

Forever Roman at heart, Constantinople is a city of forums and colonnades, public baths, palaces, churches, and monasteries. She has a hippodrome, an aqueduct, a senate house, and a slave-market. Like Rome, the city is built around seven hills, occupying a triangular piece of land bordered by the Golden Horn, an inlet of the Bosphorus Strait and the Sea of Marmara. Originally called Byzantium, the city was rebuilt in 330, and Constantine the Great christened it Nova Roma Constantinopolitana, "New Rome, the City of Constantine," the capitol of his renovated Roman Empire. Constantine extended the city's walls and commissioned many of the buildings and monuments that still stand as important features in daily Constantinople life. Successive emperors added to the

urban landscape, often building monasteries and churches, but none matched the building programs of Justinian (527-65), who refurbished the major churches, palaces, government buildings, and public works. In her heyday, Constantinople shone like a jewel, with clean streets, orderly forums, running water, and gleaming defensive walls.

While once the brightest metropolis of Mythic Europe, in the 13th century Constantinople, the Queen of Cities, is a dark and dangerous place — a fetid, squalid shadow of her former glory. Nearly a third of city still lies in ruins, scarred from the Latin siege and the subsequent fires that gutted her interior. Pockets of wealth remain, abutted against abject poverty. Affluent nobles and bureaucratic clerks walk the same streets as the homeless

and destitute, but the tally of thieves, drunks, and whores outnumber the priests, princes, and merchants. Generations of foreigners have produced a mishmash of tongues, creating a modern Tower of Babel, with each racial group distrusting the others. Urban tension has been exacerbated by the Latin occupation, which put its own desires before the needs of the populace. Civil law has evaporated, and each racial group protects itself with ad hoc gangs or bought mercenaries.

The current Latin emperors are more concerned with plundering the city than rebuilding it. Most of the prized artifacts and relics have already left Constantinople, shipped to the crusaders' homelands soon after the city fell. Others were lost in the fires that accompanied the various attacks,

Constantinople's Auras

Constantinople is a multilayered patchwork of Divine, Infernal, Faerie, and Magic auras that have fluctuated and changed many times over the years. The city originally had mostly Faerie auras, spawned from the worship of the Greek gods. Constantine's efforts created many Divine auras, which suppressed and sometimes destroyed the prevailing Faerie auras, but not always. While Constantine built monuments and buildings dedicated to his new Christian God, he still allowed worship of the pagan gods. This practice was eventually outlawed in 391. Many temples were destroyed, but an equal number were appropriated for other uses. The Temple of Aphrodite near the Baths of Zeuxippus, for example, was converted into a royal stable in 1220. Areas with powerful Faerie auras survived the impingement of the more numerous Divine auras.

The multitudes of violent atrocities that have peppered the city's past have cre-

ated Infernal auras. During the centuries, existing Infernal auras have been eaten away by the impinging Divine auras, but later acts of violence created new ones. Many of the Infernal auras created during the Fourth Crusade are powerful, and have not yet been eradicated by the neighboring Dominion auras. The city has always had Magic auras as well, although these were never as numerous as the other types of auras. Most auras had preternatural tethers rather than natural tethers, but even those existed in small numbers. To prevent these auras from diminishing, magi of House Jerbiton annually performed magical activities and spellcasting in the auras. Since the conquest of the city these efforts have ceased and the Magic auras are not currently maintained.

Despite the many churches, the Divine aura is not as strong as one would expect. Most of the Divine auras are Dominion rather than empyreal auras, meaning that their strength and size are determined by

the number of faithful worshippers. A Dominion aura is centered on a church altar and radiates outwards from it, encompassing the community and diminishing as it travels outward. The only remaining relic that has the power to generate an empyreal aura is the Crown of Thorns, held by the Venetian podesta. The Dominion auras are also weaker than they were in the past because of fewer faithful followers.

All of the auras are influenced by the calendar, increasing and decreasing in strength according to various times of the year. Most auras spread according to their own rules, but generally flow until they run into another aura of equal or stronger strength. Because of this fluid interplay, every place in the city has an aura of some type. In places where auras of different realms but equal strength meet, they form a border and rest against each other. It is not uncommon for a character to walk out of a Divine aura and into an Infernal aura with a single step.

a black scar that has yet to be repaired and almost half of the buildings of the city still lie in charred ruins. While it may have housed nearly half a million people in Justinian's day, its current population is not even 200,000.

Approaching the City

Most visitors reach Constantinople by sea, and the city has many harbors lining both the north and south sea walls. The largest is the Harbor of Theodosius, half away along the southern wall. This port is busy

with commercial ships from all corners of Mythic Europe, and is the likely entering point for characters coming to Constantinople by ship. The imperial navy, diminished and commandeered by the Latins, is anchored in the Kontoskalion. The Harbor of Julian is just south of the imperial palaces, and was once used exclusively by the aristocracy and the emperor's family. The two busiest ports on the northern sea wall are the Neorion and the Proosphorion, both awarded to the Venetians and reserved for their military and commercial ships. Every port is defended by outer fortifications and towers.

It is difficult to tell the city's misfortunes by judging the ports alone. Merchant ships enter the harbors daily, and the military ports are busy with boats ferrying knights across the Bosphorus. Armed galleys prow

the shores looking for pirates and safeguarding commercial vessels. Fisherman put out for their daily catch, and sweating dockworkers ceaselessly move bails and barrels on and off boats. The sea walls, standing thirty feet high and fortified with hundreds of towers, are kept in good repair by the conquerors. All this activity and the constant military presence make the harbors relatively safe.

Constantinople does not sit in isolation, and both shores of the Bosphorus are lined with cities, towns, fortified castles, strongholds, monasteries, and churches. Most of these communities have felt the effects of the last twenty years, and have suffered as a result. But even those most severely hit have maintained a semblance of their former selves.

The largest community is Hebdomon, lying outside Constantinople, seven miles



from the walls on the European shore of the Bosphorus. It lies on the Egnatian Road, which runs from Constantinople to Rome. Originally a summer retreat for the emperor, it became a notable seaport for the imperial navy and an important feature of ceremonial life. Early emperors were crowned here instead of Hagia Sophia, and then traveled in a procession through the Golden Gate to the Hippodrome. A medium-sized city, Hebdomon is home to many churches, including the Church of St. John the Baptist, a palace built by Emperor Justinian, and several forums and monasteries. A large plain lies to the north, called the Campus, where the imperial army used to camp before excursions. Hebdomon's harbor is protected by the Cyclobion, a round tower built to defend the otherwise unfortified city.

The harbor at Hebdomon has long been a favorite point of arrival for sea-coming visitors, both friendly and hostile. While the Cyclobion is fordable, it is nothing compared to the sea defenses of Constantinople. This was the initial landing site of the crusading forces, from which they then travel on horseback to Constantinople. After the city's fall, the governor of Hebdomon surrendered the city to the Latins, who have maintained it since.

A second important outcropping of the city is Galata, a fortified community across the Golden Horn from Constantinople. For centuries it has served as one of the primary defenses of the city. The Castle of Galata was the terminus for a great chain that could be raised across the Golden Horn, protecting the city's northern harbors. This castle was stormed by crusaders in June 1203 and the great chain was broken — a foreshadowing of the fate of Constantinople. Galata served as the home to the crusaders until April 1204, when the victorious Latins left Galata for richer houses inside the city.

The Walls

Whether by land or by sea, every journey into Constantinople begins at the city's walls. The city has always been surrounded by walls, which have been torn down and extended three times. The current land walls, called the Walls of Theodosius, run from the Golden Horn to the Sea of Marmara. Fortified with nearly a hundred towers and over twenty gates, these walls have never been breached. Composed of two parallel walls, the Walls of Theodosius runs behind a de-

Belisarius and Porphyrio

Belisarius is perhaps the most famous general of the Byzantine Empire, noted for his success on both Western and Eastern fronts, and in the city itself. One of his most retold exploits is the battle with the gigantic whale "Porphyrio." The whale had been plaguing Constantinople for months, destroying ships at harbor and along the strait, and effectively crippling Constantinople's maritime trade. Taking a single galley armed with a hundred sailors, Belisarius fought the beast for a day. At sunset, bristling with spears and scourged by Greek fire, the whale submerged and Belisarius claimed victory. Porphyrio was not seen for generations.

The beast was not dead, however, and routinely resurfaces near the city for

brief moments. It does not follow any pattern, but has been spotted over the years by sailors and dockworkers. While it has never attacked a vessel, its appearance is often a precursor for troubled times and calamitous events. It was last seen in April of 1203, a week before the Sea of Marmara was covered in Venetian ships carrying Latin knights.

Magi of the Thebes Tribunal, especially those interested in Hermetic Divination, are convinced that Porphyrio is a magic creature and believe the beast has a lair on the sea floor. Attempts to find it have so far failed, even those aided by Alexandria's Glass Submarine. Current speculation suggests that Porphyrio's lair must be hidden in a Magic regio.

fensive ditch, which is segmented so that various parts of it can be filled with water to act as a moat. The outlying wall is lower than the interior wall, being 30 feet high and 7 feet thick. The inner wall is a marvel of defensive engineering, looming 40 feet high and nearly 17 feet thick. Between the walls the ground is elevated in an area called the "peribolos," a heightened terrace that allows further defensive advantages. The land between the ditch and the outer wall, called the "patateichion," is also elevated.

The Sea Walls follow the shore of the peninsula and, combined with the land walls, completely encapsulate the city. These walls are also fortified with towers and gates that lead to the various harbors. Those on the northern side of city serve its commercial interests, and the southern harbors are used for imperial and military purposes. The sea walls are 30 feet high on the Golden Horn and 45 feet high along the Sea of Marmara.

Ten gates and several smaller postern gates dot the walls. Five of the ten gates are used for pedestrian traffic, with the remaining five used for military purposes. The most spectacular gate — the Golden Gate or Porta Aurea — stands as a triumphal arch. Adorned with gold plate and bordered by a pair of large copper elephants, this gate was only opened for a victorious emperor returning from war. The last time they were opened, however, was when the emperor Alexius V Murzuphlus fled the city through them, departing in the dead of the night after the crusaders had stormed the walls.

There is another famous gate, further

north along the wall, which leads to the Palace of Blachernae. Called the Golden Mantle, it is capped by a golden globe bearing a figure holding a cape around its shoulders. According to legend, as long as this globe rests atop the gate, the city is safe from lightning. Is this object of ancient Greek manufacture, as people suspect, or perhaps one of the failed protective enchantments created by Hermetic magi?

Entering the city is not difficult. Visitors and traders are allowed through the gates during the day, and enough secret passages exist to allow a small group to slip inside the city at night. The magi of Moero's Garden know of a secret passage near the Gate of Pege that grants access underneath the Walls of Theodosius. The covenant regularly sends search parties into the city to seek out lost artifacts and missing relics.

Inside Constantinople

Behind her walls and amid her inhabitants, the city unfolds like a flower, unfortunately tainted with deprivation and rot. Most of Constantinople is open to anyone brave enough to face whatever dangers wait. Several areas are hazardous during the day, and all but the most secured buildings are deadly at night. The palaces are guarded constantly and admittance

is limited. While the smaller parish churches are always open, the larger churches are not. Though unguarded, the doors are often locked and opened only for special Church occasions and important visitors.

The city is crisscrossed with streets. Primary streets are straight, as is typical of Roman engineering, and even the secondary streets and alleys follow a more planned course than other cities in Mythic Europe. The Mese, or "Middle Way," is the main thoroughfare through the city. Originating at the Philadelphueum — a crossroads on the Third Hill that links smaller avenues running from the city's walls — it runs through the heart of Constantinople to the imperial palaces. It is bordered with columns and porticos, which serve as boundary lines for the many merchant stalls that line the street. The Mese connects all the famous forums of the city and served as the official path for most imperial ceremonies.

Constantinople remains the most important city in Mythic Europe for the selling of commodities. Its markets still bring products from all over the world, and anything imaginable is for sale in the city. Constantinople's markets are controlled by the guilds, whose members range in social status from the near-noble prestige of silk manufacturers to the peasant-like status of caulkers and street cleaners. The city has had guilds for a long time, and those that would be anachronistic in Paris or London have existed here for decades. While Western guilds fight for autonomy from local magistrates, Constantinople's guilds are all state run, so that even the highest guild master is subservient to the rule of the city's prefect.

Guilds follow the civic divisions of the past, selling and living in specific areas. The candle makers, goldsmiths, silversmiths, and perfumers still sell near the portico of the Haghia Sophia, in the imperial section of the city. Meat sellers and fish mongers have their shops in the Forum Tauri, and the Forum Amasturanum houses the cattle and horse sellers. The celebrated Forum of Constantine houses the slave markets and brothels. Anything is for sale if the price is right.

The Forums

Forums are open-air public plazas used for markets, meetings, religious and imperial ceremonies, and general gatherings of people. All are noteworthy, and decorated with columns and monuments. The most renowned is the Forum of Constantine, resting

on the summit of the Second Hill. The column originally held a statue of the Emperor Constantine, but it was replaced with a cross in the early 12th century when the original statue was destroyed by a storm. Surrounded by colonnades and porticos, the forum leads to the main entrance point of the imperial section of the city. It is one of the major markets in the city, with buyers visiting sellers' stalls every day of the week.

The Forum of Theodosius sits near the center of the city. Also called the Forum of

The Medusas' Tears

The Basilica Cistern's ceiling is supported by 336 columns. Two columns in the northwest corner are mounted on stone pedestals in the shape of medusa heads, one upside down and the other on its side. These heads, imported from afar in the days of Justinian, can produce vis. If the water level has remained above their heads for the entire year, on the summer solstice the moss that gathers around their eyes can be scraped off for 8 pawns of Imaginem vis.

Tauri, it contains the Column of Theodosius, one of the city's permanent magical marvels. Rising 150 feet into the air and made of marble, a spiral staircase rises through it to a platform at the top, and its sides are covered in strange carvings and hieroglyphics that represent the fateful prophesies of the Sybil. They are extremely difficult to decipher until a particular event has happened, after which it is clear that the event was prophesied. Several past conflicts are depicted, including the recent siege of the city. The death of the emperor Alexios V Murzuphlus is also shown; Captured in 1205, he was flung from the tower's top to his death on the pavement below.

The Column of Theodosius sits in the center of a Magic Aura of 5, Constantinople's largest and most powerful Magic aura. The aura extends to the limits of the forum, and because no neighboring aura is near its strength, it does not wax or wane. Past magi have wondered how they could found a covenant here, but the space is too public and the aura does not extend into any of the facing buildings.

The column's prophesies can be viewed by everyone, but understood by only a few. Any character who spends an hour gazing at the writings and pictures will receive a vision

of the future, as described under the Minor Supernatural Flaw: Visions (ArM5, page 60). Only those with skill in the Supernatural Ability: Premonitions have a hope of understanding these visions. A storyguide should use these visions as story fodder to propel a story or scene that she has constructed for the group. If a character understands the vision, succeeding with an Intelligence + Premonitions vs. an Ease Factor set by the storyguide (12 is a good start), he should receive some benefit when the future event occurs. A +3 modifier to a set number of Ability rolls is a suggestion.

The column may also be studied by those with Premonitions, acting as a Source Quality of 6. The column is made up of six marble porphyry drums separated by iron bands, meaning that a character can study the column six times before its lore is exhausted. This is a busy area of the city, and studying the column will be fraught with distractions. While the two lower drums can be studied from the ground, the character will need a ladder or other means to study the higher parts of the column. The interior staircase is windowless, and will not assist in viewing the carvings.

Waterworks

In its prime, Constantinople provided running water for its inhabitants and working lavatories that flushed waste into the harbors. This urban management was accomplished by the Valens Aqueduct and a system of large cisterns to hold accumulated water. Despite not being repaired for over fifty years, the Valens Aqueduct still provides water to the city. The cisterns are located at the summits of the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Hills. They are huge open-air basins surrounded by rows of columns. The Basilica Cistern is a vast underground reservoir located beneath the First Hill, supplying the imperial section of the city with water. It is part of a labyrinth of underground tunnels and chambers that connects the cistern to the Great Palace complex, as well as to other underground rooms throughout the city.

The Venetian Quarter

Housing the governmental representatives and citizens of the Republic of Venice, the Venetian Quarter is separated from the rest of the city by a wall constructed

in 1205 to 1207. Within is a bustling hub of commercial activity. Most feel secure within the walls and with the current state of political affairs, but many remain uneasy. Many Greeks actively resent the foreign merchants' exemptions and advantages, which effectively exclude Greeks from the profits of the shipping business. The wall is constantly patrolled by Venetian soldiers. Mistrust continues between the Venetians, the other former crusaders, and Constantinople's Greek population.

Fearing a secession of the Quarter from the republic, the government of the Venetians in Constantinople has been strictly controlled. A podesta (governor) is appointed by the republic; His role is to maintain relations with the Latin emperor, and administer the Eastern section of the Venetian acquisitions as he see fit. The podesta must balance local interests and constantly reassure the republic that her best interests are being served. The Venetian Council of Constantinople advises the podesta, mirroring the Council of Venice that advises the doge. The podesta and Constantinople Council ultimately answer to the Council of Venice and the doge. Venetian holdings in Western Greece are directly administered from the republic, and Durazzo and Corfu are specifically excluded from the podesta's authority. In 1220, the current podesta is Ottaviano Quirino.

Inside the quarter's walls, life is grimmer for the Venetian citizens than for

the officials. Much of the quarter still lies in ashy ruins, where armed gangs and vicious bandits make their homes. With access to ports on the Golden Horn, the Venetian Quarter is popular with smugglers, who find access to the city easier here than at other patrolled ports.

Hippodrome

The heart of Constantinople, the Hippodrome is 1,600 feet long and 400 feet wide. Originally used for chariot races and other entertainment, it has two long sides, a curved southern side, and a straight northern side connected to the Great Palace and reserved for the imperial family. In its heyday it could seat 80,000 spectators.

Statues once lined the arcade atop both long walls, but many have been destroyed, pulled down for their inlaid precious metals or out of pure maliciousness. Both ancient and contemporary, they included a large statue of Athena, a mighty bronze eagle

standing on a serpent, a splendid Helen of Troy, a she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus, and a huge hippopotamus with a crocodile in its jaws. Many of these had magical properties, according to the citizens, and they could move, sing, play instruments, or act out a specific scene.

A long stone pier runs through the center, called the spina, which the chariots used to race around. It is also adorned with monuments, many of which have been destroyed, but two prominent statues remain.

The Ghosts of the Hippodrome

The Nika Riots, one of the most violent events of the city's past, produced ghosts that return once a year to haunt the city. The Nika Riots started when two factions of supporters of the chariot races — the Greens and the Blues — rose up in revolt and terrorized the city. The emperor Justinian tricked them into gathering in the Hippodrome, where his general Belisarius attacked them with imperial troops, killing 30,000 rioters. On the anniversary of this slaughter, January 14th, hundreds of Infernal ghosts rise from the ground at night and swarm the Hippodrome, wailing their revolutionary cry, "Nika!" (Victory). In the past, they could not escape the Hippodrome, as they were trapped by the more powerful Dominion auras of the city. But since the city's Dominion auras have lessened in might, the ghosts are free to roam the Great Palace and city.

On the southern end sits the Serpent Column — three intertwined bronze serpents rising up to hold a bronze chalice between their huge heads. Originally standing in the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, Constantine the Great moved it, first to the porch of Haghia Sophia and later to the Hippodrome. On the northern end of the spina stands the Egyptian Obelisk, a towering chunk of rock placed by Julian the Apostate.

The Hippodrome is still used for popular entertainment and imperial ceremonies. Jousting has replaced chariot races, but live entertainers still juggle and dance, display wild animals, and practice feats of dexterity and cunning. Festivals and religious celebrations are held here as well.

The Hippodrome has a mix of auras. During the day a Dominion aura of 1 surrounds the more powerful Magic, Infernal, and Faerie auras. A Faerie aura of 2 surrounds the southern end of the spina, centered on the Serpent Column, and a Magic aura of 2 surrounds the Egyptian Obelisk at the northern end. Patches of Infernal auras of 2 sprout up along the old race track, specifically at the sites of the worst fighting of the Nika Riots and the burning of the Bogomil leader, Basil.

THE SERPENT COLUMN

Originally adoring the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, the Serpent Column now sits in the Hippodrome. The magi of Moero's Garden discovered that it can produce vis, provided that a certain procedure is followed. Four times a year, at the solstices and equinoxes, a ram must be sacrificed and its blood poured into the bronze chalice, where it is consumed by the column. After the fourth time, on the summer solstice, the consumed blood reforms, congealing into a dark red lump of pulp that is worth 8 pawns of Animal vis.

A second power of the statue is to keep the city free from snakes — an ancient ritual that predates Hermetic magic theory. Originally intended to keep the Temple of Apollo free from the reptilian predators, the enchantment now safeguards the city. Acting much like a ward, the column prevents mundane snakes from entering Constantinople. Snakes with a Might score are unfazed by the ward.

The column's Faerie aura is due to its resident, a Might 10 faerie calling himself "Belisarius," who lives in a regio above the column. Entrance to the regio is fairly simple — a character merely has to hold a Roman-style sword in his hand and walk counterclockwise around the column. The regio has a Faerie aura of 4 and is the size of the Hippodrome, depicting the ancient structure in all its past glory. Belisarius, an incognizant faerie, leads a small community of urban faeries. The group continually react the Nika Riots, staging the final conflict between the rioters and Belisarius and his imperial guardsmen. Belisarius views this as an allegory against change, and his display shows the superiority of rightful rule and tradition. Though incognizant, Belisarius knows that he needs human participants for his show, and he will send his faerie minions out into the city to lure viewers inside the regio.

The Automata of the Hippodrome

At one time almost one third of the many statues in the Hippodrome were automata crafted by Ollaferus of House Verditius, a second generation magus who refined and perfected the inner Mystery of Automata for Verditius the founder. The automata had limited movement, as they were each designed to enact a specific scene from Byzantine and Roman history and legend. Like many of the non-magical statues, most of the automata of Ollaferus have been destroyed, melted down, or carted off.

Verditius magi of the Theban Tribunal would like to recover these statues — not for their arcane secrets but to decorate their studios. Naturally, few wish to sully their hands moving a half-ton stone statue, and so they ask others to do it for them. Novice magi are perfect choices, especially those unlucky enough to have acquired a shard. Many Verditius magi will offer to neutralise a young magus' shard with a token if he delivers one of the few remaining automata.

THE EGYPTIAN OBELISK

Julian the Apostate desired to suppress Christianity by promoting the pagan gods of Rome; retrieving the Egyptian Obelisk from Thebes in Egypt was one of his strategies. The stone is not complete, having been broken during its transportation to Constantinople. Originally ninety feet tall, only its upper third remains, standing at an impressive thirty feet. It is covered in engravings, both Egyptian hieroglyphics and pictures representing Roman scenes of the Hippodrome.

These engravings can be read, providing a cryptic clue to the future. A character may divine the future with an Intelligence + Magic Lore + stress die roll against an Ease Factor of 15. The results are handled as Hermetic Divination, described in *The Mysteries Revised Edition*, pages 59–62. As this is a pre-Hermetic artifact, visions of the future may break the Hermetic Lesser Limit of Time. Finding the other two missing thirds of the obelisk reduces the Ease Factor by 3 for each found piece, so a complete obelisk lowers it to 9. Few clues exist as to where these remaining two pieces are.

The Baths of Zeuxippus

Built over a former temple of Zeus, the Baths of Zeuxippus is a large bathhouse, which is adorned with over eighty statues of famous Greeks, Romans, and pagan gods. Originally open to the public, admittance to the bathhouse has been restricted since the Nika Revolt of 532. Parts of the complex only allow nobles, while other sections have been quartered off for military use, and a prison occupies one of the former bathing rooms. The complex is large enough to separate patrons from prisoners.

The baths were a popular meeting spot for many of the Jerbiton magi who once lived in the city, so much so that they dubbed themselves "the Covenant of the Baths of Zeuxippus" as a small joke among the city's Hermetic population. This joke has blossomed into the rumor that there actually was a covenant housed in the baths, however. Magi of the Theban Tribunal know this is false, but magi of more distant Tribunals still believe in the spurious covenant. Not a popular spot with Constantinople's public, the baths offer a fairly private spot for visiting magi to rest. The bathhouse is often the unofficial meeting place for magi and their associates.



The Churches

Constantinople has over 200 churches, which is more than it needs to provide religious services for its occupants. Many were built by previous emperors as patriarchal endowments to show their generosity, coupled with architectural grandeur to match their pride. Most are smaller churches, built to serve a particular neighborhood. Few churches have any relics, as these were the most sought-after prize, after gold, of the crusaders. Smaller churches may have escaped notice, though.

HAGHIA SOPHIA

The Church of Divine Wisdom, also known as the Great Church, is actually the third church build on this site. Enlarged with each successive rebuilding, the current church is a marvel of engineering, with its ceiling rising 168 feet above the congregation's heads. Fashioned after a Roman basilica, the Haghia Sophia is the largest cathedral in Mythic Europe. An exterior apse leads to an inner narthex, which in turn runs to the nave. Above the nave is the huge central dome supported by columns, which gives the impression that Hagia Sophia is a round building.

Before the city fell, the Great Church was brimming with relics, gold statuary, and beautiful mosaics. Since the Latin occupation, the church has been thoroughly looted, its relics stolen, the high altar dismantled for its gold, and the many chandeliers pulled down and stripped of their silver. Wild orgies of debauchery and violence were committed in the three days of looting, sullyng the church's Divine aura. But what is even more deplorable to the Greeks is the conversion from Eastern Orthodox Christianity to Western Christianity, and the replacement of the Greek patriarch with a Latin, who is subservient to the pope.

Despite the changes, many imperial ceremonies still happen in the Great Church, barely changed from the Greek tradition. Emperors, for example, are still crowned here. The high altar has been rebuilt; it is a shadow of its former glory, but it acts as the center point for a Dominion aura of 5. The aisles and exterior porticos have a Dominion aura of 2. The nave has an Infernal aura of 7, a result of the massacre of over 1,000 innocents perpetrated by the Latin crusaders. With the removal of the majority of the relics that used to be stored here, and the subsequent lessening of the Dominion aura's might, the present Dominion aura is not strong enough to weaken the lingering Infernal aura.

Those relics that remain were impossible to move, and so still serve their original purpose. One of the columns that supports the dome — the Column of St. Gregory the Thaumaturge — can still heal the wounded, providing a +6 bonus to Recovery Rolls and decreasing the healing time of a wound by one level. A Heavy Wound heals in the time normally necessary for a Medium Wound, for example, and a Light Wound is healed in a day. A tube is anchored to one of the nine doors that lead from the narthex to the nave. If a sick person puts the tube in his mouth, his disease is sucked from his body.

HAGHIA EIRENE

The church dedicated to Divine Peace, also called the Old Church, is the oldest church in Constantinople. It is the third building occupying this site, rebuilt at the same time Justinian rebuilt Haghia Sophia. It has a rectangular floorplan with a central dome, much like Haghia Sophia, and an external atrium and narthex. Fewer relics were stored here, so it escaped the general plunder that rent the city. It has a Dominion aura of 4.

CHURCH OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN OF THE PHAROS

Called the "Holy Chapel" by crusaders, this is one of the thirty chapels that comprise part of the Great Palace. Specifically used by the emperor and his family, this became a vast storehouse of relics, all of which have been removed. It has a Dominion aura of 4, which at night falls to 3.

Among the relics stolen were two pieces of the True Cross, the iron head of the spear of Longinus, the two nails that affixed Christ's hands to the cross, a crystal phial of His blood, His tunic, the Crown of Thorns, a piece of the Virgin Mary's robe, and the head of St. John the Baptist.

CHURCH OF THE HOLY APOSTLES

Built in the form of a Greek cross capped by five domes, the Church of the Holy Apostles was the busiest church in Constantinople, offering religious services for many of the population. It was the final resting place of emperors and patriarchs up until 1028, with Constantine VIII being the last emperor in-

The Architects of Haghia Sophia

Justinian commissioned the best architects of the day to rebuild the Great Church — Isidore of Miletus and the mathematician Authemius of Tralles. They requisitioned building material from across the empire, including columns from the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus. As materials arrived, the pair quarreled over the design, with Isidore wishing to add complexities based on the theories of Heron of Alexandria. He succeeded in his wish because his partner, Authemius, died within the year. While attributed to natural causes, rumors

circulated that Authemius' death might have been premature.

The magi of the Thebes Tribunal, especially Catella from the Mercere covenant of Alexandria, would love to investigate the Great Church and search for insights derived from Heron's theories. Such insights exist, but it would take a season to uncover and require daily investigation of the architecture. Catella is willing to fund any magus who has an idea how to do this, paying for his time and investigation notes with vis and gold.

Story Seed: Seeking the Julian Library

Built near the end of the fourth century by Julian the Apostate, this library was claimed to hold over 600,000 texts. A pagan and trained scholar, Julian stocked his library with his own personal collection, as well as copies of every academic and literary text his scholars could find. Among the volumes were several curiosities, many magical, with the most famous being the 37-yard-long guts of a dragon, upon which the Iliad and the Odyssey were written in

gold letters. Rumors say if the dragon guts are read, they increase the reader's wisdom.

By 1220, Julian's library has been built over and his collection dispersed, hidden by Julian's supporters after the emperor's demise. The library is a favorite quarry for the many Seekers of Thebes, who occasionally find lost sections of it and continually prow for more. The more fabulous items are still hidden, and competition to find them is fierce.

Story Seed: The Return of Zeno

Originally a mercenary Isaurian chieftain from the Taurus Mountains named Tarasicodissa, Zeno was an unpopular emperor, ruling from 474–491. Plagued with assassination attempts, he was eventually overthrown by rivals and buried alive in the Church of the Holy Apostles. His pleas for mercy lasted for three days, after which he was presumed dead. In actuality, he merely lay dormant, waiting to return. A demon-blooded villain, he is immune to deprivation, age, and starvation. Described by Leo Grammaticus as “bushy-haired and ill-formed, (he is) goat-footed and hairy-legged, black-skinned, absurd in stature.” At night he crawls from his opened sarcophagus and wanders the church. This demonic monster cannot exist outside an Infernal aura, making it difficult for him to leave the church.

According to Hermetic legend, metropolitan magi who wished to safeguard their secrets would bury occult tomes and writings in the crypts beneath the church, thinking that the ghosts of the departed emperors would protect their work. Hermetic necromancers would also summon the ghosts of emperors whose souls had not gone on to Heaven, working in the Infernal aura generated by Zeno’s lair. Both undertakings were dangerous, as Zeno would kill and devour anyone he could catch. A storyguide could put almost any treasure here, perhaps something to lead the characters on to another adventure, forcing them to overcome Zeno before acquiring the prize.

tered there. Since then, emperors have been buried in churches that they were more closely associated with. The relics it once held have been stolen, many being shipped back to Venice, including the skulls of Saints Andrew, Luke, and Timothy, and the post called the “Column of Flagellation” to which Christ was bound when he was flogged. Ravaged by looters, who exhumed the emperors’ corpses and stole crowns and jewelry, the church only has a Divine aura of 4. During the day, the Dominion aura suppresses an Infernal aura of 3 caused by a demon, Zeno, living in the crypts below it (see insert). At night, however, the Dominion aura falls in might to 3, and the Infernal aura strengthens to 4, overpowering

the Dominion aura and allowing the demon below to prowl the church.

THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST OF STUDIUS AND THE STUDION

Founded by the Roman patrician Studius in 463, the Church of St. John the Baptist is one of the most celebrated churches in Constantinople. The nearby monastery, the Studion, is the center of intellectual activity in the empire. The church is a typical basilica, with nave, narthex, and atrium, and the monastery is a series of stone buildings surrounding a square footprint.

The Church of St. John the Baptist escaped the worst looting in 1204, and retains a Divine aura of 5. Perhaps this was because the church collected more books than relics. The Studion still operates, seemingly impervious to the Latins’ rule, and holds the largest collection of ecclesiastical and secular books of both the Latin and Byzantine Empires.

The Imperial Palaces

Two imperial palaces exist. The larger, the Great Palace, lies to the southeast, overlooking the Sea of Marmara. The smaller, more recent Palace of Blachernae sits in the northwest corner of the city, near the sea walls of the Golden Horn. Both are sprawling complexes of stone buildings, fortified against attackers and housing riches and treasures beyond comprehension.

THE GREAT PALACE

Continually adorned and enhanced through the long history of Constantinople, the Great Palace is actually five palaces: Chalke, Magnaura, Daphne, the Sacred Palace, and the Palace of Bucoleon. They are all connected by passages and walkways, which also connect the Great Palace to the Hippodrome and the Baths of Zeuxippus.

THE PALACE OF BUCOLEON

Resting on the slopes of the First Hill and overlooking the harbors on the Sea of Marmara, the Palace of Bucoleon was the home of the empire’s earlier emperors. Centrally located,

it provided easy access to the Hippodrome, Hagia Sophia, and the Mese, as well as many secret, underground passageways. During the reign of the Angeluses, favored courtiers, imperial family members, and the emperor’s wife lived in the palace. On assuming command of the empire in 1204, Baldwin of Flanders took over the palace, which has remained the imperial domicile of the Latin emperors.

THE PALACE OF MAGNAURA

An imperial palace of remarkable size, whose name means “fresh breeze” in Greek, the Palace of Magnaura contains a throne room among its many rooms and suites. Used as an audience chamber to greet distinguished guests, the throne room holds a golden throne that can levitate to the ceiling upon command. Two gilded lion statues sit before the throne, which can open their

Story Seed: The Curse of Pride

The automata inside the Palace of Magnaura were constructed in the early 10th century by Aella of House Verditius. Born in Crete, Aella worked more closely with Byzantine imperials than many thought she should, and was accused several times of being a court wizard working for the emperor. She was never convicted, due in great part to her husband, Vaanes of House Guernicus, and his legal help. She was ostracized twice, but returned both times insistent on maintaining her enchanted creations.

In 1220, the maga Passara filia Baccuda filius Aella of House Verditius still oversees the automata, making sure that time and wear do not destroy them. Blessed with the Gentle Gift, Passara lives in apartments in the palace given to her by the emperor’s autocrat. Proud of her lineage and its mysteries, Passara refuses to live anywhere else. Formosos of House Guernicus, the grand filius of Vaanes, thinks that Vaanes’ involvement was criminal. His pride won’t let matters rest, and he is determined to prove that Passara is actively working for the Latin emperor and not just overseeing the automata. He will try to enlist player characters to clandestinely investigate Passara and her mundane involvements.

mouths to roar and shake their tails. A tree of gilded bronze stands nearby, its branches full of birds fashioned out of precious metals and encrusted jewels. When the emperor was in attendance, as visitors lay prostrate on the floor before him, the throne would rise, the lions would roar, and the birds would sing. All these marvels still exist in the palace.

THE PALACE OF BLACHERNAE

Built in the fifth and sixth centuries and originally laying outside the city walls, the Palace of Blachernae was enclosed within the walls in 627. Overlooking the Golden Horn on the slopes of the Sixth Hill, the Palace of Blachernae became the principle residence of later emperors before the coming of the Latins. It also served as their prison; Isaac II Angelus was imprisoned in a tower in the Blachernae when his brother, Alexius III, overthrew him.

Several of the imperial crowns of past emperors were stored here, but were stolen during the three days of looting that followed the city's fall. Because of this plundering, and due to the notorious practices of the last imperial residents — the Angeluses — the entire palace complex has an Infernal aura of 2.

THE PORPHYRY CHAMBER

An important aspect of imperial life in pre-fall Constantinople was the notion of being born in the purple. The Byzantine emperors maintained a magnificent birthing room of purple porphyry — a rare stone imported from Egypt in the fourth century — and hung with purple silk wall drapes. Children born here are called *porphyrogennetos*, or literally "born into the purple," and had a better claim to the imperial throne than an older heir born outside it, even if female. In short, children born to a reigning emperor and empress outrank older siblings born before the succession to the throne. This exception to primogeniture was extremely important, and the room was guarded to ensure that only empresses could give birth within its hallowed walls.

Porphyrogennetos princesses may not marry outside the Byzantine Empire, even for diplomatic advantage, though this tradition has been flouted on occasion with disastrous results. Being porphyrogennetos gives a character a claim to the imperial throne, a good education, and the support of the people. The Empress Zoe was crowned despite male contenders because her birth in the room was deemed to give her the best claim. But

for this reason many porphyrogennetos children have been blinded when their parents lose power, or been forcibly placed in convents and monasteries. With the recent rapid succession of rulers, a number of individuals from imperial families can claim this highest rank. While observed by the new Latin emperors, like many Greek traditions, they are not slavish about the Porphyry Chamber and the room is no longer constantly guarded.

Michael's Tabula

The newest of the two covenants located within the city of Constantinople, Michael's Tabula is a tightly knit group of magi, mostly of House Jerbiton, who survived the sack of the city in 1204 and who pledged to stay. These pious magi fervently oppose the presence of the crusaders; although their covenant is publicly dedicated to restoring Constantinople to its former glory, their unofficial aim is to ultimately repulse the invaders from their city, a goal in which they are receiving covert assistance from several magi and covenants sympathetic to their cause.



History

Michael was a famed magus of Thera-kopolis (see Chapter 12: Infernal Landscape) and the leader of the Jerbiton magi that ultimately failed in their effort to defend Constantinople. During that covenant's destruction, he was the last to die, heroically, in its defense. On his death bed, he, his surviving apprentice Petros, Wilrich of House Flambeau, and three other Jerbiton magi (two from Moero's Garden and one an urban eremite) pledged their lives to the city's defense and swore never to abandon it to the invaders. The oath of these magi was recorded on a tablet of stone, after which this new covenant was named. The surviving magi retreated into the city's catacombs — some bitter and thirsting for revenge, others praying devoutly for deliverance — where they established new sancta and hid away their remaining magical resources. Michael's Tabula was formally founded in 1207, at the first Tribunal after the fall of Constantinople in 1204.

Porphyrogennetos

In Mythic Europe, a character born in the Porphyry Chamber is granted a supernatural power at birth, reflected in a Minor Supernatural Virtue that does not count against her normal allotment of Virtues and Flaws. Because of the mercurial realm auras of Constantinople, the gained Virtue is not always Divine, as one would assume. If a character is born in the chamber, the storyguide should roll a simple die and consult the following:

ROLL	VIRTUE
1	Infernal Minor Supernatural
2	Magic Minor Supernatural
3 – 4	Faerie Minor Supernatural
5 – 9	Divine Minor Supernatural
10	The character receives a Major Supernatural Virtue instead of a Minor. Roll again for type, ignoring a second 10.

The player can pick any Supernatural Virtue that suits the realm indicated, with the troupe's approval. Other characters will assume that the child is born with God's blessing, as the emperors like to say, and think that the supernatural power is Divine. The Virtue's true realm alignment may remain a mystery, even to the owner, which is an insidious aspect of Infernal and Faerie Virtues.

Setting and Physical Description

The covenant is centered around an abandoned mithraeum (a worship site associated with the Mithraic Mysteries) beneath a ruined district in Constantinople, which has a Magic aura of 3. The magi have converted the mithraeum into a rudimentary council chamber, and have ceremonially placed Michael's Tabula (the stone tablet) atop the former altar. They have established underground laboratories, some of which are shared, in nearby chambers. New stone walls, erected with the aid of their patron, bar all entrances to the covenant; they can only be navigated by magi in possession of magical keys. Only trusted allies are admitted to the underground site. Other visitors may be received in one of the various city residences where the magi discreetly live.

PETROS OF HOUSE JERBITON

Age: 36 (Apparent Age: 11)

Personality Traits: Depressed +2, Meditative +2, Immature +1

Petros, the filius of Michael, had a troubled apprenticeship. First, his master botched his own Longevity Ritual; it instead took effect on his apprentice and stopped his growing further. Despite now being in his fourth decade, Petros retains the body of an 11-year-old boy. Second, his master died during the city's defense, shortly before Petros was to swear the Oath of Hermes. Despite his youth and inexperience, the magi of Michael's Tabula elected the boy their leader, out of respect for his pater.

Petros is a melancholy individual, a man trapped inside the body of a boy. His prayers for manhood remain unanswered, and he bears the shame of the failed defense of the city and the fall of Thermakopolis. In his darkest moments of despair, Petros has considered joining a monastery, but stays at the covenant to honor his pater's cause.

WILRICH OF HOUSE FLAMBEAU

Age: 51 (Apparent Age: 43)

Personality Traits: Devout +3, Valiant +3, Crude +1

Born and raised in Saxony in the Holy Roman Empire, Wilrich is one of a handful of "Frankish" magi in the Tribunal. Unfortunately, he conforms to many of the stereotypes about Franks: he is large and burly, fair-haired and bearded, and is somewhat uncouth, speaking Greek with a thick accent. However, he hides a deep piety beneath his brusque exterior.

Wilrich joined the Fourth Crusade as a knight under the retinue of the bishop of Halberstadt. To satisfy the protestations of the Quaesitores, he forswore the use of any of his magics for the duration of the crusade. As the voyage progressed, however, he became increasingly disillusioned with the righteousness of their cause. Ultimately, in the chaos of the fall of Constantinople, he abandoned the attack and instead acted to protect the innocent, battling demons. He found himself fighting alongside the dying magi of Thermakopolis, and saved Petros. A truly formidable swordsman, Wilrich is the most martial of the magi and the most active in its military plans.

Covenfolk

The covenant currently lacks the resources to employ or house many covenfolk. Nevertheless, the magi have recruited a varied as-



MICHAEL'S TABULA'S PATRON: FYLAKAS

Retreating into Constantinople's catacombs in 1204, the founding magi discovered a mysterious entity who protected and assisted them against the marauding crusaders — a powerful humanoid figure made of rock, rising out of the ground. The magi of the covenant named it Fylakas ("guard") and took it as their patron spirit, but have not yet managed to communicate with it at length. As a result, they know relatively little about it. The spirit possesses power over the earth, as well as controlling the gateways to the catacombs, it can cause violent earth tremors and thereby damage or collapse city buildings. There are several possibilities as to Fylakas' true nature, the most likely being that it is an ancient earth elemental. Another possibility is that it is a demon, released from its binding during the sack of the city. If this is the case, then it is likely duping the pious magi. However, it is also conceivable that one or more of them, despite their piety, may not be above soliciting demonic aid, if it would rid the city of the Franks.

Culture and Traditions

Michael's Tabula retains the largely disorganized but fanatical feel of an underground

resistance movement. Council meetings are often heated and chaotic, but the magi ultimately pull together around their common cause. However, opinions differ as to how cautious or bold they should be in acting against their city's Frankish rulers. There are some in the Tribunal, including the Quaesitores, who tend to view the covenant and their possible meddling with suspicion, but this is outweighed by a greater number who hold sympathy for their cause.

The magi have so far managed to discover a few sources of vis in the catacombs and have begun assembling a library, some of which are old tomes rescued from Thermakopolis. Every year or two, a Redcap arrives with a generous donation of money and books, but this mysterious sponsor chooses to remain anonymous. Some of the magi may be in possession of knowledge or relics relating to the legacy of Heron of Alexandria; see *Ancient Magic*, page 87.

Magi

There are about a half dozen magi, mostly from House Jerbiton, many of whom have lived in Constantinople since before the Fourth Crusade. They are all devout Christians.

Xylinites' False Icon: St. Loukia

Little is known of St. Loukia, a martyr of the early Church. The icon of her is set in a gilded frame, just six inches high by four wide, and is made of tiny squares of gold, silver, and colored stone. It depicts a beautiful young woman sitting in a pastoral setting holding a lamb, while healthy flocks, birds, and even the fishes in the stream by her feet watch her attentively. The scene is vibrant, dazzling even, and every so often it is said that Loukia's image raises her arms and screams a warning in a tiny voice. This has only happened three times since the icon came into the possession of the covenant. The first time was before a fire that destroyed the orphanage killing many children, secondly before the Battle of Manzik-

ert in 1071, and lastly in the spring of 1204. A demotic inscription on the frame reads "Loukia, Herald of Last Things," and the Criamon watch avidly just in case ...

Loukia was probably a Montanist heretic, condemned for her practices. Montanism was a version of early Christianity that emphasized direct spiritual experience, or gnosis, and its founder Montanus claimed to be the Holy Spirit. Loukia was a pantheist nature mystic with a strong affinity for animals of all types. Her visions were of the Magic Realm, particularly that part associated with the Form of Animal, and meditation on her icon can function as a Level 3, Quality 10 summa for learning the Supernatural Ability Animal Ken. None of the covenant's

magi have realized this, fearing to meditate extensively upon it, but the Criamon may eventually discover this attribute.

The icon is currently located in a small shrine in an alcove of the cistern, in a section still only reachable by boat, and has another amazing, possibly unique, quality. A Magic aura of strength 3 emanates from it in a perfect sphere, which expands out far enough to cover the orphanage and eastern end of the monastery complex, before disappearing on contact with the Dominion aura in the central and western parts of the grounds. This is because Loukia is not dead, but trapped in something analogous to Twilight between this world and the Magic Realm, allowing magic to pour into the world.

sortment of miscreants, spies, and mercenaries to serve them part-time. These persons lead a double life, so that the covenant, as an organization, remains largely hidden from view.

Xylinites

Until 1204 the site of a major House Jerbiton covenant, this Constantinople monastery and orphanage is today home to a House Criamon Clutch. The covenant patron is St. Loukia of Berytus, a magical spirit trapped within a false icon.



History

Xylinites is a long-established covenant, which was almost destroyed in the capture of the city in 1205, and is now fading into winter with new inhabitants. The covenant exists within the walled monastery of St. Christopoulos, inside the walls of the city of Constantinople but in an area largely given over to pasture and orchards.

The monastery was founded as a *lavra* (a community of monks living in cells), in 823. In the late 10th century Empress Zoe's first husband Emperor Romanus III Argyrus was particularly lavish in endowing the monastery. He made two particularly important donations — in 1030 he founded an orphanage and school supported from the state trea-

sury and run by the monks, and in 1031 he donated a tiny but beautifully crafted icon of a little-known saint, St. Loukia.

In 1071 Tikh of Jerbiton, a scholar paid to teach at the orphanage school, noticed the icon and that it had unusual attributes. He realized that St. Loukia was Loukia of Berytus (Beirut), a Montanist heretic who claimed to physically enter paradise by the power of the Holy Spirit, and who was executed in the fourth century for blasphemy. After seeking the abbot's permission, Tikh removed the icon from the church and placed it in the school room of the orphanage. He was amazed when a Magic aura slowly developed around the heretical magical icon, and swiftly moved it to the orphanage schoolmaster's house where he lived.

Needing space for his laboratory, he uncovered and partially drained a huge vaulted water cistern under the orphanage and east grounds, founding one of the most enduring Constantinople covenants, Xylinites, in 1074. The magi of Xylinites served for the next 130 years as tutors at the orphanage, which gave them a unique opportunity not only to educate many brilliant young scholars and to locate Gifted children abandoned to the care of the monks, but also to build strong links within the imperial palace.

The demand from the palace for eunuchs had long exceeded supply, and with the relaxation of the laws against castration many families saw having a eunuch son as a potential route to wealth and influence. The school attached to the orphanage had long accepted paying scholars from the city, and now a large number of youngsters elected or were volunteered by families to be educated there in the art of music, and subsequently

castrated if their voices were suitable for the eunuchs of the choirs, the *castrati*. In addition, politically inconvenient children were often sent to the monastery, and castrated to render them ineligible for the throne or prevent inheritance disputes. The monastery thus became an important source of eunuchs destined for the imperial palace. Former students at the palace promoted the orphanage's interests, while the Jerbiton magi enjoyed a lavish lifestyle, ample opportunities for study, and indirect influence over the imperial court.

In 1205 everything changed. While the Latins have allowed the continuation of the orphanage's funding, the call for eunuchs has largely dried up in the face of Latin disgust at the practice. Three of the Jerbiton magi were slain in the sack of the city, fighting the attackers. The remainder, fearing the censure of the Tribunal, fled immediately into exile. The remaining member, Artoud of Criamon, is dedicated to the Path of the Body (see *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*) and he established a Clutch (a Criamon covenant) dedicated to mystical researches here.

Artoud could not teach in the orphanage, and had never been formally introduced to the monks, owing to his Blatant Gift. But the monks know of his presence in the old cistern. They regard Artoud and the two apprentices he has taught as holy hermits practicing extreme bodily mortification. The companions of the covenant have taken on the teaching duties and act as intermediaries, allowing the ancient covenant a precarious afterlife. Visitors come and go as they always do in Orthodox monasteries, and the staff has little to do with the monks, and less with the hermits. So covenant life can continue, but for how long?

Setting and Physical Description

The walled monastery covers several acres and is a thriving community, with a small vineyard, some pastures, and extensive gardens. Entrance is through a gate with a great golden icon of Christ Pantokrator above the archway. The basilica of St. Christopoulos remains the heart of the monastery, with the refectory, kitchen, laundry, and bakehouse clustered nearby. Small wooden houses scattered across the grounds hold the individual monks cells, and some thirty black clergy live here today.

At the west end of the complex stands a small building of great antiquity, an ancient bathhouse. The partially ruined and roofless building today has only two remaining baths; one has been converted into a fishpond, while the other is still used for bathing by the monks. Behind the bathhouse stands the infirmary, and storehouses.

At the east end of the grounds stands a building containing the guest quarters, the school house, and a hostelry for sixty boys — the famous orphanage. The master's house, student's refectory, scriptorium, and library are situated next to it. Several concealed staircases from locked rooms in these buildings lead down to the ancient cistern now used as a storehouse.

The cistern, which is still flooded, holds six excellent laboratories cut into the walls and approachable only by small boats moored by the entrances to the steps. Tunnels branch off from it, carrying water to other parts of the city through a maze of flooded passages that could be explored by boat. The covenant uses them to discretely slip out to attend to business throughout the city.

Culture and Traditions

For most of the covenant's history this was a Jerbiton covenant. It tread a fine line between interfering with mundanes by providing a valuable service to the imperial court and leading families, and fostering political influence in a very literal sense. The academic and aesthetic interests of the schoolmasters reflected the elaborate customs and protocols of the imperial court. These practices ended with the refugees' departure, along with the flight of many of the key officials of the old orphanage.

The current Criamon Clutch has a precarious existence, living alongside devout monks and reliant on loyal companions to

teach the orphans. Some children are still left with the orphanage, and the occasional Gifted boy abandoned by frightened parents has given the Clutch some influence at Tribunal.

Following the breakdown almost a generation ago of the elaborately regimented and ritualized daily life of the orphanage, the inquisitive nature of the boys has become more of a problem. Many of the boys tell stories of the haunted storehouses in the cistern and the mad hermits who dwell therein, and a few of the braver souls have broken curfew to explore the subterranean vaults.

Magi

Xylinites currently has three magi of House Criamon on the Path of the Body, forming the Tribunal's only dedicated Clutch.

ARTOUD OF HOUSE CRIAMON

Age: 175 (Apparent Age: 71)

Personality Traits: Graceful +5, Pious +3, Devoted to House Criamon +3

Brother Artoud is the current leader of Xylinites. Much of his life was spent in the Levantine Tribunal, in the hills of Central Anatolia. There he was a member of a Criamon Clutch destroyed in the fighting between the Sultanate of Rum and the empire. His loyalty to House Criamon is fanatical, and he is largely uninterested in the wider Order of Hermes, seeing it as dominated by ignorant uncouth Frankish barbarians.

While he attempts to hide the fact, Artoud's body is in better condition now than it was at age 21; the pale scars over his tanned skin are easily explicable as the result of years of bodily mortification. He moves with superhuman grace, causing him to feign a stoop and slight limp among mundane folk, and to move as little as possible — which is easy for him with his years of mystical practice.

He has refused Repose to remain and support his House. As a result he does not suffer from aging, and even physical injury is soon shrugged off. (See *House of Hermes: Mystery Cults* for the super-human abilities he gained by devout ascetic practice and mastery of the flesh.)

THEODERET OF HOUSE CRIAMON

Age: 75 (Apparent Age: 43)

Personality Traits: Pious +3, Fatalistic +1, Reclusive +1.

Born to a Maronite family in the Lebanon, and apprenticed late in life, some years after his Gauntlet Theoderet was delighted to receive word of the establishment of a Clutch in the Tribunal of Thebes. Fluent in Syriac and Aramaic, his Greek remains heavily accented. Filthy and ragged, but well versed in etiquette, he is a terrifying figure, and one whose talents and obvious discretion, while appreciated by polite society, do not earn him friends. This is, of course, exactly how he likes it.

He is official castrator for the orphanage, and because of his known medical skills he has been called upon many times to conduct blindings at the palace and throughout the city. With Deft Art Corpus, and as a master of Perdo Corpus magic, he uses primarily magical means to painlessly and safely conduct these duties. He is philosophically committed to his work, seeing it as helping to establish Harmony where the likely alternative of execution or murder in many instances would simply bring more Strife into the world.

TRASARICUS OF HOUSE CRIAMON

Age: 21

Personality Traits: Proud +3, Bitchy +2, Idle +1

Trasaricus is the only member of Xylinites born within the Tribunal; he is a nephew of the former Emperor Alexios IV Angelos, who was deposed and killed in 1204. Castrated in early childhood for being politically dangerous, he is an implacable enemy of the Doukas family. His imperial blood fascinates Artoud, who is unwilling to expel his apprentice, but who realizes that soon the youth must be sent far from Constantinople to prevent disaster.

Covenfolk

A small staff of grogs conducts the mundane business of the covenant. They wear elaborate Byzantine robes denoting their rank and office. Tutors wear grey, orphans blue, and domestic staff black.

Four eunuch priests who are companions of the covenant are particularly important. They reside in the priests' house nearby the master's house, and officiate at eucharist at nunneries throughout the city. Because of this, they have the ear of many former noblewomen, and at least one empress, who have retired to a monastic life.

Chapter Eight

Anatolia

Geographically diverse, with a range of climates and terrain, Anatolia is the meeting of East and West. Two long, nearly unbroken mountain chains separate the coastal areas from the interior's heartland — a large plateau that composes most of the area. At the height of the Byzantine Empire, the entire land mass was controlled by the emperor, who partitioned it into several provinces. Since the decline of the Byzantine Empire in the 12th century, several of these provinces have been lost to enemies, most notably the Seljuk Turks. In 1220, the Byzantine Greeks only occupy the coastal areas, both west of the Taurus Mountains and north of the Pontic Mountains.

The Tribunal of Thebes has historically stayed in lands governed by the Byzantines. Preferring the relatively safety of the empire, covenants have favored the Aegean coast, the shores of the Sea of Marmara, and the Black Sea area. Anatolia's interior and parts further east are contested by Turks, Persians, Pechenegs, Cumans, and Georgians. However, conflict can also provide opportunity, and being in proximity to these cultures would allow magi to meet foreign wizards and other forms of magic. Magi have formed covenants in the far-flung reaches of the Tribunal in the past, but none remain in 1220. They have fallen either through lack of interest, mundane invasion, or mysterious causes.

Bithynia

Lying in northwestern Anatolia, Bithynia is a land of vast forests and rolling green hills, laced with fertile valleys and river basins. On the coast of the Sea of Marmara, it sits opposite Constantinople and the Thracian coast. A prosperous land, Bithynia is known for its wealth of fruit trees, especially oranges, and grain fields. Home to

many old and important cities, Bithynia has been overrun by armies in the last twenty years, and many venerable cities have felt the brunt of these armed forces. Bithynia is the marcher lands between the Latin Empire of Constantinople and the Empire of Nicaea, and most coastal castles have changed hands many times. Peace has reigned for the last six years, since Theodore Lascaris signed a treaty with the Latin Empire, cementing it by marrying Emperor Henry's niece in 1219. Despite this peace, Lascaris is preparing an assault in 1220, and the obvious massing of troops along the border makes many Bithynians anxious.

The Empire of Nicaea

In 1204, Theodore Lascaris fled to Nicaea after fighting heroically in defense of Constantinople. A large contingent of prominent Byzantines had also fled there, allowing Theodore to establish a court that mirrors the splendor and customs of Constantinople. In 1205, Theodore appointed the new Orthodox Patriarch Michael Autorianus, and the line of patriarchs has continued in Nicaea. Crowned Emperor Theodore II Lascaris in 1208, he is a staunch supporter of the Orthodox Church, though quixotically open to the possibility of ultimate Church union. His court welcomes Latin friars and papal envoys, perhaps a reflection of its highly intellectual and scholastic culture, and theological debates are common here. From the first, Theodore has vowed to retake Constantinople and to continue the empire until that day in Nicaea.

Despite initial setbacks, the Empire of Nicaea has fared well. Theodore has the savvy to ally with his neighbors to his own advantage. He has variously allied with and fought the Latins, the Bulgarians, and the Sultanate of Rum. His army is bolstered by

Frankish mercenaries while he actively recruits native Anatolians. His career has many highlights, the most famous being his personal combat and victory against the Sultan of Rum, his capture and imprisonment of his treacherous father-in-law, Alexius III, and his push along the Black Sea to stop the advances of the Empire of Trebizond.

In 1220, the latest alliance with the Latins of Constantinople has broken and hostilities have recommenced. The Latin Empire and Nicaea are once again locked in conflict.

Nicaea

Always an important city in the Byzantine Empire. The summer home to emperors and the meeting place for several important religious councils, Nicaea is now the capitol of the new Empire of Nicaea. Organized like a grid, Nicaea's straight streets emanate from the city's cathedral, the Church of the Haghia Sophia, in the center of town. The imperial place is to the south, as is the Church of the Koimesis, the personal chapel of the emperor and his family. Massive, thirty-foot-high walls surround the city, studded with over one hundred towers, and three main gates lie in the center of the north, east, and south walls. The west wall abuts the Ascanian Lake, and smaller gates give access to the city's docks.

As darkness falls on Constantinople, and Infernal auras overpower Divine ones, Nicaea shines like a new dawn. The cumbersome bureaucratic administration that plagued Constantinople has been replaced with a more efficient system of imperial cabinet rule in Nicaea, with few administrators and more direct lines of responsibility. The rise of the Empire of Nicaea has caused a renaissance in art, literature, and learning. Imperial revenues pour through the city's gates, as taxes that once went to Constantinople now come here. The army is happy, bolstered by sev-

The Sundered Eagle



Demon of Nicaea

Order: Furies
Infernal Might: 20 (Animal)
Characteristics: Int -1, Per +3, Pre -1, Com +1, Str +3, Sta +3, Dex +3, Qik +2
Size: 0
Confidence Score: 1 (3)
Virtues and Flaws: Berserk, Tough
Personality Traits: Wrathful +6, Savage +4
Reputations: Harrower of Saints 2 (Infernal)
Hierarchy: 1
Combat:
Teeth: Init +2, Attack 12, Defense +9, Damage +4
Soak: +5
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: Athletics 4 (pursuit), Awareness 3 (stragglers), Brawl 5 (teeth), Leadership 6 (demons of Nicaea)
Powers:
Coagulation, 2 points, Init -1, Corpus. Described in *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 31

Endurance of the Enraged, 0 points, Init 0, Corpus. Described in *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 42.

Obsession, 1 - 3 points, Init -5, Vim: Wrath. Described in *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 31

Weakness: Abhorrent Circumstance: sunny day

Vis: 4 pawns of Animal vis, one in each paw

Appearance: The demon looks like a large, savage dog with wild hair, slaving from its snarling mouth. It always appears to be stalking prey, moving low to the ground with its ears back and growling. Its bright red eyes fill its victims with dread.

The demons of Nicaea are only interested in murder and slaughter, and while they can talk, they rarely do so. Their favorite tactic is to creep up on a lone victim and rend him to bits. They can fight as a trained group, making them a formidable opponent. While full of ferocity, they are not fearless, and will flee from a superior group or strong individual.

eral years of successful campaigns, and merchants and craftsmen work hard to line their pockets with byzants. Outside the walls, cypress trees and peach orchards flourish, and the war seems very far away.

Theodore Lascaris is so eager to reclaim Constantinople, that he is willing to temporarily subject the Eastern Church to Rome to obtain the city. The pope has suggested that such an agreement is satisfactory, so now all Lascaris needs to do is convince the patriarch and the influential bishops of Anatolia. In 1220, Theodore Lascaris has assembled a host of ecclesiastical representatives whose goal is to end the schism between the Western and Eastern Churches. Besides the dogmatic issues of the procession of the Holy Spirit and unleavened communion bread, the political issue of papal primacy must be decided.

THE SEVEN DEMONS OF NICAEA

During the ministry of St. Andrew the apostle, who preached throughout Scythia and Anatolia, the people of Nicaea told the saint that seven demons lived outside the

city and were murdering travelers on the road. St. Andrew promptly banished the demons, who appeared before him in the form of slaving dogs. Several days later, the saint encountered a funeral procession outside another town. The mourners told St. Andrew that a young man was killed by seven dogs who had invaded his bedroom. Realizing that these must be the same seven demons he had earlier banished, the saint prayed to God to resurrect the youth, who then became one of St. Andrew's followers.

The seven demons still prowl the highways around the city, although they are forbidden from entering Nicaea itself. They prefer to attack at dusk or soon after, and usually target lone travelers. Some of the city's inhabitants remember the legends of St. Andrew, but most think that corpses found along the road are the result of bandits or mercenary skirmishers from one army or another. The demons are not incredibly active, killing perhaps once every month or so. Large traveling parties won't draw the demons' attention, but solitary journeyers like a Redcap, for example, could fall prey to these Infernal beasts.

Nicomedia

Located on the Gulf of Astacus in the Sea of Marmara, Nicomedia sits sixty miles east of Constantinople. Strong walls surround the town's central citadel, forums, an amphitheater, aqueducts and cisterns, and other trappings of Roman society. Nicomedia is one of the few cities in Asia Minor that hasn't been occupied by the Turks in the last hundred years. It has been occupied by crusaders, however. Soon after the fall of Constantinople, a band of one hundred knights sailed for Nicomedia. The population fled to Nicaea, a day's journey away, and the Latins easily took the city. The knights constructed a fortress around the city's church, and ruled in the city for almost a year before Theodore Lascaris moved to reclaim the city. Fierce fighting outside the city drove the crusaders back to the fortified church, and many knights died or were taken hostage. The defenders called for help, and Emperor Henry arrived with his troops. Henry and Theodore negotiated a truce — the city for the French knight hostages — and Nicomedia has been in Byzantine hands ever since.

While earthquakes are not uncommon in Anatolia, Nicomedia has seen more than its fair share. Every hundred years or so the ground shakes and buildings fall, causing fires and calamity to the citizens. Some magi of the Theban Tribunal suspect that an ancient titan is imprisoned beneath Nicomedia, who rattles his or her bounds every century and causes the devastation. The citizens of Nicomedia would laugh if they heard this, for they know it is the dragon, wounded centuries ago by St. George the *Megalomartyras* (Greek for "magnificent martyr"), and writhing in pain in an underground warren beneath the city.



The Prison of Klymene

While most of the male titans who directly opposed Zeus were bound in Tartarus, those titans who remained neutral in the Titanomachy were bound elsewhere. Many female titans were bound in various locations, and unknown to the Theban magi, the great altar at Pergamos is the lock on the prison that binds the titan Klymene, the Titan-goddess of fame. Unique features of the binding have inadvertently allowed magi to draw on Klymene's power to fuel ritual spells, rather than on vis. However, if they overtax this prerogative, Klymene will be released.

Klymene is a Kosmokrator Spirit with a Magic Might of 50 (see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 109). The imprisoning bonds have a strength of 50, which renews itself at the beginning of each year. Cast ritual spells deplete the bond's strength, by a number equal to the number of pawns of vis it would take to cast the spells as nor-

mal. If the bond strength is reduced to zero in a single year, the great altar cracks in half and Klymene is released.

Klymene will not take her release well. Knowing that Zeus was going to bind all the titans, she viewed her imprisonment as benevolent — a sweeter cell than Tartarus and a fate she shared with her sisters. Now released, she has no place to go and no kin to visit. A storyguide should use freed Klymene as best suits her saga. Klymene could simply return to the Magic Realm, leaving a ruined altar in her wake. She could soar to the top of one of the Tribunal's mountains and set up residence, disrupting the environment and perhaps the current inhabitants. Or she could race about the Tribunal lands looking for other female titans to release, to recreate the comfort and revelry they enjoyed before Zeus imprisoned them. (See Chapter 9: Magical Landscape for more on the titans.)

The legend of St. George the Dragon Slayer is widespread in Mythic Europe, from Jerusalem to Ireland, and many places adapt it for themselves, perhaps even Nicomedia. St. George was a Roman tribune (commander) from Cappadocia, an area in central Anatolia, who happened upon the king of a city offering his daughter as sacrifice to the dragon. Wounding the beast, he returned to the city with her dragging the creature on a leash. Various legends place this event in different cities, but the fact remains that something does lie beneath Nicomedia.

shores are lined with cliffs and small bays, offering many suitable locations for defensible towns.

Like Bithynia, the north half of the Troad is held by Latin crusaders. Since the peace treaty of 1216, the situation has been fairly static. The Latin overlords are content to administer their lands and let the population prosper. Since recent military forays have been against the Bulgarians, many of the Latin knights and soldiers are elsewhere. Lascaris plans to capitalize on their absence by invading Troad and taking Holkos, a port on the Hellespont. As a canonical saga begins, he has marshaled his forces and his invasion is eminent.

The Troad (Troas)

A large peninsula in northwestern Anatolia, the Troad offers a mixture of Eastern European and Mediterranean climates. The northern region, along the shore of the Sea of Marmara, experiences cold winters and abundant summer rain, while the western area, along the Aegean Sea, is milder, with long hot summers and inland drought. Seven rivers run from the plateau of Mt. Ida, cutting through gorges to reach the seas. The

Hellespont

This 38-mile-long, narrow strait separates Greece from Anatolia as it connects the Aegean Sea to the Sea of Marmara. Also called "the straits of St. George" by the French crusaders, it has long been a protective barrier and effective border for the ancient Greeks and Persians. Despite its narrow width, averaging from one to four miles wide, the Hellespont is tricky to navigate. Currents run both ways along the strait, depending on the tides and time of day, and sailors pilot their courses cautiously.

The port Holkos sits at the junction of the Hellespont and the Sea of Marmara. Lascaris hopes to reclaim the city from the Latins and turn it into a second naval base for the Empire of Nicaea. Protecting the Hellespont and the Sea of Marmara, the navy's main targets would be Venetian sailing vessels. Historically, Lascaris' invasion was successful and the Latins, beleaguered by enemies from the north, sued for peace in 1221.

THE VANTAGE POINT OF XERXES

Near the town of Abydos, west along the coast from Holkos, a small, round hill overlooks the shore, offering a view of the entire Hellespont. Close inspection reveals the hill to be artificial, manufactured by human hands and weathered by time and winds. Originally built by Xerxes' sorcerer, Artabanos, during the Persian Wars, the hill once held a marble throne and offered enhanced magical vision to the viewer. To complete the task in a single day, Artabanos forced a *druj* to build the hill, after which he magically bound the demon beneath it, using her Infernal power to enhance the king's view. Her malevolence slipped through, however, and filled Xerxes with doubt and sadness.

The marble throne is gone, but the hill remains, as does the bound *druj*. Anyone standing on the hill can view the entire Hellespont and surrounding shores as if his vision was magically enhanced (much like the General Minor Virtue Keen Vision). However, the viewer is susceptible to the *druj*'s power of Obsession (*Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 31). The *druj* has an Obsession Trait of Doubt and an Infernal Might of 30. The hill has an Infernal aura of 3.

Pergamos

Once terribly important to the Greeks and early Romans, Pergamos has slipped in stature over the centuries. The old acropolis, built as a series of terraces overlooking the Caicus River and the plains below, is a cluster of Greek and Roman ruins. Its relevance to 13th-century Greeks is purely religious; Pergamos was one of the seven churches mentioned St. John's *Book of Revelations*. The Church of St. John the Apostle, built over an older temple dedicated to the Egyptian gods Isis and Serapis, serves the Christian community still living at Pergamos.

The city is much more important to Her-

metic magi because of the number of temples still existing here, albeit in ruins most of which have not been completely explored. First and foremost is the Library of Pergamos, so renowned in its day that it rivaled Ptolemy's library at Alexandria (in Egypt). While Alexandria was still using papyrus, Pergamos switched to parchment, leading Hermetic scholars to believe that some codices might still exist buried in subterranean secret rooms. Most of the contents of the library were given to Cleopatra as a wedding present from Marc Antony, but Seekers of Thebes have found some remaining texts in their searches. Other temples on the upper Acropolis are a temple to Dionysus and a Sanctuary of Athena Polias Nikephorus, the Bringer of Victory. Both temples have a Faerie aura of 3, and the library has a Magic aura of 2.

Two miles south of the Acropolis is the Asklepieion, a sanctuary of Asclepius built over a sacred spring of healing. Originally an extension of the Greek shrines at Epidauros, the Asklepieion became more famous in the second century due to its famous student and teacher, Galen of Pergamos, the founder of most medical theories of the 13th century. The Asklepieion has a Magic aura of 3 and annually produces 12 pawns of Corpus vis, in the shape of small clay body parts.

THE GREAT ALTAR

Lying in the north of the acropolis, on a higher terrace than the basilica dedicated to St. John, is a large open-air altar. Rectangular in shape, the altar is forty feet long, twenty feet deep, and up to forty feet high. Ionic columns run atop three sides, crowning four large friezes, and the fourth side is a long series of stairs rising to the altar's central podium. The four stone friezes depict the battle between the Greek gods and the giant titans, as well as genealogies of all the major gods.

The altar is shunned by Christians, and St. John refers to it as "the throne of Satan" in the *Book of Revelations*. Hermetic magi know that it has a Faerie aura of 4, and speculate that it was once a magic site as well. The frieze shows the Greek gods, who are faeries, besting the titans, who are magical creatures. A curious side effect of the altar is that it will supply the supernatural power to empower any ritual spell cast by a Hermetic magus. The magus casts the ritual while standing on the altar, and does not need to expend vis for the ritual to work.

This site that allows "free" ritual spells has a drawback. Botched spells are tainted,

as if the caster used faerie-tainted vis, and even correctly cast spells can have weird side effects. The locals consider it an evil thing, and have chased off magi in the past, believing them to be demon worshipers. The altar is not used much, because of this and since vis is so readily available in the Tribunal. Lucian and his Children of Olympus league are drawn to the site, however, and consider it important to their overall plan to initiate pacts with the Greek gods.

Ilion

Ilion, more commonly called Troy or "Ilium" by the Latins, was the great city of King Priam. It was razed by the Greeks at the climax of the Trojan War, around 1184 BC, according to the Greek historian Eratosthenes of Cyrene. Now, nothing stands on the sandy shores, and even the mighty Scamander River has run dry. Not a single stone remains; even the new city founded by the Roman Emperor Augustus has disappeared. The area holds no territorial significance for 13th-century Greeks, Byzantines, or Seljuk Turks. It does fuel political propaganda, though, with the many groups of Westerners claiming that they are descendants of the Trojans, and that the Latin occupation of Constantinople is Trojan vengeance against the Greeks.

Magi do find the site significant, although dangerous. So many stories surround Ilion that the site could be claimed the birthplace of storytelling. As a result, it is teeming with faeries, each eager to recreate a particular

story. The entire beach and stony field has a Faerie aura of 2, and it is thick with hidden Faerie regiones, many of which overlap and interconnect in a confusing labyrinth. Magi of House Merinita claim that a faerie city exists in one of the regiones, accessible only by sea. The city is called "Ilion," and is perpetually preparing for the anticipated siege (*City & Guild*, page 58). Other regiones copy different scenes of the Trojan War, including the Greek ships and fortifications, the bloody field of combat, and the burning city of Troy. Powerful faeries mimic the central characters of the Trojan War, but none incorporate a character's tale completely, preferring to reenact a single scene from his or her life. Thus, there are several faeries calling themselves Achilles, Paris, and Odysseus, just to name a few.

Without human involvement, the faeries dwell in lazy reenactments. A visiting human is like throwing chum to sharks; the powerful faeries want to snap the visitor up so he can participate in their tales, to the exclusion of the other faeries. Since they have some power over each other, things can get odd. Several faeries calling themselves Hektor will want the human to be involved with the tales of Hektor's death, his slaying of Patroklos, and his driving the Greeks back to their ships. The more powerful faeries can close off regiones, imprisoning characters to endlessly participate in the epic struggle of Troy. Locals know that those wandering the fields of Troy can disappear forever, and claim that the entire area is haunted by the ghosts of the fallen.

Every few Tribunals a magus suggests founding a covenant at Ilion and looks

Story Seed: In Search of Wilusa

The covenant of Wilusa at Ilion was quickly and efficiently built, its towers and buildings magically created in a Faerie regio with an aura of 4. This was not the regio that contained the spirit of Scamander, but a trick played on Droserius by a faerie calling himself Odysseus. The faerie has the power to close the regio's boundaries, and promptly did so. Odysseus continually subjects the covenant, now enchanted by him to look like Troy, to the final assault of the Trojan War. The magi respond, reflexively defending their covenant. Manipulating time, the faeries have continued the assault for over one hundred years, but the magi believe only a few months have passed. Odysseus is highly cognizant and

hopes to gather enough vitality to eventually change his tale.

Finding this specific regio is difficult. Other faeries lead investigators astray, trying to entwine them in their own stories. Investigating characters will have to be well versed in Faerie Lore to succeed, and diligent in exploring faerie regiones. The regio that Wilusa is trapped in is not the only faerie regio mimicking the fall of Troy, which means the characters could defeat the "Greeks" only to find out that this Troy is not Wilusa at all. Even if found and rescued, Droserius and his companions will not be eager to leave their covenant. Indicating that one hundred years have passed may change their minds.

for supporters. In 1109, the Tribunal acquiesced to Droserius of House Merinita and allowed him and four others to found the covenant Wilusa at Ilion. Droserius claimed that the spirit of the River Scamander existed in one of the regiones, and had vowed to act as the covenant's patron spirit. However, the covenant and its occupants had disappeared by the next Tribunal, and searches for any lingering evidence of them were in vain. Since then, magi at the Tribunal easily resist any suggestion of founding a second covenant.

Lydia

Lydia is a mountainous region south of the Troad. Its Aegean coastline is a patchwork of cliffs and sandy beach coves, with several bays and natural harbors. The Hermus River — the second-largest river in eastern Asia Minor — runs through the center of Lydia, from the mountains of Anatolia to the coast where it empties into the Bay of Smyrna.

Lydia is an ancient region, ruled by various tribes and empires throughout its history. Since the fourth century it has remained a Byzantine province, even though it was overrun by Seljuk Turks during brief moments of the 12th century. Its most famous claim in legendary history is that it is the birthplace of the Amazons, the infamous tribe of warrior women. Lydia is also the site of many of Herakles' deeds.

Lydia is home to the **cercopes** — small, blue-green monkeys that live in the forests. According to legend, the cercopes were originally two mischievous brothers who Zeus turned into monkeys after they continually plagued Herakles. The transformed brothers multiplied to produce the species. Cercopes are rare and always found alone. Each is a magical creature, and it is a mystery to the Order how these creatures reproduce. Difficult to find, they are prized familiars for the magi of the Tribunal.

Smyrna

Once an important city of Anatolia, competing against Ephesus and Pergamos to be known as the "First City of Asia," Smyrna has declined since Constantine

moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Constantinople. Since then it was seized by Turks, reclaimed by Byzantines, and then subjected to near-constant warfare between the two. Recent years have been better for Smyrna, owing to the strength of the Empire of Nicaea. This respite has done little to rebuild the city, even though it has quelled its fears of being conquered. More than half of the city is a broken maze of rubble, dilapidated buildings, and overgrown streets that lead nowhere.

Smyrna sits at the eastern end of the Bay of Smyrna, and is the royal port of the navy of the Empire of Nicaea, charged with protecting the Aegean Sea. Until August 1219, the navy's main targets were Venetian merchant vessels, but the recent commercial treaty between Venice and the Nicene Greeks has terminated aggressions. As the 13th century continues, the Nicene navy will concentrate on reclaiming the islands off the Aegean coast, namely Chios, Lesbos, and Rhodes. The harbor is busy, bustling with the activities of both military and commercial vessels, including the ships of the covenant of Alexandria. Smyrna has the largest Jewish population of any city in Anatolia.

Ten miles south of the city is the Palace of Nymphaeum. Built forty years ago by Andronicus I Comnenus, it is a favorite and the most-used imperial residence of Theodore Lascaris. To reach the Nymphaeum, travelers must walk through the old agora — the oldest and most ruinous section of Smyrna. Lone travelers report being accosted by an old man who calls himself Homer, who doggedly follows the traveler asking how his poems have fared and if the traveler wants to hear a recitation or two. The old man flees if threatened or if larger groups of people approach. Some magi think he is a faerie mimicking the role of Homer, who used to visit Smyrna and enjoy the idyllic banks of the nearby Meles River. A few Jerbiton magi speculate that the old man is the real Homer, transformed into a magic human by becoming a legendary artist (*Art & Academe*, page 129).

Hagios Theologos (Ephesus)

Ephesus' size belies its importance, for while it is not especially large or populated, it is a site famous for several religious events. It hosts one of seven churches mentioned in the Book of Revelations and has its own

epistle (Ephesians), as well as being an early center of Christianity. St. Paul spent almost three years living in Ephesus, as did St. John, who was martyred and buried there. Ephesus housed the Third Ecumenical Council in 431, which banned Nestorius and his heretical practice.

Ephesus has not always been under Byzantine control. Like many southern cities, it was overrun and ruled by the Seljuk Turks for almost forty years, until it was reclaimed by the Byzantine Empire in 1100. It was renamed Hagios Theologos, but the city's population has dwindled to several hundred and its harbor has long since silted up, removing it from commercial and political activities. Despite earthquakes, conquerors, and denied access to the Aegean Sea, Ephesus continues to be an important city. Currently, the city is protected by a small garrison of troops. Without a wall, the city would be in trouble if the Turks attacked.

The homes of Mary and St. John have turned Ephesus into a pilgrim site. Popular with holy men as well, Ephesus has a long history of pillar-sitters and ascetics. St. John's Basilica — Ephesus' cathedral church — is built over the tomb of St. John and has a Divine aura of 5. The presence of so many pilgrims and monks gives the rest of the city a Divine aura of 3.

THE TEMPLE OF ARTEMIS

Considered one of the most monumental temples of the ancient world, the Temple of Artemis was the site of an early confrontation between Christianity and paganism. The temple was built on a sacred spring dedicated to Cybele, an ancient Earth Mother goddess. Destroyed by an arsonist, the temple remained a ruin. Even Alexander the Great's offer to rebuild the temple was refused. The Ephesians were stubbornly pagan, and continued to craft and sell votive images of Diana (the Romanized version of Artemis) even after the destruction of the temple. On one of his missions, St. Paul ordered the artisans to stop their pagan idolatry, an order they refused. To demonstrate God's power over the old gods, St. Paul prayed for divine intervention, and instantly the stone statue of Diana was shattered into rubble. The impressed Ephesians converted to Christianity.

Lying on the slope of a hill outside the city, the temple has a Faerie aura of 2. Most of its remaining stone has been taken and used for other building projects, but the

shell of the temple remains — including the broken head of the statue, covered in moss and resting in a corner. Stepping over this head on the eve of Diana's festival, August 13th, leads to a Faerie regio with an aura of 4, in which the temple still stands in all its former glory. A faerie calling herself Diana lives in the regio, surrounded by a herd of faerie deer who are her staff. She will ask visitors if they want to hunt with her. Those accepting can follow the faerie outside the temple into the regio's forest, where they can hunt for stags. She rewards successful women with small prizes. Men, however, she tempts by bathing in small pools, hoping that they will gaze on her nude body. If they do, she becomes violent and commands her stags to attack.

THE CAVE OF THE SEVEN SLEEPERS

According to legend, during the Christian persecutions of the Roman Emperor Decius, seven men fled Ephesus with a Roman patrol hot on their heels. They ran into a cave that the Romans sealed behind them. Trapped, the seven Christians laid down to sleep. An earthquake awoke them, breaking open the sealed entrance. When they departed the cave, they discovered that it was more than a hundred years later. Decius was gone and Christianity was the official religion of the Roman Empire. The men lived long lives and died of natural causes. They were buried in their cave, which has become a famous pilgrimage site for 13th-century Christians. The Qur'an also tells the legend of the seven sleepers, but curiously includes a dog in the story.

The cave has a Divine aura of 3 and is a few leagues outside Ephesus. Originally, the cave had a Magic aura and regio. While the Magic aura has been replaced by the Divine aura, the regio still exists — it is difficult to access, but present. It has a Magic aura of 6 and has dilated time (*Covenants*, page 7). The Redcaps of Alexandria speculate that vis could be harvested from the site, but the harvester would have to spend the night, and there is no telling how much time would pass outside the regio.

Thrakesion

The southern-most province of the Empire of Nicaea, the Theme of Thrakesion runs from Lydia to the Maeander River and its fertile river basin. Formerly the Greek provinces of Ionia and Caria, it was once heavily settled with numerous towns and seaports along the Aegean coast. Centuries of war with the Seljuk Turks have centralized the population into walled cities, the most significant being Philadelphia. The Maeander River has been the effective southern border of the Empire of Nicaea since 1211, when Theodore Lascaris defeated Kaykhusraw I of the Sultanate of Rum at Antioch-on-the-Maeander.

MAEANDER RIVER

The longest river in eastern Asia Minor, the Maeander winds its way from the inte-

rior of Anatolia to the Aegean coast. It is notoriously swift and deep, although it is not always that wide. It cannot accommodate large ships, and only small sailing and rowed vessels can use it as a route.

The Maeander has several tributaries, both large and small. Of particular note to magi, especially Redcaps, is one that leads into a small cave. Sailing up this tributary and through the cave, the river leads to the Alfeios River in Elis, a district on the western shores of Peloponnese, Greece. This subterranean river is magical, but its distinct properties lie outside current Hermetic theory, and Redcaps merely refer to it as a "natural Mercere Portal." Using the river, it only takes an hour to sail from the Maeander to the Alfeios, a journey of several days across the Aegean Sea. Unfortunately, the Maeander is too muddy and narrow for magi to use Alexandria's glass submarine.

PHILADELPHIA

At the foot of Mt. Tmolus, on a high plateau overlooking the Meander River valley, Philadelphia occupies the marcher lands between the Empire of Nicaea and the Seljuk Turks of the Sultanate of Rum. A strongly fortified city, Philadelphia has long served as the buffer against the advances of the Turks. Its most glorious moment came in 1211, when Theodore Lascaris led his soldiers from the city to defeat Sultan Kaykhusraw and his army. Philadelphia is famous for its archers, and Nicene Greeks claim that there are no better in the known world.

In addition to its military accolades, Philadelphia contains one of the seven churches mentioned in the Book of Revelation. Greek theologians believe it was the headquarters of the nascent Christian Church. The city has a Divine aura of 4, much higher than usual for a city, and the aura increases to 6 in the city's main church. Like Nicomedia, Philadelphia has a history of earthquakes. The last and most devastating happened in 17 AD and nearly destroyed the city. Citizens started living outside the city's walls at that time, retreating to the city only when threatened by foreign invaders.

Vineyards are plentiful along the slopes of Mt. Tmolus, and one in particular has been bearing fruit for centuries. Wine pressed from the grapes is especially potent, and women are extremely susceptible to its intoxication. Hermetic investigation has revealed that the vineyard was once used as a festival site for the rites of Dionysus, where satyrs and

Story Seed: The Mysterious Savior

The battle of Antioch-on-the-Maeander is told in both French and Greek chronicles. Both state that the Turks had the upper hand, until Theodore Lascaris met Kaykhusraw on the battlefield. Astride a monstrosly-sized horse, the sultan struck down Lascaris, but was slain before he could kill the emperor. French sources say that Lascaris did the killing, but Greek sources mention a mysterious French knight who appeared out of nowhere and slew Kaykhusraw. This event effectively saved the Empire of Nicaea and quelled the Turkish threat for many years.

A rumor in the Tribunal claims that

the knight was a magus in disguise. Magi are not supposed to interfere with mundane affairs, and if this rumor is true, it would be an egregious offense. Located at the distant border of the Tribunal, Philadelphia and the battleground are not easily accessible. A senior magus may ask the player characters to investigate. With the Tribunal of 1221 coming up, he would like to solve this mystery before the meeting. Perhaps he suspects someone and wants the player characters to gather proof. Or, he may himself be the culprit and wonder how easy it is for someone to uncover the truth of his involvement.



maenads — women excited into frenzy by wine — used to congregate. The vineyard sits in a Faerie aura of 3, and the grapes can be distilled to produce *Mentem vis*, at the rate of 1 pawn per hundred gallons of wine. Hermetic magi have not detected any satyrs, even though rumors abound about the race. Philadelphia's women know that if enough of them get drunk and start cavorting about, the satyrs will come.

MT SIPYLUS

Near the headwaters of the Maeander River, Mt. Sipylus stands 5000 feet tall, visible from Smyrna and the Aegean coast. An extinct volcano, its peak is a crater lake. According to legends, Mt. Sipylus was the home of the Greek god Tantalus, a son of Zeus who lived in a regal city atop the mountain peak. His city was destroyed when he betrayed his father, but his treasury still exists, submerged below the murky floor of the crater's lake.

The legends vary concerning Tantalus' specific betrayal, but each carries a tantalizing hint at unknown lore. Diodorus wrote that Tantalus revealed secret information learned from Zeus, which excites Bonisagus magi investigating breaking the Hermetic

limits of magic. Pindar said that Tantalus stole nectar and ambrosia, the Greek gods' food of immortality, and magi from Epidaurus wonder if such items could improve Longevity Rituals. Verditius magi are interested in a third legend, which says that Tantalus refused to return a golden god automaton that protected the temple of Zeus at Crete. Regardless of their motivations, seekers have failed to uncover Tantalus' treasury or any of the magical artifacts so far.

Paphlagonia and Pontus

East of Bithynia, the southern shore of the Black Sea is divided into two provinces, Paphlagonia to the west and Pontis in the east. Both provinces are mountainous, with only a thin coastal shore of arable, inhabited land. The coastal shelf houses a thick, deciduous forest and offers a temperate climate, mild in the winter and humid in the summer. The area is bordered on the south by the Pontic Mountains, and a few large rivers cut gorges and valleys on their way to the Black

Sea, providing fertile valleys of fruit-bearing trees: hazelnuts, plums, cherries, and pears. The mountains are covered with dense forests, and their summits are snow-covered most of the year.

Soon after the conquest of Constantinople, the Komnenos brothers, Alexios and David, conquered both provinces. But in 1220 the Black Sea coast is controlled by three political factions. The Empire of Nicaea extends from Eastern Bithynia midway through Paphlagonia to the city of Amastris. Further east, where Paphlagonia meets Pontus, the Seljuk Turks' rule is centered at the city of Sinope. The furthest half of Pontus is controlled by the Empire of Trebizond. Despite being the border between the Nicene Greeks and the Seljuk Turks in the west, and the Seljuk Turks and the Empire of Trebizond in the east, the southern coast of the Black Sea is not an active war zone. The last major fighting occurred in 1214, when Theodore Lascaris took Amastris, the current eastern border of the Empire of Nicaea. Things have been calm since then. Merchants of all three kingdoms regularly meet to exchange goods, and the three major cities have accepted Genoese and Venetian trade agreements. Foreigners must pay a tax on their imported goods, but otherwise these cities are open to traders.

The area's three largest cities are Amastris, Sinope, and Trebizond. Amastris and Sinope appear very similar. Both are fortified ports with markets that lay outside the walls. Both are peopled with indigenous Greeks, whose families have lived in the city for generations. And both have a healthy mix of foreigners. Amastris has more people of Scandinavian descent because it was once the end point for mercenaries traveling from Russia, while Sinope has more people of Persian descent. In 1220, both cities pay tribute to their lieges and govern themselves as best they can. Because of its Muslim overlords, Sinope has a high degree of religious tolerance, allowing its citizens to practice Christianity, Islam, or Judaism as they wish.

The Empire of Trebizond

The Empire of Trebizond was not created as a result of the Fall of Constantinople, but was contemporary with that event. Alexios and David Komnenos, grandchildren of the Emperor Andronicus Komnenos, seized Trebizond in 1204. Planning to establish a kingdom, David pushed east taking Paphlagonia and Heraclea, provoking the Sultanate of Rum to war. David then battled the Empire of Nicaea, which fiercely resisted. In 1212, the Empire of Nicaea retook most of David's conquests. Two years later the Sultanate of Rum drove north between Nicaea and Trebizond, killing David Komnenos, but it was unable to approach Trebizond through the mountainous countryside.

Trebizond in 1220 is still ruled by Alexios Komnenos, with the support of Georgian troops and Latin and Seljuk mercenaries. Isolated from their enemies in Nicaea, Trebizond is still threatened by the Sultanate of Rum. Taking the imperial title of "Emperor and Autocrat of the Romans," the 38-year-old Alexios also rules Cherson and Kerch on the far side of the Black Sea.

TREBIZOND

The city sits on a sloping area of ground, declining toward the Black Sea with the Pontic Mountains at its back. Two parallel precipices run on either side, making the city naturally defensible and picturesquely beautiful. Added to these geological fortifications are massive walls that surround the city, and two tall towers that protect the bridges that

span the precipices. The castle sits behind the city, separate from it by a narrow valley and additional walls and fortifications. Emperor Alexios Komnenos and his family live in the castle. Trebizond's weak points are its harbor, which lies alongside a short promontory, and its marketplace, which is built outside the city's walls.

Alexios is on peaceful terms with his neighbor the governor of Sinope, who is loyal to the Seljuk Turns, and receives trib-

ute from Cherson, a city on the northern coast of the Black Sea. Trebizond has always been a prosperous if provincial city, and Alexios has done much to increase the city's revenues. Resting at one end of the Silk Road trade, the city market sells exotic goods from the East. Western merchants snap up these goods, providing a lucrative business for the native traders. Since everyone has to pay some amount of tax, whether buying or selling, Trebizond is a

The Christians of Serapis

Hidden in the bowels of the city of Sinope is a heretical Christian sect that has substitute the Babylonian god Serapis for God. Originating in Babylon, Serapis was brought to Anatolia by Alexander the Great. With his death, Ptolemy took the cult statue to Alexandria in Egypt, where he blended stories of Serapis with popular Egyptian gods, hoping to create a single deity. During the reign of Emperor Hadrian, Egyptian Christians started worshiping Serapis. The sect was thought destroyed in the fourth century, but the cult statue survived, and remnants of the sect smuggled it to Sinope where it has remained ever since.

In Mythic Europe, Serapis is a False God (*Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page

37). Serapis' cult numbers approximately 200 followers, including a dozen priests who lead the congregation. Few of these followers know Serapis' true nature, and the demon uses his Shroud the Stench of the Pit ability to mask the Infernal nature of any Supernatural Abilities he bestows upon his servants. His priests do not actively antagonize or argue with clerics of the Eastern Church, preferring to copy their dress and function to covertly proselytize new followers. The Greek ruler of Sinope, Etoumes, has recently taken one of these priests as his confessor, to the thrill of Serapis. While a vassal of the Seljuk sultan, Etoumes is not a Muslim. This can only lead to woe in the years to come.

The Pearl of Peroz

In the mid-fifth century, King Peroz of Persia led a large army into Eastern Anatolia against the Ephthalites, a tribe of nomadic Huns. He wore a beautiful pearl earring, the largest and most magnificent pearl ever seen, and one reputed to have magical properties. According to legend, the pearl was discovered when a fisherman noticed a shark of great size and ferocity. The shark was following an oyster, which swam near the shore and occasionally displayed its pearl for the shark to marvel over. Thinking his king would reward him, the fisherman jumped into the ocean, grabbed and flung the oyster to the shore, and was promptly devoured by the shark. The pearl was given to the king, who noticed that the shark still wanted it and circled viciously in the ocean by the shore. Whenever the king went near the ocean,

the shark was sure to appear.

Peroz died in battle, falling into an enemy trench that his force had been tricked into. Ripping the pearl from his ear, he flung it aside so that it wouldn't be buried with him. Since that time, the pearl has occasionally resurfaced. If the bearer is near water, the shark soon appears, eager to retrieve the pearl.

Lately, fishermen from the Trebizond docks have noticed a large, extremely fierce shark prowling their shores. Attempts to kill the shark have failed, and several fishermen have lost their lives in the attempts. Remembering the legend, they are sure that the pearl must be somewhere in the city. They say that the shark is certainly a magical creature, and wonder at the potent magic that must be inherent in the pearl.

very rich city.

Like his grandfather, Alexios is a patron of art and literature. Leaving theoretical dogma and institutional learning to Nicaea, Trebizond concentrates on esoteric literature. Alexios has bequeathed titles and stipends to a host of astronomers, alchemists, and experimental philosophers. Since the city has always looked East for trade, it is much more sympathetic to Persian and Arabic learning than are other Greek cities. Among the numerous tomes and scrolls in the many libraries is an uncorrupted copy of Ptolemy's *The Geography*, re-translated from Arabic into Greek. Because Trebizond scholars are so isolated, the magi of Anato-

lia have no idea that this text exists. Those interested in celestial magic or the secrets of Ptolemy's magical coordinates would give their eyeteeth for the text (see *Ancient Magic*, pages 89-91).

Several Magic auras have formed in the city, due to its natural beauty. Most of them are centered on the various gardens and arboretums throughout the city. Magic has seeped into the various plants, and Trebizond has a wide variety of magical herbs, fruits, and hardwood. One grove of trees grows so strong that its bark is as sturdy as iron, and pieces must be soaked in water for a year before they are supple enough for craftwork. Aristotle noted some of these plants in

his works, including a vine that drips honey that can cure insane people and epileptics. Several plants, if properly harvested, would produce annual vis.

Recently Trebizond has been harried by bardi, a type of shapeshifting spirit that takes the form of a female jackal. Solitary in demeanor, a bardi is known to wail just before a death, presaging the event to listeners. The clergy claims the bardi are demons, but the townspeople think them faeries. Magi have yet to capture one of these creatures and investigate it thoroughly. A bardi is unnervingly accurate, however, and everyone who has seen its jackal form and heard its wail has lost someone dear in the near future.



The Covenant of Alexandria

Alexandria is a Mercere covenant, the bureaucratic center of the Theban Tribunal. Founded after the demise of the first Mercere covenant, Miphoria, it houses most of the Redcaps of the Tribunal. This autumn covenant also serves as a retirement house for Redcaps too old or too Warped by Twilight to effectively fulfill their duties. Despite certain difficulties created by the current machinations of the mundanes, Alexandria continues to be the hub of the information network of Thebes.



History

Alexandria is the second all-Mercere covenant in the Tribunal's history, formed after the decline and fall of the first, Miphoria, in the early 11th century. Located on the coastal outskirts of Smyrna, Miphoria had relied on fantastical and overt magical means of transport, including riding a species of giant magical sea turtles. The Tribunal decided that its members were drawing undue mundane attention to the Order, and asked them to keep a lower profile. Deprived of the sea turtles, Miphoria floundered, and by 1063 most of her Redcaps had taken up residence in other covenants.

A central location had greatly facili-

tated the bureaucratic responsibilities of Theban Redcaps, and a second attempt was deemed sensible. At the time, Methodius was the most popular Redcap in the Tribunal. Claiming to be a descendant of Alexander the Great, he had gained notoriety by discovering Alexander's flying device in the lands of the Seljuk Turks. Returning to Smyrna, Methodius selected an old fortress on the south side of the city for the site of the new covenant, atop Mt. Pagus. Not only did the fortress contain a Magic aura, several regiones sat inside the dilapidated walls. Though it was haunted by the ghostly remnants of Alexander's army, Methodius bound an eidolon spirit that lingered with the ghosts to act as Alexandria's patron spirit. The damaged walls were left as they were, so as not to attract military attention. Wooden houses were built in the aura, and stone houses were built in the regio. The building program was finished in 1075, and Methodius named the covenant "Alexandria" as a nod to the many cities built by his famous forefather.

Alexandria prospered due to the efficient centralization of Mercere duties and the many trade agreements the covenant made with nations along the Aegean Sea. As its coffers swelled, Seekers funded by Alexandria discovered the glass submarine, another of Alexander the Great's artifacts. The two artifacts drew Philagrius — an inventive Verditius magus — to the covenant. He discovered that the submarine and flying device are both mechanica, crafted by the descendants of the legendary Heron (*Ancient Magic*, Chapter Six).

But all was not rosy within the covenant. The powerful Longevity Rituals the covenant members imbibed led to magical Warping. Though many lived to an advanced age, some accumulated many magical Flaws. As a member's Warping grew worse, he would avoid mundane society and counterproductively spend more time in the regio. Alexandria's reputation changed from that of an awe-inspiring covenant of merchant adventures and savvy political contributors, to a retirement home for bizarre Redcaps.

Alexandria continues to satisfy its purpose in the 13th century despite all this, although the covenant has experienced several negative consequences from the fall of Constantinople. At the Tribunal of 1207, Petronas, who had served as logothete for almost a hundred years, abdicated his post. His replacement, Leontius, is unsatisfactory. Seven years later, at the Tribunal of 1214, he narrowly escaped being ostracized. Also, the

Emperor of Nicaea recently has stationed a small garrison of imperial soldiers in the castle, expelling the covenfolk and making entry into the regiones difficult. The garrison is there to protect Smyrna from invading Turks, and does not know that a regio resides inside the walls.

Setting and Physical Description

The ruined citadel housing Alexandria sits atop Mt. Pagus, a small mountain to the south of Smyrna overlooking the city and the bay. Its stone walls and towers have deteriorated with time, leaving only a shell of a fortress. Alexandria has not rebuilt the wall, only cleaned up the interior and built several wooden houses to hold its staff. Lascaris' soldiers currently reside in these houses. The dilapidated citadel has a Magic aura of 1.

Two regiones lie inside the aura. The first, which has a Magic aura of 3, houses the majority of the covenant's ghosts. Simple cloth tents form a grid, similar to the military bivouacs of Alexander the Great's troops. The second regio sits in the center of the tent complex and has a Magic aura of 5. The main buildings of the covenant sit here — beautiful stone buildings that are home to the retired Redcaps and serve as the storehouse for the records of the Thebes Tribunal. Alexandria has two fully functional Hermetic laboratories, only one of which is currently in use.

Alexandria maintains several buildings in Smyrna, mostly warehouses used for commercial interests. The covenant owns three ships resting in the harbor, including one chained to the glass submarine.

STATED PURPOSE

Alexandria exists to provide a central location for the bureaucratic operations of the Tribunal and a safe and convenient location for the Tribunal's Redcaps.

PATRON SPIRIT: FIDES

Fides is an eidolon, a spirit of emotions. She is the spirit of loyalty, created by the steadfast allegiance that Alexander's troops expressed to their leader. With Alexander's death and the collapse of his empire, Fi-

des resided with the troops, finding those stationed at Alexandria in Smyrna to be particularly devoted to their fallen leader. Many of those most devoted became ghosts, their spirits anchored by their slavish devotion to Alexander's notion of empire. Fides thrives in this environment, and lives among the ghostly tents of the first level of the regio.

Methodius' binding of Fides included the promise that the new occupants would continue to pay tribute both to Alexander and his empire. Methodius was able to connect these requirements with the Theban Tribunal, so that rather than conquer the world, Fides is satisfied with the "Hermetic Empire of Thebes." She demands that the members of Alexandria stay loyal to this empire, the Order, and promises to stay there for as long as they do.

Culture and Traditions

Many of Alexandria's members are quite old. They still participate in Tribunal politics, but are not as enthusiastic as they were in their youth. While enjoying their riches, they are somewhat imprisoned inside their covenant. Food and supplies have to be sneaked in, and any member wishing to leave has to sneak out. The Redcaps have the vis to buy powerful Longevity Rituals, and often take them in their mid-thirties. Five of the 15 unGifted members are over 130 years old, and considerably twisted from accumulated the Warping of their Longevity Rituals. But they have little desire for life outside the covenant's walls, anyway. They spend their days retelling stories of their youths, recounting past exploits, taunting the ghosts, and generally annoying each other.

Five of the members are considered middle aged by their sodales, ranging from sixty to a hundred years old with Warping scores from 3 to 5. These are the most active members who actually live at the covenant. They participate in the political system of the Tribunal, serving in the more prestigious posts. They also run Alexandria, see to the needs of their elders, oversee the covenant's merchant efforts, and maintain Tribunal records. The five youngest members don't actually live at the covenant, preferring houses in Smyrna or other towns altogether. They perform their duties as messengers and heralds, and try to gather the political clout that will enable them to receive more important duties.

Magi

Alexandria has 15 Redcap members, none of them Gifted, and one Bonisagus maga named Catella.

LEONTIUS OF HOUSE MERCERE

Age: 132 (Apparent Age: 82)

Personality Traits: Worried +3

Leontius is a tall, thin man with a receding hairline and long gray mustache. He has recently Warped enough to gain his first Major Flaw. Though unGifted, a prior Supernatural Virtue allows him to enjoy the same potency a Longevity Ritual would grant a magus. To his shame, he developed "The Curse of Lycaon," the colloquial term for lycanthropy. His transformation is not linked to the lunar cycle, but is dependent upon his mood. When he becomes excessively anxious he changes into a wolf.

Leontius is the current logothete of the Tribunal, a position he rues accepting. Despite his best efforts he has failed. Records have been lost, lists have gone missing, and the all-important book registering tokens and shards has been found to be faulty. He knows the Tribunal is displeased and plans to resign at the next gathering.

PROXIMIOS OF HOUSE MERCERE

Age: 91 (Apparent Age: 42)

Personality Traits: Intense +3, Eloquent +2, Humble +2

Proximios is broad-shouldered, handsome man with dark, neatly combed hair. He is a blood descendant of Andreas, a mythic hero who performed admirably in Justinian's Persian Wars in the sixth century. While not a professional warrior, Andreas nevertheless defeated two Persian champions in hand-to-hand combat, using his skills as a professional gymnast to beat the more heavily armed opponents. Proximios' mythic ancestry has given him astonishing abilities, including the performance of near-legendary feats of acrobatics. At the beginning of his career, he used his gymnastic skills to impress magi who received his delivered messages. Lucian, head of the covenant of Aegaea, especially enjoyed these performances.

Proximios has a very good reputation as an efficient and quick-thinking politician, even though he has never been placed in a position of authority. Always an assistant, he

has nevertheless made a name for himself. Because he is so involved with Tribunal affairs, for the last twenty years he has been excused from regular Redcap business, and has not acted as a messenger.

It was Proximios' idea to change the length of the term of logothete for the Tribunal, from serving for seven years, like the other political positions, to an undetermined length of time. His argument was that a longer logothete term would lead to consistency, and would remove the need for a new logothete to review past records and familiarize himself with the post. Many magi agreed with Proximios. Besides seeing the new term as efficient, it placated those who repeatedly suggest that the overseers of the Tribunal change too often.

Many Redcaps believe Proximios should be the next logothete, and plan to propose the measure at the Tribunal of 1221. Proximios is staying quiet about it, neither admitting nor denying his desire for the post. Most think it is his humility that keeps Proximios silent.

(See also Chapter 3: The Order of Hermes, The Order of the Vigilant; and Storyguides see Chapter 12: Infernal Landscape, An Enemy Within.)

CATELLA OF HOUSE BONISAGUS

Age: 41 (Apparent Age: 39)

Personality Traits: Patient +3, Cheerful +1, Determined +1

Catella is the only Gifted member of Alexandria. She joined the covenant directly out of apprenticeship, two years before Constantinople fell, when the reputation of Alexandria was still good. Drawn by the artifacts of Alexander, she has been investigating them, but in twenty years she has made little headway. Because of this interest, Catella has been given the responsibility of loaning them out, which both excites and frustrates her. She likes being in charge of the artifacts, but dislikes that they are not always available for her investigations. In the spirit of cooperation, Alexandria has made borrowing the artifacts easy, and Catella complies with this decision even if it interrupts her personal plans.

Covenfolk

A dozen mundane covenfolk live in Alexandria, residing in the inner regio and serving the needs of the Redcaps and the maga

Catella. They are servants and cooks rather than warriors. Two dozen other mundanes live in Smyrna, working at the warehouses, docks, and ships as needed. They receive a healthy stipend for their labors and are fairly loyal to the covenant. Alexandria sponsors an annual feast and celebration for its staff, held in a private house in Smyrna. Most of the urban mundane workers have never visited Alexandria, nor have they met the elder, bizarre-looking senior Redcaps.

Enchanted Devices

Besides the two artifacts of Alexander, Alexandria has a handful of magical items aimed at making a Redcap's traveling life easier. Cloaks that shed water, items that measure vis, and flasks that keep wine from spoiling are common. Once given to a Redcap, these items become the property of the holder. The Alexandrian artifacts, described below, are public property of the covenant and may be used by any member. They may also be loaned out to any magus in the Tribunal who has a positive tally of tokens over shards. The borrower must provide a deposit — either a lump sum of vis or magical items valuable to the borrower — and must return the item in a specified amount of time. The longer the item will be borrowed, the larger the deposit. In addition, the borrower must pay 1 pawn of vis for each week that they he retains the item.

THE FLYING DEVICE

The flying device is a large, chariot-shaped transport with two wheels, waist-high railings, and a long hitch. Like the glass submarine, the flying device is also a mechanica invented by an ancient mechanician. It is not a simulacrum, however, and only has a single instilled power. When activated, the flying device can float into the air as effortlessly as a puff of smoke. Other than this vertical ascent, its direction cannot be controlled, making it submissive to breezes and winds. The hitch must be yoked to a team of flying beasts, which then pulls the device and theoretically can be controlled by reins, much as a team of horses.

The tale that Alexander hitched gryphons to the device cannot be substantiated, but rather points to the megalomania inherent in many of his legends. The Red-

caps of Alexandria have found that almost any team of flying beasts can pull the device, provided that their combined Size is +8. The hitch is long enough to hold four beasts, and the chariot large enough to hold six Size 0 passengers. In the past, Alexandria used flying horses to pull the device, each horse having a magic horseshoe nailed to its hoof that allowed it to fly. Unfortunately, the horses escaped two years ago, while wearing the magic horseshoes. The device has sat idle since. The flying device is a level 39 effect (ReTe base 3, +2 metal, +4 Size adjustment, +2 Sun, +1 level for two uses per day, +3 for environmental trigger sunrise/sunset).

THE GLASS SUBMARINE

Legends are deliberately vague as to the exact nature of Alexander's underwater device. It is most often called a "bathysphere"

and envisioned as a glass bubble suspended from a ship with chains. In actuality, the glass submarine is an awakened simulacrum, or "anima," a sentient mechanica made of iron and shaped like a giant dolphin. The submarine is the size of an elephant and able to hold five Size 0 passengers within its hollow guts. It is indeed tethered to a ship with chains of iron, to prevent it from swimming off. Like a horse, it can transport people, but is a living, thinking thing rather than a simple enchanted device that responds to commands.

The glass submarine is chained to a ship owned by Alexandria and docked at Smyrna. The ship is continually under guard, and to avoid suspicion, used just as often as the covenant's other merchant vessels. Even when manned, the submarine often remains chained to the ship, which follows the submarine on its voyages. The chain is six hundred feet long and allows the submarine a great deal of mobility. When manned, the chain can be released and the submarine can roam unfettered.

Moero's Garden

Moero's Garden is a covenant of Jerbiton magi living in Nicaea, the new capital of the displaced Byzantine Empire. Aristocratic and effete, its members were expelled from their original site in Constantinople and eagerly seek to return. Until then, they make do as best they can, pursuing their artistic interests and dignified lifestyles.



History

Moero's Garden was founded in 1163 during the glory years of Emperor Manuel Komnenos. Ionna of House Jerbiton, a minor Byzantine noble and lover of women poets,

Anima: The Glass Submarine

Because the glass submarine is an awakened simulacrum, it has Characteristics and Abilities similar to a regular dolphin. It has powers because they were instilled in it, not because of its essential magical nature like magic creatures. Consequently, it does not need to spend Might points to activate its powers.

Magic Might: 12 (Terram)

Characteristics: Int -3, Per -2, Pre -5, Com -6, Str +7, Sta +1, Dex +3, Qik -3

Size: +4

Virtues and Flaws: Lightning Reflexes, Poor Eyesight

Personality Traits: Playful +3, Loyal +1

Combat:

Dodge: Init 0, Attack n/a, Defense +0, Damage n/a

Soak: +8

Wound Penalties: None, see below.

Abilities: Awareness 2 (food), Brawl 2 (dodging), Survival 3 (Aegean Sea), Swim 5 (Bay of Smyrna)

Powers:

Supple as a Fish, 0 points, Init +0, Terram. This instilled power allows the anima to swim as naturally as a fish. ReTe 34: base 3, +2 metal, +3 Size, +2 Sun, +1 level for two uses per day, +3 levels for environmental trigger sunrise/sunset, +1 complexity.

Transparent Skin, 0 points, Init +0, Terram.

This effect changes the opacity of the anima's skin so that it is nearly transparent, making it difficult to spot and allowing interior riders to clearly see through it. MuTe 24: base 1, +2 metal, +3 Size adjustment, +2 Sun, +1 level for two uses per day, +3 levels for environmental trigger sunrise/sunset.

Habitable Bowels, 0 points, Init +0, Auram.

This effect produces a slight breeze within the anima's interior, providing air for the riders and making the experience slightly more comfortable. CrAu 19: base 1, +1 Touch, +3 Structure, +2 Sun, +1 level for two uses per day, +3 levels for environmental trigger sunrise/sunset.

Appearance: The anima looks like a huge dolphin made out of iron.

The anima is an ancient construction, built before Alexander discovered it. The builder used 9 of the 12 available slots for vis, meaning that it could receive more enchantments from a trained mechanician. If investigated, it will provide three Insights for hermetic integration for each investigator.

The anima can be boarded through a large, water-tight hatch on its back, approximately in the location of its blowhole.

There is room for five Size 0 people inside, although filling it with five will make it quite crowded. Larger characters will fit, but will have a difficult time climbing through the hatch.

Because the anima is made out of iron, it does not have Wound Penalties like living creatures, but Damage Levels like commercial products (see *City & Guild*, page 77). Whenever an attack does damage greater than the anima's Soak, it must make a stress check to avoid losing a Damage Level. Roll the anima's Stamina (+1) plus a stress die against an Ease Factor equal to the excess damage. If the roll fails, the anima loses a Damage Level; if the roll botches, it loses additional Damage Levels equal to the number of botches. The anima has 15 Damage Levels total. It suffers no penalties as it accrues damage (loses Damage Levels), but when the last one is lost it bursts asunder and is destroyed.

Repairing the submarine is difficult, and can only be done by someone with a score in either Mechanica or Automata. If a character has one of these Abilities, she can repair a number of Damage Levels equal to her score in a season. Catella does not yet have a score in Mechanica, but a handful of Verditius magi throughout the Tribunal are skilled in Automata.

carefully searched the older sections of the city for the home of Moero, a prolific poet living around 300 BC. Discovering that the site rested in one of the city's several lacunas, she summoned Moero's ghost and asked her to serve as the patron spirit for a new covenant. With this accomplished, Ionna asked some of her sodales, all Jerbiton magi with aristocratic family ties, to join her. She dedicated her covenant to finding literature and art of the early Byzantine period, which House Jerbiton considers a very laudable venture. A condition of membership was that the magi could not work for a living, copying the conditions of Roman senators and Byzantine nobles, and that their income had to be derived from land toiled by others' hands. The covenant prospered, leaving its members time to indulge their literary and artistic proclivities.

During its time in Constantinople, Moero's Garden did not participate in the mundane affairs of the emperor. While they attended social functions, they rigidly resisted close connections to the imperial family and mundane politicians. Rather, they focused on beautifying their covenant, taking expensive holidays abroad, and visiting the sites in the Theban Tribunal that house ancient architecture and paintings. The magi were overly trusting of both the Hermetic political system and the emperor's rule, assured that no harm would come to them as long as they remained politically uninvolved with the emperor.

Things changed when the crusaders stormed the walls and seized the city. The beauty of the city was horribly scared, and while Moero's Garden escaped the initial destruction, its members were not confident that it would remain untouched. The crusaders' reputation for looting made them fear for their library and collected artifacts, and when the chance to leave the city came, they followed the majority of the affluent Greeks and fled. They carried what possessions they could, but the vast majority was left behind. They fled to a chapter house they had established in Nicaea, the ancestral home of Hipparchus of Nicaea, a famous Greek astronomer who lived around 190 BC. This former summer home has become the entirety of their covenant.

Setting and Physical Description

The home of Hipparchus sits in a corner of Nicaea in a section devoted to merchants

and their families. It is a large building three stories high, with both an outer and inner courtyard. Palatial by merchants' standards, the members find it squalid, cramped, and undignified, despite their best efforts to rehabilitate the place's aesthetics. The top floor of the building is divided into laboratories, the second floor is the magi's living quarters, and the covenfolk live on the ground floor. Their library and artifacts of art are stored in the basement, a condition which continues to horrify them.

To make matters worse, the new site rests in a Divine aura of 2. While not an insurmountable obstacle to the magi, their apprentices find it difficult to cast spells and complete their final years of apprenticeship at the covenant.

STATED PURPOSE

Moero's Garden's original purpose was to assemble the splendid artifacts and literature of the past to highlight the harmony and peaceful cerebral delight of beauty, which would temper hot emotions and promote a sense of well-being and serenity throughout the Order. With the fall of Constantinople and the scattering of the treasures she once held, Moero's Garden also seeks to reclaim items that were lost.

PATRON SPIRIT: HIPPARCHUS

Moero's Garden's patron spirit is the ghost of Hipparchus, summoned and reluctantly bound by Ionna. While Moero's ghost is still bound in Constantinople, the Tribunal stipulates that a covenant's patron spirit reside within the covenant, forcing Ionna to bind this second ghost. In terms of Might, Hipparchus' ghost is not powerful, nor is it happy to have been disturbed from its centuries-long slumber. Consequently, the ghost torments those he can, primarily the covenfolk because the magi are too powerful for it to affect. It spends its day pulling hair, tipping over bowls of wine, and blowing out lamps.

When things get really bad, Ionna placates the ghost by spending time with it, gazing at the stars and discussing astronomy. Hipparchus' ghost enjoys such evenings, which effectively soothes it for a week or so.

The members are afflicted with the idea that, like aristocratic nobles, they should not have to work to earn their living. They do not wish to sully their hands or their magic with labor, and feel entitled to lives of ease. This becomes increasingly difficult the longer they are removed from Constantinople. The covenant's finances are managed by Pastor, the autocrat, and they are dwindling. Money is not the only threatened resource. Displaced from Constantinople and the rich vis sites surrounding the city, Moero's Garden has only found one vis site to replace the many it lost. Most of its vis comes from the generosity of other magi around the Tribunal, whose gifts of vis are greatly appreciated.

To compensate for the covenant's failing fortunes, Pastor has become the financial backer for several craftsmen and artists in Nicaea, using the majority of the covenant's treasure as seed money. Over time, the craftsmen have become fairly wealthy and are an important source of income for Moero's Garden. Two of the artisans are able to create enchanted commodities; Nonna is a cosmetic manufacturer who can produce wondrous items (*City & Guild*, pages 70-73) and Ampelius is a maestro who paints breathtaking religious murals (*Art & Academe*, pages 133-135). The magi enjoy the craftsmen's income, but shudder when they realize that their wealth is linked to crafters. Ampelius enjoys a better reputation because he is an artist, but the magi would rather appreciate his work than acknowledge his financial contributions.

Four of the seven Jerbiton magi are members of the League of Constantine and think that the covenant should support the Emperor of Nicaea in his attempts to regain Constantinople. The two youngest members, Trasaric and Helladius, claim that the city fell because covenant members idled away their days instead of protecting their homeland. Ionna and Syagricus disagree, saying that Constantinople has suffered calamities before and always righted itself, and this current occupation will pass with time. The covenant is undecided, with equal members agreeing and disagreeing with the pair.

Magi

Moero's Garden has eight magi: seven of House Jerbiton and one Tylalus maga with the

Gentle Gift. Three of the Jerbiton magi have apprentices who will soon be gauntleted.

IONNIA OF HOUSE JERBITON

Age: 107 (Apparent Age: 91)

Personality Traits: Poetic +3, Blunt +2, Frivolous +2

Ionnia is a tall woman, with thinning, white hair and dull blue eyes. She dresses in sumptuous robes and adorns herself with gold necklaces, jeweled rings, and gem-encrusted bracelets. In her early years, before founding Moero's Garden, Ionnia made a name for herself by collecting all the poetry of Kassia, a ninth-century nun and the most famous female poet of the Byzantine Empire. A master of Rego and Mentem magic, Ionnia's ability to summon and interrogate ghosts has been a great aid in her quest for ancient poetry. The collection is marvelous and collecting it earned Ionnia a famous reputation with House Jerbiton.

Because Longevity Rituals have never worked very well for her — she has the Hermetic Major Flaw Difficult Longevity Ritual — Ionnia is extremely frail and not long for this world. This doesn't seem to bother her, and while she mourns the loss of her original covenant site, she finds contentment in her idle pastimes, communications with her two living daughters, and early evening social engagements. While she has served the Tribunal in the past, she declares herself too old for politics anymore, although she plans to travel to Delos for the next Tribunal meeting to sacrifice vis to the covenant's patron spirit.

SYAGRICUS OF HOUSE JERBITON

Age: 102 (Apparent Age: 43)

Personality Traits: Outspoken +3, Opin-

ionated +2, Kind +1

Syagricus is the oddest Jerbiton member of the covenant, both in temperament and physically. He is a genuine hermaphrodite and seems quite proud of it. He dresses to accentuate both his male and female gender, wearing a full beard and a dress that accentuates his bust. His sexual nature is inexplicable but medically proven, and Syagricus sees his true nature as beautiful and refuses to hide it. His sodales are very accepting of his nature, but would prefer he didn't mention it as much as he does.

Syagricus happily imbibes his Longevity Ritual, which is a daily mixture of specially prepared herbs and powders drunk at noon, and is hale and hearty. Interested in art, etiquette, and a pleasant life, much like his sodales, he is more determined to regain the covenant's objects of art lost when they fled Constantinople than in continuing a hedonistic lifestyle. Syagricus has joined Valnastium's league of New Iconophiles (*Houses of Hermes: Soceitates*, page 54), and travels to Constantinople at least once a year to search for the lost pieces of art.

Syagricus' apprentice, Pancratius, is due to be gauntleted in 1221, and hopes to receive the honor at the upcoming Tribunal. Pancratius will likely join Moero's Garden as a full member, and Trasaric and Helladius hope that he will side with them in assisting the emperor, tipping the vote in their favor.

ZIPER OF HOUSE TYTALUS

Age: 129 (Apparent Age: 65)

Personality Traits: Conniving +3, Obsequious +3, Busybody +2

The oldest magus at Moero's Garden, Ziper joined after its relocation to Nicaea. He usually dresses in white robes and a red

overlying toga. He is stooped and wrinkled and completely bald. His appearance is deceiving, for while he looks venerable, he has the energy and acumen of a youth.

Ziper feels that the covenant needs new members, that its size is a detriment to its standing in the Tribunal. He has proposed that Nanno and Ampelius be accepted into the covenant as members of House Jerbiton. While not magi, they can effect minor enchantments within their creations. Proximos of House Mercere (see *The Covenant of Alexandria*, earlier) supports his position, citing how beneficial his House of unGifted people is to the Order, and theorizing that unGifted members in House Jerbiton would only contribute to its success. The other members, apart from Syagricus, are horrified at this proposal, not because Nanno and Ampelius are unGifted, but because they are craftsmen! Both artisans, Nanno more so than Ampelius, think the life of a magus must be wonderful, and threaten to travel to Delos and ask the Tribunal as a whole for membership.

Covenfolk

Of the forty or so craftsmen and servants that work for Moero's Garden, the most important is the autocrat Pastor. Besides managing the day-to-day business and finances, he has been put in charge of managing the covenant's vis stores, which are ever-decreasing. His wife, Viviana, is the covenant's main scribe, responsible for preserving and organizing Moero's Garden's library. Besides the vast collection of poetry, the library contains several summae and tractatus on Rego and Mentem magic, written by Ionnia, as well as tractatus of her personal poetry.

Chapter Nine

The Magical Landscape

The Theban Tribunal has a rich history of magic. This section discusses the magical powers that some think once ruled the world, and the magic that is thought to derive from their captivity. It also considers some of the non-Hermetic magics that are practiced across the four seas.

The Titans

In pagan mythology, the universe was created by primal beings beyond mortal understanding such as Khaos (Chaos), Ouranos (Heaven), Ge (Earth), Pontus (Sea), Erebus (Abyss), Nyx (Night), and Hemera (Day).

Christian theologians who have studied the classics count these beings (the protogonoi) and their children (the titans) among the allegorical or actual Intelligences whom God set to rule over natural processes.

The six male Titans are all responsible for governing time in the Magic Realm. Hyperion establishes day and night, Krios orders the heavenly constellations, Koios rules the axis of the heavens, Iapetos is the titan of mortality, Kronos rules all-devouring time, and Okeanos regulates the motion of the tides. Their wives control natural forces of the Magic Realm: Theia is the brilliant sky, Mnemosyne (or Eurybia) is the mistress of the weather, Phoibe is the prophetic earth, Themis (or Klymene) is the Underworld's cavern, Rhea is the fecundity of nature, and Tethys is the power of the waters under the earth. As described in *Realms*

of *Power: Magic*, page 109, these primal beings are members of the Magic Realm, unlike the gods who succeeded them, who are faeries.

It is not difficult to understand the fascination that many magi of the Theban Tribunal have for these cosmic figures. Those individuals who pursue study of the titans are divided broadly into three factions, detailed below. These factions are not (yet) formal political leagues, but simply like-minded individuals who often collaborate due to similar goals. The names of the factions — Seekers of the Fallen, Legion of Atlas, and Kampe's Lovers — were coined four Tribunals ago by Lucian (see Chapter 4, Hermetic Leagues) in a cynical speech mocking their efforts. The labels have stuck, and younger members of the factions have begun to refer to themselves in these terms.



The Titans as Governors of the Universe

The titans are creatures of the Magic Realm, leading some to theorize that they were among the first creations of God. When He separated the earth and the sky, He created Ge and Ouranos; when He ordered the light He created Nyx and Hemera, and so forth. The implication is that the Magic Realm is the primal state of the world before man. With the titans set over time, and the titanesses set over nature, their children became the inventors of all human sciences and arts, the progenitors of culture, and, some say, the creators of mankind.

SEEKERS OF THE FALLEN

This loose coalition of a handful of magi believe that the restoration of the titans will lead to a new age of magic. They believe the Garden of Eden was the Magic

Realm, and when Adam and Eve were cast out beyond its bounds, they entered the mundane world, bringing with them fragments of the Magic Realm that manifested as auras. Most respected among the Seekers is Evantia of Moero's Garden. The members of this faction are fascinated with Magic auras, regiones, and portals into the Magic Realm itself.

The Titans as Enemies of the Gods

The rulership of the titans over the universe was not destined to last. Kronos ate every one of his children by Rhea, after a prophecy revealed he was destined to be overthrown by his son. Appalled at his behavior, Rhea fed Kronos a stone instead of her third son and youngest child, and had the baby Zeus raised in secret. When he came of age, Zeus fed his father an emetic, and he vomited forth the stone, then Zeus' elder siblings. Meeting as a council of war, the children of Kronos asked Zeus to lead them in war against the titans. The battle was enjoined and dragged on for many years. Initially neutral, Atlas joined the fight against the gods when they sunk Atlantis, his beloved island kingdom. He took over leadership from Kronos, and the titans started to win. The turning point for the gods, which won them the war, was obtaining three fabulous weapons from the Kyklopes: Hades stole the titans' weapons using the helmet of invisibility, Poseidon distracted them with his trident, and Zeus struck them down using the thunderbolt. All the titans were captured and imprisoned in Tartaros, save Atlas who was set to hold up the vault of heaven, and Prometheus who sided with the gods.

LEGION OF ATLAS

Perhaps the most radical faction of the Theban Tribunal, the Legion of Atlas seek to undermine the faerie gods. Rather than preserving the remnants of the Magic Realm on earth, the Atlasiens plan to make it anew. This is a dangerous goal; not only are the gods themselves powerful opponents, but the Oath of Hermes is quite specific about prohibiting the molestation of the fae.

Kristophoros of Bonisagus is an evangelizing magus who takes the First Commandment very seriously. He believes that the

The Titans, in Brief

The following is a very brief overview of the titans and their progeny, the Daimons and nymphs. Readers are directed to the bibliography for more information.

The sons of Krios and Mnemosyne are Perses, Pallas, and Astraio. Perses is the titan of the scorching heat of summer and destruction. His daughter is Hekate, goddess of witchcraft. Pallas is the titan of war-craft and spring. His children by Styx are the Daimons of rivalry, strength, force, victory, and persuasion beloved by House Tytalus (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 94). Astraio is the titan of autumn and the stars, and father of the winds and the planets. Mnemosyne is also the mother of the Muses by Zeus.

Iapetos and Themis had four sons:

Atlas, titan of endurance and daring; Prometheus, titan of forethought and crafty counsel; Epimetheus, titan of afterthought and excuses; and Menoitios, titan of violence. Themis is also the mother of the three Graces and the three Fates by Zeus.

Hyperion and Theia gave birth to the sun (Helios), the moon (Selene), and the dawn (Eos). Okeanos and Tethys are the parents of all the world's rivers and seas. Koios represents the inquisitive mind, and is acclaimed as the creator of science; Phoibe stands for the intuitive mind. Their two daughters are Leto, titaness of heavenly prophecy and omens, and Asteria, titaness of the oracles and prophecies of the night (including dreams and necromancy).

remnants of pagan practices across the Tribunal are a form of insidious evil, and seeks to cleanse Hermetic procedure in Thebes from any hint of idolatry. Curiously enough, he has no issue with the titans, since they do not desire worship, unlike the faerie gods who live for it. Kristophoros has become a rallying point for all magi of the Legion of Atlas, since their goals coincide even if their philosophies do not. Kristophoros has used his considerable rhetorical powers in the past to prevent convictions against those magi who molest the fae, and characters may find in him an unexpected (and perhaps unwelcome) ally at Tribunal.

The Titans as a Government in Exile

Mother Earth was consumed with wrath at the treatment of her children by her grandchildren, and bore a race of giants to wreak her anger. The 24 giants attacked the gods, but they were incapable of being killed by the gods, requiring instead the hand of Herakles to land the death blow. During the fight the geography of the world was rearranged as both gods and giants used uprooted islands and mountains as missiles. Ultimately the giants were defeated and either imprisoned or slain. The final monster to be brought forth by Earth was Typhon, the mightiest giant of all; his ass' head brushed the heavens, his wings darkened the sky, and he spat burning

rocks from his mouth. The gods were put to flight and they hid in Egypt in the shape of animals. Zeus was hamstrung by the hideous giant when he faced it; he was rescued by Hermes, and was subsequently successful in defeating Typhon with his thunderbolts and imprisoning him beneath the earth.

Having secured three victories over the progeny of Earth, the gods now reigned supreme. By overthrowing the titans and imprisoning them in the Underworld (that is, the Magic Realm), the gods usurped their power. The titans still represent the primal forces of the universe, but they do so at the behest of the gods.

KAMPE'S LOVERS

Mortal magicians discovered long ago that despite being imprisoned, the titans were still capable of providing power for the exercise of magic. Some Seekers claim that all magic comes to man through the titans, and Hermes was the first to discover how to take this power without weakening their bonds. These magi do not seek the downfall of the gods, but do desire a greater bond with the primal spirits of the Magic Realm. Dubbed Kampe's Lovers after the jailer of the titans, this faction is attractive to House Tytalus, since its goals mirror those of a Tytalan Mystery Cult called the Titanoi (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 94). Tisiphon of Hedyosmos is the most prominent member of this faction (see more on Tisiphon in Chapter 5: Greece, Hedyosmos).

Mythic Blood – Gigantes

Characters with the Mythic Blood Virtue can choose to have the blood of the Greek giants. These differ from giants in other parts of Mythic Europe, in that their immense size was accompanied by another distinct physical feature — they had serpent tails instead of feet. The Magical Focus that accompanies the Mythic Blood is usually connected with strength or the Form of Terram, and the Personality Flaw is Rebellious. Common Virtues and Flaws include: Giant Blood, Large; Horrifying Appearance — Snake Legs, Necessary Condition — must be touching the ground

NEW FLAW: REBELLIOUS

Major or Minor, Personality

You react adversely to any attempt

to impose 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.

NEW FLAW: HORRIFYING APPEARANCE – SNAKE LEGS

Major, Supernatural

You have no legs, instead your hips give rise to two or more snake-like tails; you should consider how you survived childhood with this horrific deformity. Your movement is not hindered under most circumstances. You can hide this deformity under clothing, but you cannot move without revealing it, leaving you feigning being crippled as well.

The Sibyls

Legend has it that 10 sibyls are entrusted with the secrets of the universe. All of the sibyls predated Christianity, and yet they predicted the birth of Christ, his miraculous life, and his death for the redemption of all mankind. Several theologians, including St. Augustine and Peter Abelard, have declared the oracles of the sibyls to be true prophecy despite being relics of paganism. Whether or not each utterance of a sibyl is true prophecy is up to the storyguide. The *oracula sibyllina* (the *Oracle of the Sibyls*) is widely circulated in the 13th century, as a descendant of a collection of many thousands of sayings of the sibyls uttered over hundreds of years.

What is little known is that the sibyls are ancient magic humans, gifted with immortality and true sight. Some are rumored to have been born mortal, and it is possible that "sibyl" is a role rather than an individual. Each sibyl rests in a powerful Magic aura or regio, and cannot leave without risking losing her prophetic powers (through Acclimation; see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 52, for more details). Half of the sibyls dwell within the boundaries of the Theban Tribunal, and they are occasionally sought out for their wisdom, although each has a quirk in the manner in which she provides prophecy. Sibyls rarely live alone, and often have mundane or supernatural guardians to help them protect their secrets.

THE ERYTHRAEAN SIBYL

Demophile lives in Erythrae, a town in Ionia opposite Chios. She is closest to Christian teaching in her utterances, and is consequently more celebrated than her sisters. Her prophecies are presented in riddles; most characteristically as acrostics (a poetic device she invented), where the initial letters of each sentence spell out a word.

THE DELPHIC SIBYL

Herophile dwells in the sacred precinct of Delphi on Mount Parnassus, a site famed for its oracle to Apollo. However, the Delphic Sibyl is not (and never was) the same as the Pythia — the priestess of Apollo known as the Delphic oracle — despite the two famous prophetesses occupying the same space (see Chapter 5: Greece for more details on Delphi). Herophile only utters prophecy for those with royal blood, although she seems unconcerned how dilute that blood is.

THE SAMIAN SIBYL

Phyto, on Samos, is one of the most approachable sibyls, and she is often brought gifts by the shepherds who graze their flocks near her cave. She demands that any questions are posed to her in a riddling rhyme, although her answers are refreshingly plain.

THE HELLESPONTINE SIBYL

Amalthea dwells at Dardania on Mount Ida in Asia Minor, although her origins are in Troy. She will prophesize truly for any native-born Trojan, but she refuses to utter any prophecy regarding Troy (or its present day descendant) ever since she predicted the war that saw so many Trojan deaths.

THE PHRYGIAN SIBYL

This sibyl's name is Lamia, and she haunts Phrygia in the Anatolian Highlands. She is probably not the she-monster of the same name who preys on the unwary, but she has an unsavory reputation nonetheless. She must be physically overcome and forced to speak prophetic words; unlike the other sibyls, she is monstrously strong.

THE SIBYLLIDES

While the sibyls themselves are incapable of leaving their shrines, they occasionally bear children to the visitors who seek their wisdom. A child of such a union is encouraged by her mother to leave the sanctuary of her magical home and experience the world. The children of sibyls — called sibyllides — are magic kin (*Realms of Power: Magic*, page 89). They may be magic characters or characters aligned with the Magic Realm. They always have powers associated with prophecy and extra-normal sight (like the Warders of Mystery from *Realms of Power: Magic*, page

The Other Sibyls

The Persian Sibyl is named Sambenthe and lives in ancient Babylon. The Libyan Sibyl Phemonoe dwells in the Siwa Oasis in the Libyan desert. Sabbe the Hebrew Sibyl is purported to have been on the Ark, as one of Noah's daughters-in-law. She wanders between Magic auras throughout the Holy Land. The Cumean Sibyl and the Tiburtine Sibyl are both to be found in Italy; Carmentis dwells at Lake Cumae near Naples, and Albunea next to the Tiber river in Etruria. The Cumean Sibyl sold three books of prophecy to King Tarquinius of Rome; these books became the property of a Roman college of priests, and then part of the lore of the Cult of Mercury.

95), and at least one has become a magus of the Order, naturally specialized in Intellego magic. They are obligated to return to their mother's home every decade to report to her what they have learned about the world, so that she can judge whether it is right for more of her prophecies to be released.

Magical Bindings

One of the most significant magical traditions of Ancient Greece — although by no means unique to Ancient Greece — is the power of bonds, whether those restraints are taken unwillingly or voluntarily in the form of oaths. These traditions have not vanished along with antiquity, but only fragments of them survive into the 13th century. It is the choice of the storyguide as to whether any or all of the fragments presented in this section constitute a single or multiple magical traditions, and whether practitioners of that magic still exist in the wildernesses of the Tribunal, away from the eyes of the Order.

Epanankoi

"Epanankoi" is a general term for spells that constrain, specifically for the purposes of coercing spirits and gods. The *epanankoi* are among the most powerful magics of the classical period, practiced by both gods and men, and are almost completely forgotten in the current day. Some fragments of this power remain, and magi eagerly seek them out for clues to this lost magic.

The Gates of Tartaros that constrain the titans are one of the most significant bindings known. These mighty chains allowed the gods to direct the power of the titans while keeping them imprisoned. The jailer of Tartaros is a fearful she-dragon called Kampe; she is the embodiment of the chains of the gods ever since Zeus slew her. Some claim that Kampe's power was channeled by ancient sorcerers to work their binding magics.

Some of the bindings wrought in ancient times still hold today, and members of the Order who are aware of them are nervous that they are incapable of repairing them should they be broken. Some example bindings known to the Order include:

Magic Might: 25+ (Mentem)
Season: Winter
Characteristics: Int +5, Per +6, Pre 0, Com +1, Str -1, Sta 0, Dex -1, Qik -1
Size: 0
Age: n/a (varies)
Confidence Score: 2 (6)
Virtues and Flaws: Magic Human, Magical Master, Famous, Self Confident, Meddler, Ability Block (Martial Abilities), Visions
Magical Qualities and Inferiorities: Divination & Augury (see *The Mysteries Revised Edition*, Chapter 7), Improved Perception, Natural Appearance, Improved Abilities x3, Mentem Resistance, Minor Virtue (additional Divination methods) x5, Minor Virtue (Great Intelligence) x2, Minor Virtue (Great Perception) x2, Minor Virtue (Improved Characteristics), Minor Virtue (Premonitions), Minor Virtue (Puissant Divination)
Personality Traits: Enigmatic* +6, Meddlesome +3, Brave +1
Reputations: Prophetess 4 (Local)
Combat:
Unarmed Defense: Init -1, Attack n/a, Defense -1, Damage n/a
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: Classical Greek 5 (prophetic pronouncement), [Area A] Lore 5 (varies), [Area B] Lore 5 (varies), [Area C] Lore

Character Guide: A Sibyl

5 (varies), Artes Liberales 4 (scribing riddles), Divination 10+2 (varies), Faerie Lore 4 (prophecy), Guile 1 (under duress), Intrigue 3 (local politics), Latin 5 (declamations), Living Language 4 (local dialect), Magic Lore 5 (prophecy), Mentem Resistance 5 (mind-reading), [Organization A] Lore 5 (varies), [Organization B] Lore 5 (varies), Penetration 5 (Divination), Philosophiae 4 (natural philosophy), Premonitions 5 (nations), Teaching 3 (Area Lore)

Vis: 5 pawns of Mentem vis, in tools of divination

Appearance: Each sibyl appears as a woman native to the area; some appear to be young maidens, whereas others appear as haggard crones. They wear flimsy veils across their faces, or else a blindfold.

This character guide follows the rules for Magic Characters (see *Realms of Power: Magic*, pages 29–54), and describes the basic minimum game statistics of a sibyl. However, there is plenty of room for customization; the sibyl has only 5 points of Virtues and Flaws, and most sibyls have a Magic Might greater than 25, allowing room for some overtly magical powers rather than relying on Divination, Premonitions, and a vast knowledge of diverse subjects. The sibyl's Enigmatic Personality Trait is an Essential Trait; magical effects to make her speak clearly mysteriously fail. Some sibyls might be Transformed Humans rather than Magic Humans.

DIABOLAI

Much as Christians threaten saints into compliance with ritual humiliation (*Realms of Power: The Divine*, pages 87–88), so too can local spirits and mythological figures be coerced into acting on a character's behalf. Although by no means common in the empire, practice of *diabolai*, or "slander rites," is widespread. The most common use of *diabolai* is to evoke the wrath of a supernatural being and direct that wrath at the target of choice; but this process can direct the being to use any of its powers at the character's command. Not every supernatural creature is responsive to *diabolai*; it has to be a sentient being who has accepted patronage over a specific site or subject per-

- The island of Delos was once bound to the ocean floor by spells wrought by a titan, but this binding as now been broken (see Chapter 6: The Islands);
- During the gods' war against the giants, each defeated foe was bound into the earth, crushed under mountains, or buried beneath islands. The locations of some of these giants are known;
- The Jar of Pandora is rumored to be an item of great binding magic capable of controlling the spirits of hardship and death;
- The monsters of the Persian Wars were bound by Greek sorcerers into inanimate objects (see Chapter 2: History);
- Oaths formed the foundation of the mundane leagues (see Chapter 2).

sonal to the character invoking it. Thus a native of a village could invoke a nymph who guards a local grove; a local could visit the long-abandoned shrine to Helios the sun god; a physician could invoke Aesklepios, the god of medicine; and someone with Mythic Blood could call upon his magical ancestor. This deep and personal connection is vital: a person cannot simply perform a diabolai on a random magical spirit or faerie. The character also requires some intimate knowledge of the specific being he intends to invoke, represented by knowledge of the (Realm) Lore appropriate to the entity's Might. Characters without an appropriate (Realm) Lore cannot perform a slander rite, but no other specialist Ability or Virtue is required. Slander rites can be used to coerce creatures from any Realm, but they are most commonly used against Faerie and Magic beings. Attracting the attention of demons with these rites is opening yourself to future corruption.

It takes several hours to perform a slander rite. The most common method involves drawing a portrait or making an effigy of the entity, wrapping it in cloth and then throwing it into an oven or bath, or suspending it over a lamp. Alternatively, the character can reverse the normal (pagan) worship rites of the being, such as offering the brains of a black ram, or fumigating a holy place with burnt dung from a black cow. But any of these rites, particularly the last, are easily misconstrued as paganism or demon worship, and may attract unwanted attention from one's neighbors. While performing the slander rite, the character must describe the power to be employed and the target of that power, if appropriate. If the entity does not have the requested power, then the diabolai automatically fails.

DIABOLAI: Presence + (Realm) Lore
+ modifiers + stress die

EASE FACTOR: 9 + being's (Might / 5)

Modifiers to Diabolai

Diabolai performed in public: +2
Requested power is apt (e.g. target worthy of punishment): +1 to +5, as determined by the storytide
Synthemata of being known (see *The Mysteries Revised Edition*, pages 86–88): +3
True Name of being known (see *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, pages 34–35): +9
Performed a diabolai in the last month: –9
Threatening an unfamiliar being: –6

Stygian Magi

An interest in binding magics is known as the "Stygian Art" in the Theban Tribunal, connecting these magics to the mythology of the Underworld. It is commonly held that binding magics are suspect, possibly even Infernally corrupted, probably due to the preeminence of the Goetic Arts in this field. Despite this reputation, some magi still pursue these studies. Most notable of these is Polydegmon of Hedyosmos (see Chapter 5: Greece), who practices a non-

Hermetic tradition of binding magic, until he trains an apprentice, his abilities remain unique in the Tribunal.

The Witches of Thessaly (*Realms of Power: The Infernal*, pages 140–142) — possibly the native tradition of Trianoma — still practice their stygian magic across the Tribunal, but specifically on the mainland. Here they clash with the Covenant of Erebus (see Chapter 5) over territory and magical resources.

If the slander rite succeeds, the invoked supernatural being immediately uses its power to grant the character the effect he demanded. If the rite fails, the invoked being is annoyed and will not respond to any further petitions for a month. If the roll is 10 or more points beneath the Ease Factor, or the diabolai is botched, then the entity uses one of his powers on the invoking character. Furthermore, the supernatural being refuses to entertain more requests from anyone for the entire year.

GOETIA

A more direct way to summon and control spirits and gods is through the Goetic Arts (see *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, pages 114–119). The term *goes*, meaning "sorcerer," is one of the most ancient words used to describe magic in Greek, and some believe that this brand of Infernal sorcery began here. Because they deal with chthonic forces, the Goetic Arts inevitably bear the taint of the Infernal realm. Practitioners are treated with the utmost prejudice by Hermetic and Church authorities alike.

SPIRIT MAGIC AND THEURGY

Some Mystery Cults of the Order of Hermes teach a form of binding magic that deals with spirits (Hermetic Spirit Magic) or Daimons (Hermetic Theurgy). Both of these techniques contain elements of binding and control, and it may be that they owe their origins to either diabolai, goetia, or both. For more information on these magics, see *The Mysteries Revised Edition*, Chapters 8 and 9.

KATADESMOS MAGIC

The lost art of Defixio Magic (see *Ancient Magic*, Chapter 3) was called Katadesmos Magic in Ancient Greece, where it was perhaps more prevalent than in Ancient Rome.

However, the evidence is more scattered and less easy to obtain. That has not deterred the magi who search the islands for *katadesmoi* — cursing tablets — in hope of an insight into this lost magical tradition. Through this magic, a wizard could enact a curse on a victim at any range without the need of an Arcane Connection. Furthermore, they could create conditional spells that would be triggered in response to a specified event, and thus act as warnings, traps, and governors of good behavior. The ancients would call upon spirits to act as conduits to their magic, and to deliver their spells to their enemies.

One consequence of the prevalence of Katadesmos Magic is the manifestation of the Leadworker Virtue (*Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, page 143) in non-Hermetic wizards who may take this Virtue as a Supernatural Virtue. Among magi, leadworking remains a secret of House Tremere.

Hedge Magic and Magicians

The Theban Tribunal is a fortunate place for practitioners of magic; not only is it magically rich in terms of auras, regiones, and vis, it also has many wild and uninhabited places that serve as retreats for the Gifted individual wishing to avoid the negative consequences of his Gift on other people. The Order of Hermes has estimated that one in every hundred people in the Theban Tribunal have some magical ability; although only one in every thousand has received any formal training. Furthermore, only one in 10,000 has The Gift, and is thus capable of learning the most powerful magic.

Magical Traditions

Hedge Magic, *Ars Magica Fifth Edition's* supplement for non-Hermetic magic, details a number of magical traditions that can be found across Mythic Europe. This section describes how these traditions might manifest in the Theban Tribunal.

ELEMENTALISTS

Chapter 2 of *Hedge Magic* describes the Apostles of Apollonius, devotees of the legendary inventor of elemental magic, Apollonius of Tyana. These wizards can be found scattered throughout the Greek islands and in Asia Minor, and they have some contact with their Arabic counterparts in the Muslim lands to the south and east. Control over the elements of water and air is exceptionally useful for sea-going peoples, and merchants occasionally hire these wizards to ensure safe passage.

FOLK WITCHES

Folk witches are mostly found on the Greek mainland rather than on the islands. Many are secret devotees of Hekate, the titan-goddess of witchcraft, and claim an unbroken tradition leading back to the classical era. Some covens have joined forces with the Strigae or Daughters of Erictho (*Realms of Power: The Infernal*, pages 129–131 and pages 140–142, respectively), although it is often these Infernal witches who are in control. This alliance has given the practice of the folk witches a bad reputation in the empire.

GRUAGACHAN

While this magical tradition is based in a culture from the other side of Mythic Europe, a storyguide could introduce a similar tradition drawn from the Pelasgic people of pre-Hellene Greece. They would be worshipers of the titans and descendants of the serpent-tailed Greek giants, but their powers over curses and blessings, and the connection of these to permitted or prohibited behavior, is a perfect match for the binding magics native to the Tribunal. It is probable that Greek versions of the gruagachan would have access to spirit magic, most likely in the form of some of the Goetic Arts (*Realms of Power: The Infernal*, pages 114–119), in exchange for losing the ability to create enchanted tattoos. They may be a reservoir of Defixio Lore (see *Katadesmos Magic*, earlier) which would greatly extend the scope of their magic.

The Theban Tribunal

LEARNED MAGICIANS

Byzantium has no universities, which are the most likely home of the *mathematici*, although Constantinople's famed schools are perhaps a suitable substitute. Any *mathematici* in the Theban Tribunal are more likely to have come here with the Venetian invaders. However, the variant form of cunning folk are perhaps as common as folk witches in rural areas, communing with faeries and local nymphs for the protection of their community. Likewise, alchemists have a home in Constantinople. They are heirs to a great body of learning, and were richly funded before the fall of the empire because of their contributions to military prowess, particularly with regard to Greek Fire.

NIGHTWALKERS

Nightwalking traditions were a feature of Ancient Greece, and remnants of the cult remain in pockets across the empire. They often find themselves at odds with Folk Witch covens, particularly those who have teamed up with Infernal witches. Nightwalkers in Greece often have other magical abilities, such as being cunning folk (see *Learned Magicians*).

The Makhai

In *Rival Magic* a tradition of wizards called the Muspelli is described, who derive their magic direct from the Norse equivalents of the titans. Advice is given for variant Muspelli in other lands, including the Makhai — Greek sorcerers who serve the monstrous Ekhidna and Typhon, who were brought forth by the Earth to avenge the imprisonment of the titans on the faerie gods. The Makhai might incorporate or replace the Gruagach variants mentioned in this chapter.

Peasant Magic

As well as the usual collection of minor magical powers represented by Supernatural Abilities like Dowsing, Premonitions, Second Sight, and so on, the common folk of Greece also have a very minor ceremonial magic. The origins of this magic — if indeed it has a single origin at all — is long lost. It is usually dismissed by Hermetic magi as beneath their notice.

New Virtue: Folk Magic

Minor, Supernatural

The character is capable of performing very minor acts of magic through his knowledge of scraps of occult lore. Choose one (Realm) Lore that is the key Ability for this magic; he may learn this Ability at Character Creation even if he is normally unable to take Arcane Abilities. The choice of (Realm) Lore also determines which supernatural realm his magic is aligned to for the purposes of aura modifiers. He can only create spells in one narrow area, which must be one of the following four options:

Abjuration: Creates a ward against animals or supernatural creature. Uses the Rego Animal or Rego Vim guidelines.

Divination: Acquire magical senses that detect health, wealth, and mental state. Uses Intellego Corpus, Intellego Mentem, and Intellego Terram guidelines.

Healing: Grants a Recovery bonus for either wounds or diseases, and aids the birthing of children and livestock. Uses the Creo Corpus or Creo Animal guidelines. Infernal Lore cannot be used to produce this type of effect.

Evil Eye: Causes minor acts of mischief like pain, blight of crops, hair loss, sneezing, and so forth. Uses the Perdo Corpus, Perdo Animal, or Perdo Herbam guidelines. Divine Lore cannot be used to produce this type of effect.

To cast a spell the character must expend a fatigue level, whether the spell succeeds or fails. He must also spend at least 15 minutes preparing the spell, during which time he needs unbroken concentration and access to his "magical" materials (while necessary, these materials offer no benefit to the casting). The spell is designed exactly like a Hermetic spell. The Casting Total is equal to (Stamina + (Realm) Lore + Aura modifier + stress die) / 2. Penetration is calculated in the normal fashion: Casting Total – Spell Level + Penetration modifiers. You may pick this Virtue more than once, to acquire expertise in a different category of spells. Each time you choose this Virtue, you can align it to the same Realm as before or pick a different one, although a character cannot have access to both the Divine and Infernal Realms.

Chapter Ten

The Faerie Landscape

Called *exotika* or *xotika* in Greek (singular *exotiko*), faeries abound on the mainland and among the islands. Every town and village has its local faeries: there are places through which grown men will not walk after dark; stories told by mothers to disobedient children; and offerings made to the house spirits. These *exotika* are a far cry from the gods of pagan times, themselves powerful faeries in their day. However, with the abandonment of the old temples in favor of Christ, the gods of the Greek pantheon have little influence and mere handfuls of worshipers remaining.

The Greek Gods

The ancient Greeks worshiped a race of powerful faeries as gods. In their mythology, the gods overthrew the primal race of titans to claim the position at the head of the pantheon; theurgists see this myth of the titanomachy as a fundamental shift in the sublunar powers and perhaps the origin of the Faerie realm. The six principle gods of the Pantheon are named as the children of the elder titans Kronos and Rhea: Zeus, Hades, Poseidon, Demeter, Hera, Hestia. Furthermore, several were said to be born from a union between Zeus and younger titans (Artemis, Apollon, Athene, Aphrodite, and Hermes), or between Zeus and his sisters (Ares, Hephaistos, and Dionysos). The myths of the Greek Gods portray them with human flaws and foibles: Zeus is lecherous, Hera is vengeful and proud, Ares is argumentative and a coward, and so forth. This makes them very different from the depictions of the titans, who were seen as distant and uncaring.

The Twelve Olympians

Twelve gods sat on Mount Olympos and received worship from the ancient Greeks. Zeus was the king of the gods, despite occasional attempts to dethrone him by his siblings and children; Zeus had earned his



position at the head of the pantheon by defeating Kronos, and remained there by a mandate of Fate.

The other Olympians consisted of Hera, Poseidon, Demeter, Apollon, Artemis, Athene, Ares, Aphrodite, Hephaistos, Hermes, and Dionysos. Zeus' sister Hestia had ceded her own seat to the youngest Olympian, Dionysos.

Other Gods

In addition to the 12 Olympians, the Greek pantheon consisted of a whole host of other deities, of whom Hades was perhaps the most important. His home in the Underworld disbarred him from a life on Olympos, and he guarded the dead and ruled over them much as Zeus ruled over the living. Hestia was intended by the fates to be his wife, but the goddess of the sacred fire eschewed a life in the perpetual gloom of the Underworld and remained a virgin. She instead became the goddess of the family. Persephone, the daughter of Demeter, became Hades' queen instead.

Pan was the foster-brother of Zeus himself, and older than many of the Olympians. This pastoral god spent much time on earth among the flocks of his beloved Arcadia. Asklepios was the god of healing and son of Apollon. In addition to these major gods, many other local nymphs and Daimons were worshiped locally as gods.

Not all of the beings worshiped as gods were necessarily faeries; only those that encompass an ideal that is a facet of human nature or endeavor are generally considered to be fae. Some of the worshiped beings were younger titan — aspects of the magical world that performed their tasks according to nature whether man took notice of them or not. These "magical gods" included Helios the sun god, Selene the moon goddess, Hekate goddess of witchcraft, and Leto and Asteria, the goddesses of prophecy.

Heroes

Stories are still told in the 13th century about the deeds of the great heroes of mythic times: Herakles, Perseus, Bellerophon, Jason, Theseus, Daedalos, Kastor and Polydeukes,

Odysseus, and so forth. Many of these heroes were demigods, having one of the Olympians or a nymph as a divine parent. Given the nature of faeries, it is a certainty that many if not all of these heroes can still be found in Greece, and some of them may even be the real thing. House Mercere has a particular interest in these stories, as they preserve a Cult of Heroes that contains many who claim descent from one of these champions among men. Some example heroes, and the Virtues and Flaws they may pass on to their descendants, are:

Achilles: The champion of the Greeks in the Trojan war, he was granted invulnerability by his mother Thetis. His descendants are highly likely to have a Greater Immunity to Metal and the Fury Flaw.

Bellerophon: Tamer of Pegasus and slayer of the chimera, he believed he could fly to Olympus and become a god. Those who bear his blood are likely to be possessed of remarkable power over wild animals, but suffer from the Proud Flaw.

Kastor or Polydeukes: Twin brothers and great athletes, particularly in boxing, wrestling, discus-throwing, and horse-riding. Likely to have the Mistaken Identity Flaw as they are haunted by their twin.

Daidalos: A cunning inventor and student of Athene, who became the prisoner of King Minos in an attempt to keep the hero's genius all for himself. His descendants are likely to have the Touched by Faerie Virtue (*City & Guild*, page 71), along with Great Intelligence and Inventive Genius.

Helen: Sister to the twins Kastor and Polydeuces, and herself a twin to Clytemnestra, Helen was believed to be the most beautiful woman in all existence. Her descendants should have an unearthly beauty; they bear the Curse of Venus that was first applied to Helen, and was the cause of the Trojan War.

Odysseus: Hero of the Trojan War and famed for his inability to get home due to the machinations of the gods who led him into many fabulous adventures. His descendants may be Plagued by Supernatural Entity, but are probably superlative sailors.

Perseus: Slayer of Medusa with the help of the gods; a descendant of this hero might possess one or more of the powers of the magic items he was given to assist in his task: an adamantine falx (sickle) that can slice any material, winged sandals that permit flight, a helmet of invisibility, and a shield bearing medusa's head. The

The Olympian Houses of Hermes

Seekers have long connected the 12 Houses of Hermes with the twelve Olympians. Different researchers make different attributions, but the most common identification is: Bjornaer as shapechanging Poseidon; Bonisagus as Zeus; Cramon as mysterious Hestia and/or ecstatic Dionysos; Ex Miscellanea as Demeter; Flambeau as Apollon; Guernicus as Hera; Jerbiton as beautiful Aphrodite; Mercere as Hermes; Merinita as Artemis; Tremere as Athena; Tytalus as belligerent Ares;

and finally Verditius as crafty Hephaistos. Even Diedne was represented, originally as Demeter and then as ill-omened Hades. It is rumored that Trianoma was the deliberate inventor of this pattern, and she passed over some wizards as potential Founders purely because they did not meet her mythological criteria. Some say that the fall of a House was inevitable ever since the Order accepted Ex Miscellanea as the 13th House, disrupting the Olympian symmetry.

The Problem of Hermes

Seeker magi are most interested in Hermes. His two most intriguing characteristics are as a god of invention and as a god of transition.

According to myth, Hermes invented music, writing, arithmetic, and magic; this characteristic seems to make him a creature of the Magic Realm according to theorists. Other stories make him a human, whose knowledge was so great that he divined the secret of immortality, transcended his humanity, and became a god; this is a path to the Magic Realm that many aspire to emulate.

However, as a god of doorways, the bringer of sleep, and the guide of souls to the Underworld, he occupies a quintessential liminal role and thus is ideally characterized as a faerie. Furthermore, he was offered worship by travelers and merchants, and his shrines often retain a Faerie aura.

The most satisfactory answer to many is that there were two or more beings who went by the name of Hermes, and so all of these options — and more — are potentially true. Until a magus meets with a being calling itself Hermes no-one will ever be sure; and perhaps not even then.

character himself possesses the power (for example, through the Hero's Birthright Power, *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, page 105), but requires an appropriate tool to get it to work.

Theseus: Famous as a slayer of bandits, giants and, monsters (most famously the minotaur), this king of Athens successfully waged war against the Amazons and even visited the Underworld in fulfillment of an oath and was trapped there for four years. His descendants would be superb warriors who live by a Code of Honor.

The Children of Olympus

The aim of this Hermetic league (see Chapter 3: The Order of Hermes, The Leagues of Thebes) is to forge a close connection between the Order of Hermes and the faerie gods. Its leader Lucian believes

that the Order has been ill-used by the Infernal and the Divine, and that the uncaring Magic Realm is not a suitable path for magi due to the lack of interest of its denizens in the works of man.

Lucian hopes to forge pacts with the old Greek gods that create longer, more stable relationships with covenant patrons. Underlying this is an unspoken desire that the power of Faerie would replace the Magic auras present at most of the Theban covenants, leading to a great renaissance in both the power of Faerie and the worship of the old gods. To achieve these goals, Lucian desires that his followers progress to a degree such that they can channel the gods' aspects into themselves, allowing Lucian to communicate with them. He also believes that the power of Faerie is sustained and emboldened by the force of the epic stories of the Olympians and the Heroic Age. It is, however, not enough to keep these stories alive; one must live through them,

recreating the stories on a grand scale and becoming a player in them. He has already assigned many of the magi and covenants in the Tribunal roles in his imagined grand reenactment, and seeks to direct events in accordance with their perceived story role. This accounts for his inexplicable and often changeable political stances — actions which other covenants often perceive as illogical or treacherous are in fact a premeditated attempt to steer the covenants toward

their “correct” story roles.

The league has several sympathizers but few actual members, most of whom are from House Merinita. Its existence is not a secret, although Lucian’s scheming and the specifics of his new Mystery Initiation are. Lucian hints at his innovation, but only tells willing initiates the whole story. To achieve the league’s goals, Lucian has invented two Mysteries for his followers: Elysian Ecstasy and Olympian Pact. By use of these Mysteries,

a person channels a specified Greek god, whose spirit possesses the person. So possessed, the person gains some of the god’s powers and personality. The better the recipient is at channeling the god, the more power he receives. At some point, depending on the strength of his existing personality, the god overcomes the recipient, who becomes the god incarnated in physical form. Thus far, Lucian has acted as mystagogue for each member of the league who knows Ely-

New Minor Supernatural Virtue: Elysian Ecstasy and Olympian Pact

Elysian Ecstasy is a new Minor Supernatural Virtue, the consequence of Lucian’s investigations into the Faerie realm combined with the ecstatic rites he invented for this new Inner Merinita Mystery. It is gained through a Mystery Initiation of his devising. There is no prerequisite for gaining the Virtue, which violates the nature of the Merinita Mystery Cult; initiates do not need to be opened to the Outer Merinita Mysteries, nor do they need a score in Merinita Cult Lore. Having invented the Mystery Initiation, Lucian has an Initiation Script that will work for anybody, providing that he serves as the mystagogue.

To invoke this power, the character must spend an hour getting into the correct frame of mind. This typically involves acts such as meditation, singing, the recital of stories, wild dancing, or drinking. A character may spend additional hours in this frenetic state, with each additional hour adding +1 to his die roll. The character is limited to the number of extra hours preparing equal to her Stamina Characteristic. After the hour (or more), the player makes a (Characteristic) + Faerie Lore + aura + stress die roll against a variable Ease Factor to see if she has channeled a Greek god. The relevant Characteristic depends on the god or hero being channeled; for example Presence is appropriate for Aphrodite and Strength for Herakles. The storyguide should add a modifier of between -3 to +3 to reflect how close the character’s gender, appearance, and personality are to the god in question. The storyguide may also add an additional modifier of up to +3 if the character’s actions in the last season were appropriate to the god in question. For example, spending time underwater and hunting with a trident would be highly appropriate for Poseidon, or a season of philandering would match with Zeus. If the

roll succeeds, the character gains the Personality Trait and Sympathy Traits for that god. If the roll fails, the character collapses in exhaustion, losing one Long-Term Fatigue Level for each hour spent preparing. If the roll botches, any faerie entity can be channeled at any strength, determined by the storyguide.

Lucian has also discovered a stronger, but more dangerous, version of this Mystery — a Major Supernatural Virtue called Olympian Pact. Initiation into this Mystery involves the gain of a Major Personality Flaw appropriate to the god whose powers are sought. It is invoked in the same way as Elysian Ecstasy and provides the same benefits. However, it may also grant limited access to the powers of the god being channeled; each usage grants the character a Warping Point.

CHANNELING A GREEK GOD:
(Characteristic) + Faerie Lore
+ stress die + aura

Ease Factor: 9

Result: (God’s) Personality Trait +2, 1 point of Sympathy Traits chosen from those appropriate to the god

Ease Factor: 12

Result: (God’s) Personality Trait +3, 3 points of Sympathy Traits, (Olympian Pact: use of one of the god’s minor powers)

Ease Factor: 15

Result: (God’s) Personality Trait +4, 6 points of Sympathy Traits, (Olympian Pact: use of two of the god’s minor powers)

Ease Factor: 18

Result: (God’s) Personality Trait +5, 10 points of Sympathy Traits, (Olympian

Pact: use of one of the god’s major powers or three of its minor powers)

Ease Factor: 21+

Result: (God’s) Personality Trait +6, 15 points of Sympathy Traits, (Olympian Pact: use of two of the god’s major powers, six of its minor powers, or one major and three minor powers)

Points of Sympathy Traits are used to buy those traits as if they were Arts. Thus a character channeling Zeus who has 6 points to spend could choose Thunder & Lightning +3; or Kings +2 and Sky +2. The score in a Sympathy Trait replaces the specialty for any Ability where it applies, but makes the use of that Ability into a stress roll; for more information see *Realms of Power: Faerie*, pages 102–105. A character gains Sympathy Traits, Personality Traits, and powers (for Olympian Pact) for a number of hours equal to the total rolled.

INITIATION OF ELYSIAN ECSTASY

Ease Factor: 18

Script Bonus: +12

Script Details: The initiate must visit 12 powerful beings, each one chosen to represent one of the 12 Olympians, and receive a boon from each. These beings can be magical, faerie, or even magi or kings. They need not know why they are granting the boon, but each must possess strong resonances for the Olympian they represent (+6). In a shrine dedicated to one of the Olympians, the initiate must then perform a rite as Sirius rises (+3) that confers to him the power of the gods, but also inflicts the Susceptibility to Faerie Power Flaw (+3).

sian Ecstasy (see insert), although only Lucian currently possesses an Olympian Pact. This latter Mystery allows the character to acquire a god's Powers, and is similar to the Spiritual Pact Virtue (*Realms of Power: Magic*, page 88), although aligned to Faerie (see the nearby insert for details).

Lucian believes that he is channeling the actual Greek gods, but he might be mistaken or duped by powerful pretenders, either Faerie or Infernal. As yet, he has not convinced any channeled god to become a covenant's patron spirit. His vision is rather clouded; he is so enamored with ecstatic rites and faerie possession that the truth could easily escape him. As a result of Lucian's Twilight Scars, he also tends to forget his own identity when himself channeling one of the gods.

Faeries of Greece

Realms of Power: Faerie describes a number of faeries that are prominent in Mythic Greece. These are briefly recapitulated here; for more details (including game statistics), see Chapter 4: Faerie Bestiary in that book.

LAMIAE

The original Lamia was a queen of Libya, cursed by Hera to become a baby-eating faerie with a snake's body instead of legs.

Blood-drinking faeries called lamiae are purportedly her children, and may have goat's hindquarters instead of those of a snake. The lamiae use the game statistics for the ghula.

In many parts of Greece, the snake-bodied lamiae are sea creatures that raise waterspouts to plague sailors. They can be warded against by driving a black-handled knife into the mast of the ship; this averts the direct wrath of the faeries.

CHILDHOOD TERRORS

Gorgones appear as women with hideous faces, tusks and claws, snakes instead of hair, and sometimes bat-like wings. They are nursery terrors, haunting particularly boy-children. The *yalou* is a variety of gorgon that specifically preys on unbaptized children. It cannot open doors itself, but if a person enters a house after dark, the *yalou* can follow them in. A *yalou* can be warded off by keeping a cross of cane and a piece of bread under the pillow of the child.

Mormo is a faerie spirit who bites naughty children; she often possesses a mother and encourages her to play rough games with her infant.

CENTAURS

This is the famed half-man, half-horse of the legends of Thessaly and Thrace; although some magi believe that the original centaurs belonged to the Magic Realm, and these are simply faerie copies born from the legends.

KALLIKANTZAROI

These faeries live under the earth, but are permitted to emerge on Christmas Eve and remain abroad for the Twelve Days of Christmas. They are swarthy, hairy faeries with huge heads, red eyes and lolling red tongues, tusks, goat's ears, and long arms tipped with vicious claws. Most are small, but some are several paces tall; these latter ones always have long black fur and out-sized male organs. The *kallikantzaro*i range in character from mischievous to murderous, but are always destructive. They break furniture and tools, spoil food by defecating in it, frighten livestock, and attack people who get in their way.

A similar group of seasonal faeries are the *drymes*, which are abroad during the first few days of March and August. These faeries specifically attack people engaged in activities involving water, such as washing; these pursuits are avoided during this time.

FAUNS AND SATYROI

These faeries of the wild are relatively common in Greece, but they are also frequently confused with the *smerdaki* (see Chapter 12: Infernal Landscape), a demon that attacks flocks of sheep and goats.

TRITONES AND SEA NYMPHS

Tritones or merfolk are ubiquitous in the Greek Islands. Every bay, inlet, and sandbar had its own mermaid. They act as the guard-

Sympathy Traits of the Olympians

Characters taking the Faerie God variant of Faerie Blood (*Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 107–108) may choose appropriate Sympathy Traits for an Olympian god, as listed below.

God's Name

Positive Sympathy Traits
Negative Sympathy Traits

Zeus

Thunder & Lightning, Kings, Sky
Fidelity

Hera

Women, Children, Vengeance
Men

Poseidon

Sea, Earthquakes, Horses
Calm

Demeter

Fertility, Plants, Domesticated Animals
Winter

Apollon

Light, Prophecy, Healing
Passion

Artemis

Wild Animals, Pursuit, Diseases
Men

Athene

Wisdom, Tactics, Culture Direct
Action

Ares

Violence, Weapons, Fear
Bravery

Aphrodite

Attraction, Desire, Beauty
Avoiding Attention

Hephaistos

Iron, Volcanoes, Precious Metals
Beauty

Hermes

Money, Trickery, News
Avoiding Trouble

Dionysos

Wine, Madness, Initiation
Rational Action

Hestia

Family, Hearth, Virginity
Self Promotion



ians of these localities (much like the stoicheia are the spirits of places, see later), and local sailors know to avoid their domains.

Sea nymphs are usually mute. They dance in the surf and on the beaches on nights of the full moon, and it is good fortune to see one. They should otherwise be treated as nereides (see later).

DRAKOI

The giants most commonly encountered in Greece, especially on the islands, are named *drakoi* (singular *drakos*). Although "drakos" is the origin of the word "dragon," in Byzantine lands it usually refers to such a giant instead of a winged serpent. The drakoi usually resemble humans, to a greater or lesser extent, but with a great size and strength, and are almost always exceedingly stupid. They may be encountered alone or as a family. Lone drakoi often become infatuated with human women, and bring them gifts. Such a drakos will pester the poor woman regularly; although he is easy to outsmart temporarily, he will only flee and cease his advances permanently once his fear is exploited. Each drakos has a great fear of some relatively mundane phenomenon; fear of dogs is common. A family of drakoi inevitably contains numerous daughters — equally strong and dim-witted — whom the father seeks to marry off with some luckless man. For a standard drakos, use the statistics for a Faerie Giant (see *Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 98).

Drakoi often build stone dwellings named "dragonhouses" for themselves; they

are squat towers carefully assembled from great boulders, usually two stories high, with a single room in each floor. Some drakoi are purported to have hidden caches of treasure beneath their houses. Dragonhouses and drakoi are particularly common on the Cyclades.

Many drakoi can take the form of a large serpent, sometimes with a human head. They occasionally grow to immense size, such as the one that crawled out of the sea and took up residence in the Karakalou Monastery on Mount Athos, where the monks treated it as a house snake. Another variety of drakos has a single eye, burning with fire, and a special talent for hurling rocks; these are especially common on the island of Zakynthos. Such drakoi are likely the descendants of the ancient *kyklopes* (cyclopes) described in Greek legends, which emerged from the Underworld Tartaros and dwelled by volcanoes.

Nereides

In classical times a *nereid* was specifically a water nymph, but in the middle ages the term is applied to all nymphs and female courtly faeries of all types (there is a distinct lack of male courtly faeries in the Theban Tribunal). Nereides are perhaps the most common faeries in the region, and typically appear as beautiful women bedecked with flowers. Their white dresses occasionally hide the fact that they have the hind legs of a goat or donkey.

Nereides are keen to interact with young men, as they gain vitality through

such intercourse. A nereid can be acquired as a bride by a man who steals her veil, as long as he keeps the cloth hidden from her. There are dangers in this practice: should the nereid ever find the stolen cloth, she will leave her husband, occasionally enacting murderous revenge on her spouse and children. On other occasions, the nereid is the aggressor, and indulges in nympholepsy — the theft of children (particularly boys). The malice of a nereid increases towards noon, and mothers particularly warn their children about leaving their sight at this time of the day. A pre-adolescent boy stolen by a nereid may acquire Faerie Blood from the experience, whereas a sexually active youth might instead father such individuals (see Faerie Blood and Changelings in *Realms of Power: Faerie*, pages 105–110 and pages 110–111).

For more information on nereides, see the entries under Courtly Faeries, Entrapping Lovers, and Faerie Spouses Trapped by a Trinket in *Realms of Power: Faerie*, pages 82–86, page 73, and page 75. Greek nereides can steal the wits of a man with a single kiss, inflicting the Flaws of Simple Minded or Short Attention Span through the Grant (Minor Flaw) power. Other nereides can induce weakness or muteness. Saint Artemidos is particularly prayed to by the parents of nymph-struck infants, and can undo the curse.

Stoicheia

The *stoicheia* (singular *stoicheion*) are the spirits of places. Every significant landmark has its guardian, which commonly takes the form of a spirit-animal such as a calf, donkey, cat, or white hound. In the deep wilds where no-one sees them, each unusually shaped boulder, hilltop tree, river, and mountain possesses a stoicheion, which in these cases are *genii loci* (see *Realms of Power: Magic*, page 106). However, closer to human habitations, faeries fill the role of the spirits of places, extending their guardianship over the land to guardianship of the local community in return for proprietary offerings of eggs, figs, milk, and honey. The village is very respectful of its stoicheion, greeting it politely should they come across it, for a faerie spirit who is treated rudely can abandon or attack the community it once protected.

A common variety of the guardian spirit are the *koukouvaounes*, which take the form

of an immense white owl with red eyes. The koukouvaouna bravely enters battle against malicious faeries and demons that threaten its chosen people, risking its life to keep them safe. They conduct these battles both in spiritual form, and, if necessary, in physical form. They are invigorated in these battles by drinking milk left out for them by their communities. Occasionally, a koukouvaouna faces a threat it cannot defeat by

itself, so visits strong men of the community for assistance. Some possess a Ritual Power allowing them to grant the Skinchanger Virtue, which is accompanied by a Lesser Charm (see *Realms of Power: Faerie*, page 104 for more details), allowing them to turn men into rams, oxen, horses or bulls to assist them in their battles. Some churches attract their own stoicheia, which unlike the koukouvaounes take the form of a white calf, red

horse, or a black rooster. These stoicheia can usually surround the village with a protective ward that keeps out ill luck or malicious spirits.

The *basiliskos* is a house spirit, much like the brownies or portunes encountered further west. These stoicheia tie themselves to a specific family rather than a whole community, but can be a boon to those who possess one. These faerie spirits take the shape of snakes,

Character Guide: Stoicheion

Faerie Might: 10 (Animal); 20 in its village
Characteristics: Int 0, Per +1, Pre +2, Com -1, Str +1/+2*, Sta +2/+3*, Dex 0/+3*, Qik 0/+2*
 * in physical form

Size: +2

Virtues and Flaws: Faerie Beast; Focus Power (Guardian of the Bounds), Ritual Power (Strike Dumb); Faerie Sight, Feast of the Fae, Improved Powers, Increased Faerie Might, Lesser Power (Loosely Material), Personal Power (Extended Glamour), Reputation as Confidence, Time or Place of Power; Narrowly Cognizant; Overconfident, Intangible Flesh; Traditional Ward (varies)

Personality Traits: Fiercely Protective +6, Brave +3, Loyal +3.

Reputation: Defender 4 (Local)

Combat: (pick one weapon appropriate to animal shape)

Teeth: Init +2, Attack +14, Defense +10, Damage +5

Claws: Init +2, Attack +15, Defense +12, Damage +6

Horns: Init +4, Attack +13, Defense +11, Damage +5

Soak: +8

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

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

Abilities: Area Lore 4 (local spirits), Awareness 3 (faeries), Brawl 6 (varies by animal), Romaic Greek 4 (those whom it protects), Faerie Lore 2 (weaknesses of enemies), Hunt 3 (enemies), Penetration 4 (*Guardian of the Bounds* power)

Powers:

Extended Glamour, 0 points, constant, Mentem: Grants awareness of everything that happens within the bounds of a specific domain chosen by the faerie.

In essence, the faerie is coterminous with its associated landscape feature, so it is present simultaneously everywhere within its boundaries. A stoicheion with a Might of 10 can extend its glamour to the size of a room, while more powerful faeries can affect a greater area. The area controlled by the faerie can produce a yearly harvest of (Might/10) pawns of Animal vis, which manifests as physical objects within the controlled region. Removing this vis does not harm the faerie if it is bargained for.

Guardian of the Bounds, 1 - 5 points, Init -5, varies: The spirit protects its chosen community by using this power. By completing a circuit around the village and inscribing a circle, the faerie creates a ward designed to exclude a particular type of supernatural threat. This operates exactly like a *Ward against Faeries of the Water*, but the stoicheion can choose which Realm and which Form is affected each time it uses the power. The power costs 1 Might point per 5 levels (or fraction) of the equivalent spell. Common wards include a *Ward against Faeries of the Wood*, to prevent crop-damaging faeries; and *Ward against Demons of the Mind*, to exclude the evil eye. These wards typically are of low level to ensure that they have sufficient Penetration against their foe; a stoicheion with a Might of 20 (in its village, for example) can create a Level 10 ward with a Penetration of 15, at the cost of 2 Might points.

Loosely Material, 3 points, Init -10, Animal: The stoicheion can take on glamourous flesh and a material form. It takes one round to take this form. The creature is Size +2, and has the physical statistics marked with an asterisk. It is only in

this form that it can physically attack. The faerie may maintain the material body indefinitely. If slain, the body contains the vis listed below. When the faerie returns to immateriality, which takes an uninterrupted combat round, it regains the Might points spent to activate this power. If it then takes on matter again, it does not carry over the wounds caused to its previous body.

Strike Dumb, 5 points, Init -20, Vim: Imposes the Mute Flaw upon a victim. The faerie can decide to bestow the Flaw permanently or temporarily. If permanent, the power costs points from the creature's Might score as well as Might pool. If temporary, the Might points spent on this power are only recovered when its effects are withdrawn. This power has been affected by the *Improved Powers Virtue*

Vis: 3 pawns of Animal vis, in bones

Appearance: Usually immaterial, those with Second Sight might see the stoicheion as an oversized animal of its chosen form.

This stoicheion is not intended to be a player character unless taken as a magus-level character, since it has 15 points of Virtues and 7 points of Flaws. However, it is suitable as an ally of a covenant, perhaps even its guardian (bought as a covenant Boon). It can take up to 3 more points of Flaws, each point granting 2 more Virtue points. In the faerie's chosen locality, its Faerie Might is increased to 20 and its protective power is enhanced. The most common taboo (i.e. Traditional Ward) of stoicheia is that they are bound to the land or people they are sworn to protect, and perish if they leave. If a stoicheion is slain it will eventually be reborn in a modified form, in the manner of faeries.

Story Seeds

THE THALASSOMACHOS

A covenant has a vis source that comprises certain colored fish present in the local fishermen's catch. They sponsor the fishermen by buying them new boats or providing them with magical assistance in an attempt to increase the yield of fish. However, a local triton lord has taken exception to the exploitation of his domain, and rides on the back of a dolphin to battle the fishermen. He becomes known as the Warrior of the Sea (thalassomachos), and he can damage nets and summon winds to support his cause (use the statistics for the Selkie King on page 91 of *Realms of Power: Faerie*). If the magi fight the thalassomachos every year they can retain their high vis yield, including that taken from the faerie's corpse, or else they can settle for a smaller fishing fleet and thus less vis.

THE FAMILY BASILISKOS

A basiliskos is a great boon to a magus' sanctum, granting the free Spotless Virtue and the Lesser Guardian or Lesser Horde Laboratory Virtues (see Covenants, page 118), as well as acting as an Assistant (the spirit has learned Magic Theory) and a

source of vis. Basiliskoi are loyal to familial lines, so when a magus' pater dies, the basiliskos seeks him out at his new covenant. This upsets the former covenant, who treated the basiliskos as a valuable resource, or even their patron spirit.

THE KALOTYCHE'S SACRIFICE

A kalotyché in the covenant's grounds provides vis as a product of its Extended Glamour power. The spirit has been neutralized by its traditional ward, but if the magi ever take all of the fruit from the tree without leaving any as a sacrifice, the stone wedged in the trunk works itself free, and the spirit goes looking for anyone who currently possesses its vis.

A POWERFUL PATORN

A koukouvaouna is a powerful patron for a covenant to gain, but must be persuaded to act as a guardian. Ruthless magi might ensure that the spirit's current community founders to leave the spirit seeking a new home. Alternatively, this tactic might be used by a rival against a village beholden to the characters' covenant.

sometimes they have three or seven heads, or the head and feet of a cat. Like portunes, the basiliskoi usually have a Focus Power for Domestic Work.

The *pergalio* is a spirit that ties itself to a particular structure, rather than to a family or a community. A *pergalio* takes the form of a blue-eyed black child of about five years old. Usually benign, the *pergalioi* are prone to jealousy, and sometimes their own help can ultimately drive them away. One told a beautiful but poor girl where to find a treasure for her dowry; but by being beautiful and rich she attracted many suitors, which annoyed the *pergalio* who then strangled her new husband before abandoning her.

The *kalotyches* are the *stoicheia* of trees that, when their tree is felled, become murderous creatures of vengeance. The name *kalotyché* means "good fortune," a classic Greek trick of giving a euphemistic name to an unpleasant entity as a propitiatory measure. Some trees — planes, poplars, and figs — are considered to have inimical spirits even when still alive, and no-one will even take rest in their shade. Particularly dangerous trees are distinguished by the speed of their growth; they must be cut down by the person who planted it else it will try to kill him. The vengeance of a *kalotyché* can be halted by placing a stone in the wedge of the trunk after the tree is felled (a Traditional Ward); these stones inevitably work their way free.

The Divine Landscape

To understand the nature of the religious tensions that divide the Theban Tribunal, it is necessary to understand the history that led to the great Church of the first Christian millennium fragmenting into hostile camps.

Church History

In 381 the Second Oecumenical Council was called at Constantinople, and Constantinople and Jerusalem were granted their own dioceses, creating a system of five patriarchs known as the Pentarchy. The patriarchs guided the Church, none subservient to others, but accepting by tradition Rome as "first among equals" with Constantinople as the New Rome taking second place. The authority of Rome was always stronger in the Latin-speaking West than the Greek-speaking East, and the Church developed two cultures while sharing common doctrine. These are the "Roman" and "Greek" Churches of the Tribunal.

ICONOCLASTS AND ICONODULISTS

One of the key differences between the Eastern and Western Churches is the importance of icons (*eikon*) in Eastern spirituality. These beautiful objects are representations of holy figures, and are often elaborately and lavishly decorated. A few, the *acheiropoieta*, were not made by human hands at all, but came into being miraculously as spontaneous manifestations of the Dominion.

Icons are often associated with miracles and effects, in the same way as relics in the Western Church. Objects of popular devotion, they are sometimes regarded with suspicion by theologians. Two great parties arose on the issue of the use of icons in the

Church. The Iconoclasts, who opposed icons, held that the processions and prayers directed to icons frequently surpassed veneration (*proskynesis timetike*) directed to the subject, and so were actually direct worship (*latreia*) of the icon itself. The opposing party, who supported icons, were known as Iconodules, and claimed that to deny the material presentation of Christ in icons was to deny the incarnation of God, as icons were reminders of the physical presence of God in the world through Jesus Christ.

The issue roused such sentiment that in the eighth century an imperial order for the removal of some icons led to riots breaking out. This inaugurated a fifty-year period of political and military struggle, and during these years the League of Iconophiles, the direct ancestors of House Jerbiton, formed (see *Houses of Hermes: Societates*, page 40).

Two rival Church councils — one Iconoclastic and one Iconodulist — met and denounced each other. Eventually the support of the Empress Irene for the Iconodulist position ensured their victory. In the ninth century, a further thirty-year period of violent political and theological struggle arose over the issue, and in 843 the Regent Theodora promulgated a final pro-Iconodulist judgment. Icons remain an important aspect of Orthodox faith to this day, and the first Sunday of Lent is still celebrated as the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy.

Such complex theological issues, which led to the deposing of emperors, violent public discussion, and demonstrations, are hard for Westerners to understand. But theology is followed in Constantinople in much the way the city in former times wholeheartedly embraced chariot racing teams. Everyone has an opinion, and theological debates are major sources of gossip and interest. The population of Constantinople is noted for its intense spirituality and religious enthusiasms, and for its temperamental character and tendency to riot over such issues.

Story Seed: The Procession

When the local Latin churchmen attempt to suppress the procession of the icons through the streets on the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, rioting is certain. Most clergymen are still Orthodox, while the hierarchy of the Church is now at least partly Latin. With the Latin Patriarch of Constantinople dead, and his replacement not yet appointed, few realize the bloodbath the Bishop's decision to suppress the procession will provoke. Can the characters avert disaster?

Schism

The increasing claims of primacy by the pope led to centuries of tensions between the patriarch-led churches of the East, and the Western churches that looked to Rome for leadership. The final split that divided Christendom came in 1054, over a theological dispute. The dispute crystallized over a phrase, in Latin *filioque*, meaning "and from the Son."

The rejection of the papacy's authority over the *filioque* clause led to a split, with the diocese of Rome known as the Latin Church, and the Eastern part of the Church becoming the Orthodox Church. The event was in fact not generally seen as catastrophic at the time, but simply another theological dispute. But today the breach has widened to the point that both sides regard the other with grave distrust, and frequently as heretics.

Despite that, attempts at dialog have continued. The real catastrophe followed the crusade of 1204, which culminated in the sack of Constantinople, the imposition of the Latin Church by the conquerors, and the subsequent political and religious struggle that has torn the Theban Tribunal apart.

The Filoque Clause

The technical aspects of the argument over the phrase *filoque* (meaning "and from the Son") are complex, but can be summarized as follows.

In the East the Holy Trinity could be described as the Father, from whom proceeded the Son and Spirit. Whereas the Latin formulation was the Father, from whom proceeded the Son, the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and Son.

The issue was a long-standing bone of contention, and led to a short-lived schism in the ninth century when the pope excommunicated the Patriarch of Constantinople, Photius. The breach healed, and until 1054 the debate continued. It was at least partially exacerbated by the difficulties of expressing the theological nuances of the

Greek terms in the Latin formulation, and vice versa. The issue in trinitarian theology, in "the economy of the Godhead" as this area is known, became the focus for long-standing linguistic, theological, cultural, and political divides.

In 1220 many citizens still take every opportunity to discuss theology, and the lack of understanding of the Trinity on the part of the Latins is a cause of much amusement at their ignorance among Greeks. The baker who sells the characters their bread, or the maid who serves their breakfast, may well wish to engage them in theological debates, and attempt to show their ignorance. A character with a good score in Theology may well win friends, regardless of his background and ecclesiastical allegiance.

today, though some isolated exponents may exist. Asceticism, contemplative prayer, and invocation of certain specific prayers are still common throughout Byzantine religious life, especially in the monastic tradition and on Mount Athos. One form of spirituality is creating a major impact on religious thinking — the mystical practice of the *hesychasts*.

Hesychasm

The practice of hesychasm is a form of Orthodox spirituality that dates back as far as the Desert Fathers, but which is gaining in influence at this time. However, it is still an unusual and at times theologically controversial practice, insofar as the Church authorities pay any attention to it. While widely known from St. John of Sinai's seventh-century mystical classic *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, the practice is generally considered to be suited only to ascetics living lives of renunciation as hermits. In recent years a movement that introduces hesychast practices to monastic life and alongside standard liturgical offices has begun to gain influence, though the practice is still theologically controversial.

The hesychast trains himself to repeat constantly the Jesus Prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner," and to remain perfectly still, focusing on the inner to the neglect of the body and external environment. Special breathing exercises are used to enter a meditative state, along with controlled postures held for hours. Ecstasy, premonitions, and other phenomena are incidental by-products, and should be ignored completely as dangerous spiritual counterfeits that can lead to delusion and danger. The hesychast learns how to control his emotions by letting the mind be drawn into the heart and the unceasing quest for God and salvation. The ultimate aim is mystical experience of the Divine and illumination by the Holy Spirit.

Magic & The Church

Although amulets and talismans with inscribed holy names and prayers were common until the Iconoclasm riots, they usually employed Christian symbols. One example is the lead monk and nun rumored to be employed by the Empress Irene in the working of love spells. So too, diviners and soothsayers did certainly exist in the streets of Con-

Mysticism

The Orthodox Church has a very strong mystical tradition dating back to the days of the Desert Fathers — early hermits who em-

braced a contemplative lifestyle and sometimes rigorous ascetic practices. Perhaps most famous were the *stylites*, who climbed on pillars and remained on top preaching, fasting, and meditating, in some cases for decades. The tradition has largely died out



stantinople, but they ran the risk of death at the hands of enraged pious mobs. St. John Chrysostom publicly denounced the trade in amulets in the fifth century, and today openly bearing any kind of amulet or magical item is likely to mark one for death at the hands of the citizenry, long before the Church authorities get you. In fact, you would be much better off if the Church got to you first, since following the Iconoclasm period popular sentiment turned violently against use of magic or divination in any form, while the Church promulgated laws defining very specific offenses and punishments that are generally lenient. For example, dealing with demons is regarded as largely its own punishment, as the magician is invariably destroyed by the powers he tries to control. Ordinary Hermetic magic is probably indistinguishable from sorcery to any uneducated individual, requiring subtlety in spellcasting. Jerbiton magi are, however, known and respected as scholars, and are simply regarded as philosophers pursuing natural science as long as they avoid showy magical effects and frightening people. The Gentle Gift is an invaluable attribute in the urban areas of the Theban Tribunal.

Despite this, or perhaps because of it, some magi have adopted Holy Magic, especially in House Jerbiton (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 38). Magi of the Holy Societies of Sol Invictus (*Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 70) and Kabbalists, Baal Shem, and Karaites from the Jewish traditions (*Realms of Power: The Divine*, pages 140–142) can be found in the Tribunal, as well as Christian holy traditions including Hesychasm and the Society of St. Cyprian and St. Justina.

Creating and Venerating Divine Icons

Most icons are mundane, though beautiful, objects of pious veneration and aids for prayer directed to the figure depicted — they are *eikons*. This is represented in game turns as a bonus to prayers to that particular saint (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 87). The icon must be crafted as a single painting (described in *Art & Academe*, page 117). Only those who have taken Holy Orders and have a score in Ability Theology of 3 or more can create eikons.

The formula for creating an eikon is:

AESTHETIC QUALITY:
Dexterity + Craft (Painting) + bonuses

This generates its **Aesthetic Quality** (as described in *Art & Academe*, pages 123–125). An additional bonus (+1 for Standard work or +3 per Excellent crafts result) to Aesthetic Quality may be granted per season of work in gilding, bejeweling, or likewise decorating the icon appropriately, if spent by talented

craftsmen specialized in those abilities. A Pious personality trait may also be employed as a bonus to Aesthetic Quality if the saint depicted is the patron saint of the artist.

Eikons of saints give a bonus to intercession rolls when invoking a saint (see later). The bonus is equal to the Aesthetic Quality

Holy Tradition: Hesychasts

Troupes using the rules in *Realms of Power: The Divine* in their saga may wish to represent hesychasts in game terms. In 1220 there are two distinct modes of hesychast practice. The ascetics follow the traditional lives of hermits and renunciates, and live apart from their fellows. The monastics incorporate hesychast practice into the Divine offices of monastic life. They have slightly different favored abilities, as follows, reflecting the different focus of individual and communal paths to the Divine.

Ascetic Favored Abilities: Meditation, Purity, Transcendence, Understanding.

Monastic Favored Abilities: Ceremony, Meditation, Transcendence, Understanding.

The Holy Tradition is found exclusively among monks and possibly some nuns. There are at this time no Latin practitioners. Hesychasts are prone to the Divine Gloom form of Divine Ascent, from the very first time they experience it (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 63).

Story Seed: Death of an Artificer

When Simon of Newmarket is found dead in the back streets of Constantinople, his body hacked apart and his remains thrown down a disused well, political tensions run high. He was travelling to the covenant of Ingasia to discuss the location of the next Verditius Contest, which has caused much disagreement in the house between pro-Verdi and pro-Ingasia factions. The characters may be suspects,

magistrates, or foreign Quaesitors investigating the crime. Eventually the cause of his death becomes clear — Simon was not killed in a Hermetic political assassination, but died because of the broach he wore on his cloak, which was prominently marked with Verditius runes. A frightened mob killed the suspected sorcerer, The Gift and his blatant spellcasting exacerbating their fears.

Society of Cyprian and Justina

Favored Abilities: Holy Magic, Invocation, Sense Holy/Unholy and Wonders

St. Cyprian was a native of Carthage who lived in Antioch in the third century. He was renowned as a powerful thaumaturgist, whose magical wonders brought him a great reputation. In the same city lived a beautiful young lady named Justina, who had converted from paganism to worship Christ. A rich young man named Aglaias wooed her, but she rebuffed him. After a forceful abduction failed, he went to Cyprian for help. Cyprian consented for a price, and employed all his magical

arts against the girl, but his demons fled from her in terror and his spells failed. He attacked her household mercilessly, but all his spells failed. Thus he realized his sin. He went to the bishop, repented, burned his books on pagan magic, and was made a priest of God. Justina became a deaconess, and they had many adventures before suffering for their faith as holy martyrs.

St. Cyprian and St. Justina are the patron saints of magicians who repent, and who turn their knowledge to the support of the Divine. The Holy Society has a small but pious following who use prayer and miracles to fight the enemies of God.

divided by 5 (round up). Icons of Christ likewise give a bonus to invoking God's aid (see *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 41).

In either case, the veneration of the icon requires an hour of peaceful contemplation, or in an emergency the expenditure of a fatigue level and a roll of:

EMERGENCY VENERATION ROLL:
Presence + Concentration
vs Ease Factor 15

Angelic or saintly miracles occur at a time decided by the entity venerated, not necessarily immediately. So one might venerate an eikon of St. George the morning before going out to fight a dragon, and receive the effect of his Power at the time of the conflict.

An eikon can also be used for study of the ability Craft: Painting (as described in *Art & Academe*, page 126).

Eikons do not possess Divine Might.

ACHEIROPOIETA

The *acheiropoieta* are icons not made by hand, but spontaneously generated by the power of the Divine. They are usually found in Dominion auras of strength 10, or are brought from Heaven by angels. Invariably of Christ or the Virgin, they are always powerful relics. The best known spontaneous image of this type in the West is the Veil of Veronica, and in the Orthodox world the *Mandylion*

The Relics of Constantinople

Before the fall of Constantinople, the city held the largest collection of relics in Christendom. Many of these have been taken by the conquerors and sent back to Western Mythic Europe, but a good number still remain. Several relics are quite potent, stronger than both standard relics (the Minor General Virtue: Relic) and more powerful relics (the Major General Virtue: Powerful Relic found in *Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 35). Examples are provided below. Characters should not start the game possessing these relics, unless extreme circumstances exist in the troupe (for example, one of the player characters is Otto de la Roche).

Use relics in your saga to indicate the zeal with which medieval characters desire them, and the lengths that they will go to get them. Successfully taking a relic from someone else can indicate God's will, regardless of the means that the takers use to obtain the item. Relics are spread among all the mundane political entities populating the Theban Tribunal, and everyone wants more relics than they have. Player characters can easily be motivated to gain or retain a relic, depending on how they are allied or attached to any one particular group. Several of the magi of Moero's Garden, for example, would happily take a relic from a Latin crusader and return it to its proper place in the Eastern Church.

FRAGMENTS OF THE TRUE CROSS

The brutal instrument of Jesus' death, the cross is a symbol of mankind's redemption and a central aspect of medieval Christian identity. Lost under a hill outside the walls of Jerusalem, the True Cross was discovered by St. Helena, Constantine's moth-

er, who commissioned basilicas on the site to house the relic. Parts of it were transported to Constantinople, and throughout Mythic Europe. Many pieces of the True Cross were kept in the Hagia Sophia. Those pieces are now held by Venetian and Latin occupiers, as well as Byzantine exiles in Nicaea, who were able to take many of the smaller pieces with them.

A fragment of the True Cross that is as large as a man's leg has a Faith Score of 10, giving it 10 Faith Points and a Divine Might of 100. It also has the power to completely heal any wound instantaneously. Such pieces are rare. A piece the size of a man's hand has a Faith Score of 3 and has the power to instantly heal a Medium Wound. Small slivers have a Faith Score of 1 and act as regular relics (ArM5, page 48). Smaller fragments are common, and are frequently kept in golden reliquaries that people wear. The True Cross is an inexhaustible source of small relics.

THE IMAGE OF EDESSA

Part of the long, linen winding sheet used to bury Christ, this napkin-sized cloth has the image of Christ's face impressed upon it. Moved from Jerusalem to Hagia Sophia in 944, it is currently in the possession of Otto de la Roche, the current Duke of Athens. His possession of the shroud is the source of great animosity among ecclesiastics of the Eastern Church, a few of whom complained to Pope Innocent III, without result.

The Image of Edessa has a Faith Score of 5, meaning 50 Faith Points and a Divine Might of 50. It has the saintly powers of Celestial Immunity and The Leap of the Faithful (*Realms of Power: The Divine*, pages 88–89).

THE CROWN OF THORNS

Hagia Sophia's most recent acquisition, the Crown of Thorns was moved to Constantinople in 1063 from the Holy Land. Made by Roman soldiers to humiliate him, Jesus wore this painful headpiece as he walked to Calvary for his crucifixion. Like the True Cross, it is an inexhaustible source of smaller relics — individual thorns that have been distributed throughout Mythic Europe. Each thorn acts as a relic granted by the Minor General Virtue: Relic. The whole crown has a Faith Score of 7, and the saintly powers of Cure Blindness, Strengthen the Cripple, and Mass Healing.

In 1220, the crown belongs to the Latin emperor, but is held by the Venetian doge as security against a large loan of 13,134 Mythic pounds. It has not left the city, and resides under lock and key in the Venetian section of Constantinople.

THE HOLY LANCE

The Holy Lance of Longinus (Latin: *Lancea Longini*) is a Roman pilum, used by the centurion Longinus to pierce Christ's chest during the crucifixion. It has lain in Constantinople since the eighth century and now rests in the imperial palace of the Latin emperor. A second, longer lance was discovered during the First Crusade in 1098, and this also appears to be a genuine relic.

The Holy Lance has a Faith Score of 3 and the power to Expel Demons. It is a good example of a relic gained by the General Major Virtue: Powerful Relic.

— the first icon which was stolen from Constantinople during the Sack of 1204.

NON-DIVINE ICONS

Icons can also be affiliated to other realms — Magic, Infernal, or even Faerie — but these are extremely rare. False icons, for such they are, arise in different ways. Some are spontaneously generated in powerful auras by misguided worship aimed at an entity other than God. Worship is reserved for God alone (*latreia*), while veneration (*du-lia*) can be applied to any entity, even a demon or mortal, without harm as respect due to its status and power, no more and no less. (The Seventh Oecumenical Council created *hyperdulia*, a special veneration applied solely to the Theotókos.) Worshiping rather than venerating an icon breaks the First Commandment, and is a mortal sin that will open one to the possibility of demonic influence.

The power of these false icons usually resides in the item itself; they do not, as with true icons, act as channels to an entity, though demons are usually attracted by misapplied veneration aimed at them. They are therefore best represented as supernatural creatures with a Might score and powers.

Three Symbols of Divine Authority

The Byzantine Empire has been under the auspices of the Divine realm since the Battle of Milvian Bridge, when Constantine the Great abandoned his pagan heritage and fully embraced Christianity. The emperor is the representation of God on earth, His vicegerent who rules through divine mandate. If an emperor is murdered, it is a sign that he has lost God's favor, and if the murderer then accepts the purple and is crowned the new emperor, God's grace has descended upon the new ruler. In Mythic Europe, this means that the emperor, whatever actions brought him to the throne, is a representative of God and gains the powers of other Christian rulers, as defined in *Realms of Power: The Divine*, pages 42–43.

The emperor's holy authority is symbolized by three artifacts: his battle standard, his imperial crown, and the holy icon of the hagka — a double-headed eagle carried on a long pole. When combined, these items form a powerful divine force. In 1220, these

items are separated, one held by Bulgarians, another by the Latin occupiers, and the third mysteriously missing. Many theorize that the empire won't stabilize until these three artifacts are again held by a single emperor.

THE BATTLE STANDARD

The battle standard is a large, bronze staff capped with a golden eagle and cross posts that hold the imperial symbol emblazoned on purple silk. It was last seen in the army of Isaac Angelus, when he summoned the army of Constantinople to march on the rebellious Bulgarians in 1190. His army was defeated and routed, fleeing all the way back to Constantinople. When held by the imperial standard bearer, the battle standard extends the emperor's commanding aura to Sight Range (*Realms of Power: The Divine*, page 42). This effectively grants a +3 bonus to any Discipline and Moral tests friendly soldiers have to make.

THE BYZANTINE IMPERIAL CROWN

Each emperor has his own crown, personally made for him by the imperial goldsmiths. Of the three items that signify imperial power, the crown is merely symbolic and does not confer any additional supernatural powers. Since each emperor has his own individual crown, a large collection of past crowns exists, all finely wrought of gold and precious jewels. The conquerors have taken all of these crowns as spoils of war. Besides their monetary value, the crowns of past emperors do not possess any supernatural powers.

The crown is the easiest of the three artifacts to find because it is, in fact, made for the current emperor once he ascends to the throne. To augment the powers of the other two artifacts, the crown must be worn; so while symbolic, it is essential. If lost, a new crown must be made before the emperor can augment the powers of whatever other artifact of power he might possess. Crowns are lost relatively often; in 1204, before the fall of the city, Alexius V Ducas Murzuphlus lost a battle to a small group of French knights raiding the coastal city of Philia, leaving both his crown and the hagka behind as he fled.

THE HOLY ICON: THE HAGKA

The hagka is the imperial symbol of the Byzantine Empire, depicted as a double-headed eagle. Installed as the state symbol

by Emperor Isaac I Komnenos, rumor has it that he derived the symbol after seeing the "hagka," a legendary two-headed eagle large enough to carry off a bull. Symbolically, the double heads represent the emperor's authority over both secular and religious aspects of the empire.

The hagka is a bronze effigy mounted atop a long lance, with a portrait of the Blessed Virgin Mary hung from it. By itself it confers a Magic Resistance of 10 to the bearer. If used in connection with the imperial crown and the battle standard, the Magic Resistance is spread to every friendly unit within Sight Range, and the Discipline and Moral bonus is boosted to +6.

Byzantine Saints

The veneration of saints and the invoking of their intervention from God are a major component of the Orthodox Church. Having survived the Iconoclasm, images of saints and their relics flourish. Technically, there is no difference between Byzantine saints and the saints of Western Mythic Europe; the Greeks venerate all saints and don't exclude saints popular in the West from their calendars. They do have a preference for Eastern saints, especially martyrs of the Eastern Roman Empire, but would never ignore the apostles, the Blessed Virgin Mary, or any of the holy martyrs.

There are a great many more recognized saints in the Eastern Orthodox Church than in the West. The official calendar of saints, the *Synaxarion*, lists over 2,000 saints, each having a brief history and liturgical readings for public displays on any individual saint's day. Compiled in the 11th century and regularly updated, the most exact copy resides in the Studion next to the Church of St. John the Baptist in Constantinople. Other derivative copies exist. The *Synaxarion* includes many saints not recognized by the West, including Emperor Justinian, Emperor Justinian the Younger, Patriarch Photios and his theological opponent Patriarch Ignatios.

Saints seem to be more active in Eastern Mythic Europe than in the West, and their intervention in mortal affairs is more common. Perhaps this is because of the loss of the Queen of Cities, the dethroning of the rightful emperor, and the catastrophic rise of demons and Infernal agents. For example, in 1207 when Ioannitsa the Greckslayer, King of Bulgaria, was besieging the city of Thessaloniki, the city's patron St. Deme-



trios assumed physical form and slew him with a spear. The siege was lifted and one of the worst threats to the Byzantine Empire was removed.

Invoking a saint's intercession is common, and storyguides can use the rules in *Realms of Power: The Divine*.

INVOKING A SAINT:

Communication + Charm + modifier + simple die vs. 15 + simple die

A list of modifiers helpful in invoking saints appears on page 87 of *Realms of Power: The Divine*.

There is a surprising similarity in the miracles that Greek saints employ, according to the stories of their lives. While all the powers and curses available to Western saints are allowable, storyguides should concentrate on the following powers:

Healing, 2 points, Init +7, Corpus. With this power a saint can heal all of a supplicant's wounds, regardless of how they were inflicted, cure any disease, and remedy any physical impairments.

Overstepping the Temporal Bounds, 5 points, Init +9, Mentem. Saints have the ability to slip outside of the regulated structure of God's temporal framework and view images of the past and future, as well as instantly appear in any place no matter how far it is from their last appearance.

Knowledge is often delivered in cryptic riddles or parables. Allow the petitioning character to benefit from the Supernatural Virtue: Premonitions or the Supernatural Flaw: Visions for the day.

Feed the Hungry, 1 point, Init +3, Herbam. Using God's power, a saint can create nourishing food for any number of people it sees fit. This is usually bread and fresh water, but fish and other corn products can be created.

Relief from Natural Disasters, 5 points, Init +6, Aquam or Terram. Many hagiographies recount how a saint saved the faithful from violent storms, earthquakes, or being lost at sea. With this power a saint can halt any natural disaster occurring from mundane causes. For supernaturally caused disasters, this power allows the saint to instantly transport the petitioner away from harm, up to a hundred miles away.

Tame the Wild Beast, 2 points, Init +5, Animal. This power tames any wild beast, regardless of size or temperament, causing an otherwise hostile animal to depart in peace. Tamed animals cannot be yoked into service, and this power primarily protects the faithful from dangerous predators while traveling.

Gift of Endurance, 3 points, Init +6, Corpus. This power lets saints fortify a petitioner to be immune to physical deprivation. The petitioner does not need to eat or

sleep for a number of days equal to the saint's Divine Might, nor do naturally occurring weather conditions (heat and cold) impair him.

The powers listed on page 88 of *Realms of Power: The Divine* that Greek saints do often have are: *Acknowledgement of Evil*, *Apparition*, *Expel Demons*, *Resist Temptation*, and *Sanctuary of Virginity*.

A MOTHER'S CURSE

Mothers are held in special reverence in Greek and most other cultural traditions surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. The Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of God, is the patron and protector of Constantinople, the greatest city on earth. Mundane mothers are viewed as the protectors of their children. To ensure the proper behavior of her children, a mother in Mythic Europe's Mediterranean Sea basin has the power to curse her child. This curse is associated with the powers of the Divine realm, and an individual mother does not have to possess any magical, divine, or supernatural powers or Abilities to be able to invoke a curse.

The effects of the curse are the same as the Minor Supernatural Flaw: Lesser Malediction. The mother selects some area of expertise her child has — military, academic, or professional — and he suffers a -3 penalty to all rolls involving that activity. Curses cannot be laid haphazardly, and the mother must have a good reason behind her curse for it to manifest. Most curses demand that the character do something to return a family situation to normality. Examples are rescuing a captured sister, reclaiming the family honor, defending a weak sibling, and providing for destitute kin. The storyguide should use her judgment to decide if a curse is appropriate. Roleplaying games rarely include a character's mother, and this is an opportunity for the storyguide to propel stories while retaining a certain Greek feeling in the saga.

The only ways to remove a mother's curse are by completing the assigned task that elicited the curse, or receiving divine intervention. A saint can remove a curse, as can other creatures of the Divine realm, but even this depends on the character's behavior, the exact terms of the curse, and God's ineffable plan. Characters hoping to find succor from a curse that is supposed to ensure Christian principles may be sorely disappointed when a saint refuses to remove it.

Hermetic Leagues

Given the importance of theology and religion in the Theban Tribunal region, it is unsurprising this is reflected in the Hermetic politics. Chapter 3: Order of Hermes, The Leagues of Thebes details several leagues, and another is given below.

The League of Constantine

The League of Constantine desires to restore the Roman Empire by restoring a Greek emperor to the throne. Its members have uncovered the Infernal influences that led to the city's fall, and suspect that the missing hagka is vital to accomplishing their goal. Their immediate goal is to search the enemy Bulgarian territories for Isaac Alexios' missing battle standard, hoping that it will provide clues to where the hagka may lie.

In the long run, the League of Constantine is correct. The city has suffered due to its loss of Divine favor. Returning the hagka to the throne will be extremely beneficial. It does not necessarily mean that a Greek will overthrow the Latin emperor, but the return of the hagka will grant the wisdom of Solomon, the strength of David, and the mercy of St. Paul to a truly devout emperor.

Unfortunately, the league has not accurately determined who was under the influence of Infernal manipulation. Demons, being the masters of guile, have remained immune to the league's investigative spells. Determining that demons were involved in the city's fall was easy, identifying who the specific culprit is has been impossible. The league suspects certain individuals but cannot provide definitive proof. Coupled with this inability to distinguish between allies and enemies, the hagka could be anywhere. The league doesn't know if the artifact is whole, or has been split into several parts. It could be hidden in a crusader's treasury, secreted away in a Greek monastery, buried under a pile of rubble in the burned-out Venetian quarter, or laying at the bottom of the Bosphorus.

The Hagka, Protector of Constantinople

The Hagka, the two-headed eagle, is not merely the great symbol of Byzantium, but is also a real creature, an immensely powerful Divine beast. Native to the mountains of Asia Minor, it was called upon by Byzantine folk, emperors and peasants alike, in defense of their lands. This splendid and awe-inspiring beast is large enough to flatten a small house or carry off a man in each of its claws. Its feathers shine with the light of the heavens and its gazes strike terror into the hearts of enemies, causing wicked men to fall to their knees and beg for forgiveness. After the Hagka failed in its battle to protect Constantinople (see Chapter 12: Infernal Landscape, Akgah), it was forced to flee the great city and retreated to the wilderness of Asia Minor, where it remains

the protector of the Empire of Nicaea. The great eagle is weakened, but still has a Divine Might of 40. It bears sore wounds that will not heal and its brilliant white feathers remain soiled until the empire is restored. It will nurture and protect any pious Greek who is loyal to the empire but is an enemy to Latin crusaders, unless they are truly repentant.

The symbolic hagka, a representation of this legendary beast, may be seen in the coat of arms of the great city of Constantinople, clutching a cross and an orb in each of its claws, signifying Divine and imperial authority, respectively. The two heads look both to the west and to the east. It is also often depicted on battle standards (see main text) or in stained glass windows in churches in colors of gold or purple.

Greek Saints

Realms of Power: The Divine divides saints into three categories: greater, area, and local saints. Greater saints have a Divine Might of 75, area saints a Divine Might of 50, and local saints a Divine Might of 25.

St. Symeon Stylites, a Syrian pillar-sitter who lived atop his column for 37 years. The patron saint of Antioch in the former Byzantine Levant, Symeon was the first of many stylite saints.

GREATER SAINTS

- St. John Chrysostom**, a prolific Father of the Church and patron saint of preachers.
- St. George**, *megalo martyros* (magnificent martyr), one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers in the Eastern Orthodox Church, patron saint of soldiers (note that St. George does not become the patron saint of England until 1415, after the battle of Agincourt).

AREA SAINTS

- St. Demetrios**, patron saint of Thessaloniki and soldiers.
- St. Eugenios**, patron saint of Trebizond.
- St. Euphemia**, patron saint of Constantinople, the city's first official saint
- St. Nicholas of Myra**, patron saint of sailors, merchants, students, and children.

LOCAL SAINTS

- St. Hosios Loukas** (St. Luke), a 10th-century hermit who is patron saint of his monastery, built on the slopes of Mt. Helicon.
- St. Hypatios**, patron saint of Rufinianae, a monastic complex a few miles from Chalcedon and a frequent stop-over for imperial families.
- St. Leontios**, patron saint of the monastery of St. John the Evangelist on the island of Patmos. Leontios was a "holy fool," meaning that he was not a monk or part of any institutional framework, and was made a saint based solely on his asceticism.
- St. Prokopios**, the first martyr of Diocletian's persecutions, and popular in Caesarea.
- Saints Cosmas and Damian**, twins known as Unmercenary Physicians (they healed the sick for no pay), they are saints of physicians and suburban Constantinople.

Chapter Twelve

The Infernal Landscape

The Theban Tribunal has suffered greatly from the machinations of the Infernal realm. The situation is not black and white; no single enemy or army is entirely composed of demonic forces ravaging the lands of the good. But Infernal agents have seeped into every faction, including the Order of Hermes, and spread moral rot and earthly corruption.

The Corruption of the Byzantine Empire

At the beginning of the 12th century the Byzantine Empire was slipping into decadence and decay. By the end of the century, it was beset by familial infighting, greed, and wars, and had made powerful enemies in the West. Inundated by selfishness and the personal depravity of some of the emperors, demonic agents finally gained a firm foothold when Emperor Andronikos Komnenos fully embraced an Infernal patron.

Exiled after plotting against his cousin Manuel, Andronikos Komnenos faced the prospect of an ignoble end. Instead of retreating into the empire's hinterlands, he sold his soul to a demon in female guise for the promise of the imperial throne, and in 1182 rode into Constantinople at the head of a conquering army. His short but fateful reign was characterized by a mixture of brilliance and horror; while an able administrator, he was also thoroughly sadistic.

Immediately upon assuming the throne, Andronikos had his rivals brutally murdered. One victim, Renier of Montferat, was the younger brother of Boniface, who would later become the leader of the Fourth Crusade. Andronikos set loose a great orgy of violence in Constantinople, starting with the Venetian merchants and spreading to include all Westerners; tens of thousands of Latins were slaughtered. The Republic of Venice was naturally horrified

and outraged. Thus Andronikos both thoroughly corrupted his empire and sowed the seeds of conflict with Venice and Montferat. Once Andronikos had achieved these malefic goals, he was betrayed by his Infernal patron and his subjects alike, and his long life and short reign ended in an agonizing torture.

The Corruption of the Fourth Crusade

The Fourth Crusade was established with the noble aim of recovering the Holy Land. Yet it would totally fail to achieve its goal and instead end in tragedy and infamy. Certainly it was not God's hand that directed this fate, but rather the Infernal, which subtly manipulated a small number of key events to devastating effect. All parties involved — be they Latins, Venetians, or Greeks — had Infernal saboteurs within their ranks, making it impossible to label anyone entirely good or evil.

The crusade suffered misfortune before it even began with the untimely death of its intended leader, Count Thibaut of Champagne. His replacement, Boniface of Montferrat, was less influential and gathered fewer knights than expected. The crusade's emissaries had negotiated with the Republic of Venice to construct a vast fleet for them, capable of holding 33,000 knights and their entourages. But only 12,000 knights assembled at the agreed upon time, and the army did not have the money promised to the Venetians. To salvage their agreement, the crusaders agreed to help the Venetians recover Zara, a port on the Adriatic whose merchants were a thorn in the side of the Venetian Republic.

Upon the army's arrival at Zara, the citizenry negotiated a peaceful surrender with the doge, but this plan was undermined when Simon de Montfort told the defenders that they had nothing to fear from the French and

would only face the Venetians. This division in the army only postponed the siege, since many of the French still felt duty bound to the Venetians to pay their debt. Zara defended itself for five days but eventually surrendered. To the great horror of the pope, the crusaders ransacked the Christian city, and he responded by excommunicating them.

With the knights removed from Divine protection, the Infernal could now operate among the crusading army with greater ease. Several of the nobles made ill-advised pacts with demons in exchange for protection, fame, and wealth. The more pious of the crusaders saw that the crusade was becoming increasingly corrupted and abandoned the enterprise.

The final piece in the puzzle was the rebellious Byzantine prince Alexios Angelos, who had allied himself with the crusade in the hopes of gaining the imperial throne. Was he a diabolist or merely the unwitting pawn and beneficiary of Infernal aid? He had long pleaded with Western rulers for aid in taking back the throne, but his pleas had been met with scorn. Now, however, he suddenly had the ear of the leaders of the crusade and was in possession of the money that they needed to repay their debts. Reduced in numbers, indebted, excommunicated, tired, and impatient for a proper fight, the crusaders ultimately agreed to his offer. The city of Constantinople was fabulously wealthy; if they took it Alexios would repay their debts to the doge, they would restore a rightful prince to his throne, and they would avenge the murders of Boniface's brother and the slaughter of the Venetians and other Westerners twenty years ago.

The Fall of Constantinople

The crusading army reached the city in 1203. It looked as if a peaceful conquest was possible when the Byzantine emperor, Alexios

III, fled his city. Just as in Zara, however, a squabble between allies — this time between Alexios and his blind father, Isaac II — ensured that war was wrested from the jaws of peace. The citizens of Constantinople revolted and a tremendous fire tore through the city.

Next spring, the crusaders resolved to take the city by force. The violence and outrages that followed were unprecedented. Hordes of demons accompanied the invading army through and over the walls, as the city's Dominion aura had diminished due to Alexios III's slaughter of worshipers. The crusaders engaged in rape and pillage, old women were violated, infants were slaughtered, and magnificent works of art were defaced and destroyed. The city's great library was ransacked and burned. The knights knew no shame, for they even smashed their way into the great Hagia Sophia, defacing its icons and holy books, where they installed a drunken whore on the patriarchal throne. This harlot proceeded to sing lewd songs and issue senseless edicts over her new "realm," and the attendant demons ensured that her orders were carried out to the letter, willingly or not. Greedy priests and nobles stole priceless relics from churches, while the more crazed and drunken of the knights simply dumped the relics in a heap and urinated over them. In the drunken debauchery, knights played dice and gambled away their wives with each other. The watching demons ensured that those who "lost" their wives never saw them again; back home, either the wife would suffer a tragic death or commit adultery. The Fourth Crusade had thus culminated in a bloody orgy of greed, sacrilege, and destruction against a great Christian city — the very antithesis of a righteous crusade.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THERMAKOPOLIS

One of the great prides of House Jerbiton was Thermakopolis, an urban covenant of five Jerbiton magi lead by the Archmagus Mathieus. Settled within Constantinople, Thermakopolis pledged itself to the preservation and protection of the city. Despite the atrocities and threats of the 12th century, and the foul machinations of the royal family, the magi of Thermakopolis promised that the city would continue and that any noted evils were merely ripples in an otherwise tranquil sea. They told the magi of the Theban Tribunal to set their anxieties aside, and that they would protect the city no matter what the threat. They vowed that all was well even as

Akgah, the Demon of the Fourth Crusade

The events described in the main text were orchestrated by a prince of Hell known as Akgah, and proceeded according to its grand malefic design. Akgah is the counterpart and enemy of the Hagka (see Chapter 11: Divine Landscape, The Hagka). Its physical form is that of a double-headed winged leopard as large as an elephant, a perversion of the winged lion that symbolizes the Republic of Venice. Its splendid sweet-smelling fur is mottled gold and black, and it has great golden wings. Those who accompany it are overcome with greed, lust, and a frenzy for battle. As the crusaders swept into Constantinople in the spring of 1204, the great leopard did battle with the Hagka in the legendary Hippodrome, surrounded by the statues of ancient gods and beasts. The struggle was cataclysmic, resulting in the partial destruction of the arena and its ornaments. But the Infernal combatant ultimately won the day, and the wounded Hagka fled. Deluded

Crusaders nearby thought they were witnessing a Divine vision of the triumph of the lion of Venice, and were emboldened. Now, Akgah aims to maintain a state of war and chaos in the lands of the former empire, and sows the seeds of mistrust and avarice among the rival successor states.

Akgah is an exceedingly powerful demon, with an Infernal Might of 50. As a result of the unimaginable and tremendous success of its great schemes, which led to the downfall of the greatest Christian empire on earth, it has gained great infamy and stature among the princes of Hell. Its lair is about a dozen miles outside the city of Constantinople, hidden in an Infernal regio resembling a blasted battlefield. Akgah sits surrounded by great stinking heaps of corpses, which it lazily devours amid piles of treasure and despoiled relics. The bodies of suicides, violated nuns, and other unfortunate souls are hung nearby on hundreds of pikes.

the Latins assembled outside the city walls.

Masters of Mentem magic, the magi felt assured that they could orchestrate a peaceful solution between the mundane forces. However, they didn't take into account the magical protection that several of the leaders possessed, fruits of an evil union between man and demon. Their spells of mind control and illusion failed to prevent hostilities, and they bravely accepted that they would have to defend the walls as best they could. To their credit, the magi stood among the defenders, watching the Latin ships sail across the strait, decks bristling with siege engines, towers, and spears. Their heroic defence was a catastrophe, though. Their spells frightened their allies, who fled the wall more afraid of the wizards who stood alongside them than the encroaching crusaders. While the first assault was prevented, it claimed the lives of two of Thermakopolis' members. A third fell the next day when the crusaders mounted the walls, and a fourth member died in the fires set that evening. A famed member of Thermakopolis, Michael, also perished, but gave his name to a new covenant founded by survivors from the other covenants in the city (see Chapter 7: Constantinople, Michael's Tabula). The sole surviving magus, Mathieus, fled to the Normandy Tribunal and eventually founded the covenant Eboris

(*Lion and the Lily*, pages 84–97).

In 1220, Thermakopolis is the greatest shame of House Jerbiton. For all their promises and bravado, the magi failed to repel the invaders, and this dark smudge still haunts every Jerbiton magus in the Tribunal. Many Jerbiton magi, especially the apprentices who will soon be gauntleted, desperately want to reclaim the city and replant a covenant within its walls. The Tribunal as a whole is undecided. Should this act be encouraged or discouraged? Many prefer to wait and see what happens before committing to this action.

THE FATE OF THE CRUSADERS

Just like Andronikos Komnenos before them, most of the victorious leaders of the crusade were not rewarded with a long rule, but instead quickly met their doom after they had served Hell's purpose (either wittingly or not). Enrico Dandolo, the Doge of Venice, died the next year, as did Baldwin of Flanders and Louis of Blois, at the Battle of Adrianople. Louis was killed by a Cuman force and Baldwin was captured and later executed, his skull being turned into a drinking cup. Boniface of Montferrat was slain in an ambush two years later and his head was sent to the Bulgarian tsar as a trophy.

An Enemy Within

Unknown to all, Proximios of House Mercere — member of the covenant of Alexandria, co-founder of the League of the Vigilant, and likely nominee to be the next logothete — is an Infernalist. He is an expert at the Unholy Method: Incantation and the Unholy Power: Diablerie, and has a long list of demons' True Names, who he can enlist in his evil designs. He frequently uses summoned demons as spies and lures, controlling various Tempters and Evil Spirits and ordering them to compel his fellows to sin. Proximios' ultimate plan is the complete downfall of the Order of Hermes starting in Thebes. He knows that the Tribunal is full of magi who would detect any obvious Infernal machinations, making him work covertly and patiently. He has begun looking for weak links in each covenant in the Theban Tribunal, hoping to spread corruption and distrust. His position at Alexandria has allowed him to gain information from several missives and private correspondences between magi.

He has initiated his first plan by founding the League of the Vigilant and convinc-

ing Hydatius of Ingasia to act as its leader. As the league develops, he will steer its members toward persecuting magi who appear to be diabolists, but are in fact innocent of any Infernal crimes. Likely candidates are Caterina de Vigonovo of Polyaegos, young members of Erebus, and the nosey Delfini of Aegaea. Proximios plans to convince Hydatius to send league members to investigate the suspected diabolists, but he will not lead them personally. Once afield, a demon disguised as Hydatius will direct the league members to attack.

He also plans to induce likely candidates to act against their sodales. If he can get Aiakia of Hedyosmos to believe that the Tremere of Gigas were responsible for the fall of Constantinople, and are planning future strikes against his covenant, perhaps the Guernicus will move against Gigas. Boustaphan will certainly not open Gigas' records for Aiakia's perusal. Tisiphon is more easily led astray, and convincing him that the magi of Gigas have escaped true justice would be easy. More volatile than Aiakia, Tisiphon might respond with Wizard's Wars.

Knowing that Lucian of Aegaea hopes to raise the forgotten Greek gods, and that Celaena of Hedyosmos obsessively loves Hermes, Proximios intends to tell Celaena of Lucian's agenda. He hopes her devotion to Hermes will incite her to act against Lucian and his

league. Moreto has informed Proximios that, if the Redcap could find an Infernalist magus and place him in the league, chances are good that they would raise a False God for binding rather than a powerful faerie (False Gods are an order of demons described in *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 57). Triggering Celaena's protectiveness of Hermes is easy, while finding an Infernalist magus much harder.

These plans are merely formulating in Proximios' head in 1220. Politically, he will accept the position of logothete, but it is important to his plans that it look like he accepted the post reluctantly, so he cannot be blamed when it eventually unravels. As keeper of the tally of tokens and shards, he will be able to promote those willing to cooperate with him. As yet, he has not sought Hermetic allies in his Infernal conspiracy, but he has his eye on a few who he thinks are susceptible.

Proximios can easily be the main enemy in a saga set in the Thebes Tribunal. He has the potential to raise high in the political system of the Order and could spread dissension and deceit throughout the entire Tribunal. He is very good at not getting caught, and all of his plots will look like someone else engineered them. Caution should be exercised with the speed and success of his schemes, since they could easily overwhelm beginning magi player characters. The threat of his machinations should build as the years pass, and careful consideration must be exercised so that he does not completely unhinge a budding saga. As he gains the upper hand, he will be more overt with the League of the Vigilant, using them as his shock troops as he rebuilds the Thebes Tribunal in his image.



Theban Demons

The following Infernal creatures are unique to the Theban Tribunal.

The Vrykolakas

One of the most feared of the supernatural denizens of Greece is the *vrykolakas* (plural *vrykolakes*), or vampire. It is a common tradition for families to exhume their deceased relatives after three years and place the bones in a small box or *coemeterion* ("house of sleep"). However, sometimes the flesh doesn't dissipate in this time, and the family releases a *vrykolakas* from its sleep. The demon, who has eaten the

corpse and taken its form, adopts its Form of Wickedness (see insert description) to spread panic while it makes its escape.

Those who are most prone to becoming host to a vrykolakas after death are those who have died alone, who have had a cat jump over their corpse, or who have eaten the flesh of a sheep that was killed by a wolf. However, the most surefire way is to be cursed at the moment of death: "may the black earth spew you up" or "may you remain incorrupt," or variants thereof. Some particularly evil individuals who die with evil yet to do may curse themselves as they die in the hope of attracting the attention of a demon.

With its ability to blend into society without fear of detection, the vrykolakas often sets up trade in a nearby village where it will not be recognized. They are fearful predators, first eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the relatives of the corpse, then ranging further abroad. An area with a vrykolakas suffers a general decline in health and vitality as it feeds at night on both livestock and on men. Like all demons, they can be repelled with symbols of faith, but their particular enemies are the alaphroiskiotoi (see Chapter 4: Culture & Customs). A vrykolakas is unable to harm anyone who was born on a Saturday, and those of this group with Second Sight can always spot a vampire in human or spiritual form. In different regions, the vrykolakas also goes by the name of timpanios (after the drum-like skin of a bloated corpse), alitos (indissoluble), and katakhanas (destroyer).

The Smerdaki

Anything which is unacceptable, foul, or unclean is referred to as *smerdos*. The term is used for adulterated wine, rotten fruit, and decaying meat; but it also refers to unbaptized infants, the offspring of two different races, and a child born out of wedlock. Individuals polluted by smerdos may develop the power of the evil eye or become powerful masters of the maleficia (see *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, pages 102–113).

There is a class of demons called the smerdaki, which are of particular nuisance to shepherds. These demons frequent enclosures, hedges, ruins of houses, and spots where livestock rest. They can appear as men covered head-to-toe in hair, or as rams with black patches on their foreheads. Others take the form of a child with red skin and eyes like those of a cat. The smerdaki terrorize livestock, dispersing the flock. They cause abortions and traumatize

Vrykolakas

Order: Vessel of Iniquity
Infernal Might: 20 (Corpus)
Characteristics: Int 0, Per 0, Pre 0, Com 0, Str +4, Sta +4, Dex 0, Qik +2
Size: 0
Confidence Score: 1 (3)
Virtues and Flaws: Shapeshifter; Improved Characteristics, Lightning Reflexes
Personality Traits: Hateful +6, Depraved +6
Combat:
Grapple: Init +2, Attack +6, Defense +7, Damage +4
Teeth: Init +2, Attack +10, Defense +8, Damage +7
Spittle: Init +2, Attack +6, Defense n/a, Damage +10
Soak: +14
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: Athletics 10 (leaping), Brawl 5 (grapple), Folk Ken 3 (passing for human), Shapeshifter 3 (at night), Thrown Weapons 5 (spittle)
Powers:
Form of Wickedness, 2 points, Init 0, Mentem: See *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 39
Form of Man, 0 points, Init 0, Corpus: See *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 39
Contagious Obsession, 1 point per victim, Init 0, Mentem: See *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 39

Obsession, 1 to 3 points, Init -5, Vim: Fear. See *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 31.
Burning Spittle, 0 points, Init +2, Ignem: the spittle of a vrykolakas is liquid fire, and it can expel it up to 5 paces. If it hits, the spittle inflicts +10 damage; if it is parried it eats through any object it touches rendering it useless. This is considered a natural attack and cannot be resisted by Magic Resistance.
Weakness: Protected Group (those born on a Saturday).
Vis: 4 pawns of Corpus in its teeth
Appearance: The vrykolakas is indistinguishable from ordinary people in appearance, until it reveals its powers, at which point it takes on its true form. Some have shiny black skin, others glow in the dark. They are hunchbacked, with black hands and long nails. Their faces are blood-red and peeling, their teeth are like those of a cat or wolf, and they have wild hair and beards. In Thrace they are even more monstrous, with the skin of a goat, the trunk of an elephant, and a single colossal eye. With their Shapeshifter Ability they usually take the form of cats, goats, and owls.

Vrykolakas usually take victims who are on their own, locking them in a grapple before biting them. They occasionally keep their victims alive and feed from them night after night by inflicting scuffle damage rather than normal damage.

the genitals of valuable stud animals. Shepherds claim that smerdaki cannot be killed, wounded, or injured in any manner. Since they haunt specific places, smerdaki are avoided by changing pastures and removing the tongues of the bells on the livestock so that the demon is unaware of the ruse. It is believed that those bearing the taint of smerdos become smerdaki, but this is simply peasant superstition.

Infernal Tradition: Stringla

Favored Abilities: Ceremony, Debauchery, Effusion, Phantasm

A *stringla* (plural *stringles*) is a variety of witch found in the Byzantine Empire; some areas (such as Mykonos) are reputed to be positively infested. These depraved women seek specifically to undermine the power of

the Church and the dominance of man over woman; to achieve this aim they have made a deal with a demon who has granted them numerous horrible powers. Outwardly, a stringla appears no different to any other woman, although over time her ankles and wrists become deformed and twisted, so older stringles take pains to keep these joints hidden. It is not uncommon to hear of a man who has been married for years before discovering his wife (and usually his mother-in-law) is a stringla.

Local stringles gather into covens of 13 members, and they meet in rocky crevasses and echoing ravines to plot their mischief with each other and their stringles demon. This demon apparently has no physical form; it communicates to them as a disembodied voice. The stringles demon is a member of the Order of Deluders, specifically a Watcher (see *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, pages 41 and 64), and will provide teaching in maleficia in

Smerdaki

Order: Tempters / Evil Spirits

Infernal Might: 10 (Animal)

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

Size: -2

Virtues and Flaws: Hex; Weak-Willed

Personality Traits: Selfish +5

Combat:

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

Soak: +5

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

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

Abilities: Animal Handling 5 (inducing stampede), Athletics 3 (giving chase), Brawl 3 (evasion), Folk Ken 3 (shepherds), Hex 2 (abortions)

Powers:

Coagulation, 1 point, Init -1, Corpus: See *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 31.

Obsession, 1 to 3 points, Init -5, Vim: Terror.

See *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 31.

Illusionary Form, 1 point, Init +1, Imagination: Creates an image of the demon's physical form, which can move at the demon's direction. The demon must appear in this form or in physical form to use its Coagulation power.

Shout of Pan, 1 point, Init +1, Animal: Animals flee in terror from the demon. Up to 10 animals are directly affected, but herd animals tend to spread the panic to the rest of the herd. Even goats or sheep can form a lethal stampede if in sufficient numbers.

Weakness: Compulsiveness

Vis: 2 pawns of Animal, in eyes

Appearance: See main text

The apparent invulnerability of the smerdaki is provided by their illusionary form; they only rarely take corporeal form.

addition to acting as a mentor and protector.

A stringla should be created as a companion or Mythic Companion. As a tradition they are similar to the Strigae (*Realms of Power: The Infernal*, page 129), and have the same favored abilities. They are the especial enemy of Greece's nightwalkers (see Chapter 9: Magical Landscape and *Hedge Magic*, pages 103-119), and may have similar powers.

Common Virtues: Ceremony, Debauchery, Effusion, Nightwalker, Phantasm; Infernal Blessing (see below), Skinchanger (Crow)

Common Flaws: Depraved, Envious, False Power (Nightwalker); Arthritis (twisted ankles and wrists), Corrupted Abilities, Witch Marks

When a stringla joins the coven, she undergoes a rite that grants her the Infernal Blessing Virtue (*Realms of Power: The Infernal*, pages 85-86), usually as a Minor Virtue. In addition to those powers listed in *Realms of Power: The Infernal*, a stringla can also take one of the following powers. These are granted by a Debauchery/Phantasm maleficium cast by the leader of the coven under the guidance of its demon. This maleficium is level 25 (base 4, +1 Touch, +4 Forsaken), granting the stringla a supernatural ability. Consequently, each of these powers has a minimum cost of 25. Each power can be used once per day unless otherwise noted, has a Penetration of 10 plus the stringla's Penetration bo-

nus, and may not be used in the Dominion.

Wings of the Tempest (Debauchery/Effusion 20):

The witch can gather winds to herself strong enough to allow her to fly, or else lift others aloft and dash them to the ground. She must concentrate on the winds in order to control them. (Base 4, +3 Sight, +1 Conc)

The Sanguine Feast (Incantation/Consumption 35): The stringla can heal herself by draining the blood of another. She can restore a Light, Medium, or Heavy Wound by touching another; that touch inflicts the same wound on her victim as she has healed. (Base 25, +1 Touch, +1

affect Medium and Light Wounds)

Mephitic Exhalation (Debauchery/Malediction 25): The breath of the stringla can wither crops and destroy fruit. She can affect up to 10 bushes, five small trees, or a four-pace-diameter circle of field crops with a single exhalation. (Base 5, +2 Voice, +2 Group)

Infernal Tradition: The Paulicians

Favored Abilities: Ceremony, Debauchery, Diablerie, Malediction

The Paulicians are a religious heretical sect living in the great cities of the Tribunal, most notably Constantinople, Philippolis, and Thessaloniki. Granted freedom of religion in 990, they are not persecuted by the Orthodox Church. Practicing a derivative form of Manichaeism, the Paulicians hold that an eternal war exists between Satan and God, and that they and only they are the unconditionally chosen people. Outwardly ascetic and pious, they are not perceived as a threat despite their curious beliefs. The situation is much more dire inside their secret conclaves, however.

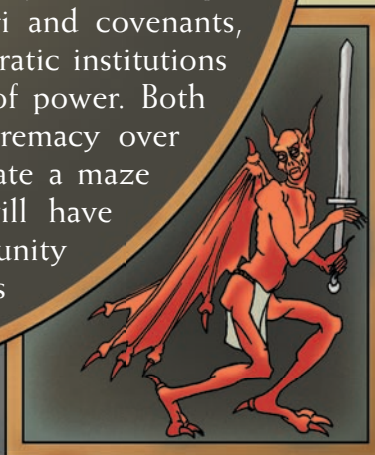
Holding that the material world is the province of Satan, they despise both the Orthodox Church and the Jewish faith. Only the inner circle of the group's leaders knows the truth, that the creed of the Paulicians is more than merely heretical, it is outright Infernal. They yearn for the day when they can raise rebel armies, as their forefathers did in the ninth century. While Paulician communities grow, they are not yet at the point of leading armies. Instead they conspire against both Jews and Christians, denouncing and defaming them in general, and striking against them with Infernal powers when possible.

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Ars Magica



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