

# Covenants

by Mark Rein•Hagen



Lion Rampant

An Ars Magica™  
Resource Supplement



# **Covenants**

## **Rules for Creating a Mystical Covenant of Magi**

By Mark Rein•Hagen



Lion Rampant

**Dedicated to Paul Kirchner:**

Thank you for your dedication,

for I did learn from you, O did I ever learn.



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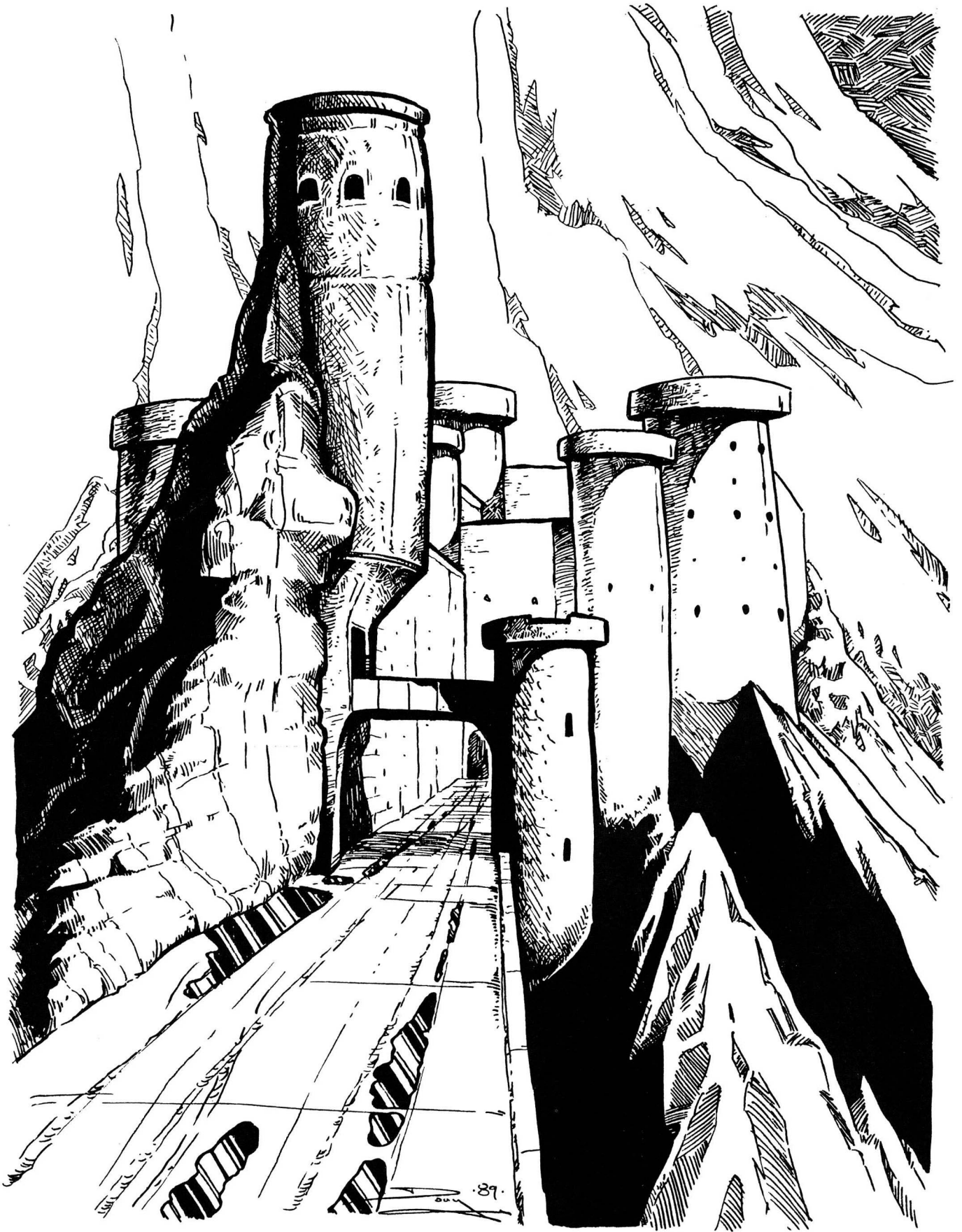
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# Introduction

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There is more to life than exploring ruins, solving mysteries, and roaming the world. There is always home to return to as well. To the magi of the Order of Hermes, however, home is not quite like it is for us today. Home for the magi is a mystical haven of safety and solitude far removed from the roar of the maddening crowd—a place where they can study ancient lore and the magical arts in peace. It is a fortress, a university, as well as a refuge, and it can be an eerie place filled with many secrets. Home, for a magus, is their covenant, and it is a place as strange as places come.

The covenant (or, in Latin, *convenium*) is the way the magi organize themselves. Originally it meant the pact made among magi to aid one another and share responsibility for their mutual protection. While at first the term covenant literally referred to this charter that magi would make, over the years it has come to mean the group of magi itself, as well as the stronghold in which they live. “Covenant” has come to mean that which the original pact between magi created—an institution of mystical learning.

A covenant may be an immense castle, a series of caves, or a just collection of huts. It may have thirty members, five members, or just one. It may be hidden away in the heart of the Alps, or it may be located in the catacombs beneath Rome itself. But regardless of how it is structured and organized, the covenant is where magi come together to share their resources—it is where they, along with their companions and grogs, live. The covenant is fundamental to the play of *Ars Magica*™, for it is the home of your magus, and all the stories of your Saga will start there.

The first step in beginning any *Ars Magica* Saga is designing the covenant. This supplement provides rules and ideas that enable you to construct and visualize your covenant, as well as to develop the saga that will revolve around it. This supplement is useful not only for *Ars Magica* players, but for players of any fantasy game who can borrow ideas to improve their own sagas. The wizards’ academy is an institution common to many different fantasy roleplaying games, and *Covenants* can add a wealth of detail to many campaigns.

The object of this book is to help you create the most detailed and realistic “home-base” for your characters as possible. The more detailed and realistic a covenant is, the more the players will take pride in it and strive to advance, protect and otherwise support it, and the better you will enjoy roleplaying in your ongoing Saga. You will, in the process of designing your covenant, detail its layout, covenfolk, daily politics, turb size, magical resources, and relations with the outside world.

## Covenants

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Magi gather in their covenants in order to defend themselves from attack, to prevent constant interruptions, and to share such resources as the library or laboratory equipment. The covenant is a refuge from the dangerous and treacherous world where a lone magus would never be safe. Only by banding together in covenants are magi able to devote their full attention to their studies and not have to worry as much about their own safety.

The covenant is the center stage of the Saga; it serves as the home base from whence most stories begin and to which the characters return when the story is over. The covenant provides a central point for a Saga, allowing the players to focus their ambitions and desires on something besides their own characters and making it a central element of the Saga. Everything in the Saga revolves around the covenant, just as the sun (in the medieval paradigm) revolves around the earth, and outside events are important only in as much as they affect the covenant. You will find that the desires to improve your covenant and increase its reputation in the Order of Hermes become the primary goals of the characters, rather than self aggrandizement. This desire to build the power of the covenant is a way to encourage the players to work with each other for a common goal, instead of against one another, and it can cement the unity of a troupe. Ultimately it is the covenant which is the most important character in the Saga—even if a favorite magus dies, the covenant will live on.

Designing a covenant will not only provide the basic foundation of your Saga, but can be an endless supply of ideas for engaging and relevant stories. A covenant provides a roleplaying arena where all the characters in the Saga can interact—all of them at the same time, if need be—even those not involved in the main story for the gaming session. Even if your magus is not going on the expedition, you can still roleplay your character at the magi’s council, and give your input as to how the excursion should be handled.

A covenant makes sense out of “adventures”, providing a very clear-cut purpose for the undertaking of expeditions and putting almost any story into context. Because a covenant is so much an actual part of the game world, it interacts with the world, and it makes the characters a part of society as well. People will come to the covenant for help, the magi might become embroiled in some court intrigue, or the covenant may even be attacked. But whatever happens, the Saga becomes more interesting and involving as the characters interact more with the society around them.

While some magi live and work alone, concerned that others might take their hard-won secrets, too paranoid to accept any kind of companionship, others live in enormous covenants where the centralization of power and knowledge make them formidable, but complex hierarchies limit the individual magi’s freedoms. Although covenants can be of any size, the smaller covenants do not usually survive as long as the larger ones, and are less secure places to study. Your covenant can include only the player-character wizards, or it can be much larger and include other, older wizards as well.

The covenant is similar to a famous medieval institution, the monastery. Although comparing the two would seem blasphemy to some who oppose the Order, understanding one can help in understanding the other. In both, intelligent people have gathered to study, separated from the distractions of mundane life, free to delve deep into the mysteries they explore. In fact, some wizards see magic as part of a spiritual path and feel an especially close kinship with the monks. If nothing else, a love of learning, a respect

for ancient wisdom, and a similar life style (lived on the edge of society) gives the magi and the monks something in common. Occasionally their similarities bridge the gap that a difference in doctrine has created. If there is anyone that the magi can turn to in the Church for an understanding ear, it is the monks. It is not unusual for a wizard and a monk to engage in copious correspondence.

In as much as the Order of Hermes is the only society of which a magus is truly a part, their covenant is the only clan they can belong to; it is in some ways their family. A covenant, as you shall see, is much more than simply a citadel. While a wizard's covenant is a wizard's castle, it is also a wizard's home. Magi care about their covenants, in much the same way we care about our nation or our communities. It is rare for a magus to betray their covenant, and it's not out of fear of retribution. Magi do not usually have families or relatives, or any sense that they belong to a particular village or clan — they only have their covenant. The covenant takes the place of a family (though few magi would admit it), and even magi can get attached to it. Members of a covenant may argue and feud, but ultimately they share a sense of bonding, of connection, and betrayal is not a part of their shared credo.

## How to use this Supplement

Creating your covenant is not an entirely simple task, for you have so many choices to make. There are a few different ways you could go about it: the members of your troupe could get together and determine as a group the description of the covenant; or one player, perhaps the one who starts the Saga, can take responsibility for it. Magi live a long time and you're going to be stuck with your creation even longer, so don't be boring. A covenant can be a place of great wonder and grandeur, don't let yourself down by not putting enough care into its creation.

It won't take very long, you simply go through this book and choose a certain number of attributes (determined by what Season you want your covenant in). Once you have picked enough positive and negative attributes you are done, and all that is left is the task of filling in the details — that can wait until later. Creating a covenant usually takes no more than an hour, and often a troupe will get it done in half that time. It helps, however, to have people who have read the book through, and have a good idea of what is available. I encourage you to skim through this book now — you might as well have a good idea of your choices, you're going to be living at the covenant for a long, long time. A quick way to make up a covenant is to simply pick what Season your covenant is in, and then casually work out the particulars from there. You won't have all the details that attributes will give you, but you will have more freedom in determining what your covenant is like. It's fast, too, because all it takes is you jotting down your ideas.

Why go to all this work in developing a covenant? Like I said above, because it provides a solid foundation for all your stories. It also provides a vehicle for the ambitions of the troupe to be directed into, the covenant is a kind of "super character" for everyone to identify with. The covenant is a great help in keeping everyone working together, and in making sense of why the characters are going on these adventures at all.

## If You Already Have a Covenant

You will find that even if you have already established your own covenant, or use Mistrudge as your own, you will find that this supplement will still come in handy. By using these rules you can add new details to your covenant. Even if you decide not to do that, you can gain ideas for what the covenants of other nearby magi are like. Interaction between different covenants can be very interesting, whether it be diplomacy, rivalry, or war. Hopefully you will find herein some food for thought if you are developing and expanding your previously created covenant.

What you should do is simply make up your covenant as if from scratch, chose all that things that you already have, and then purchase some additional attributes as well. You can even change things if you'd like, and half-way start over, but if you simply choose attributes fit the current scheme, nothing needs to change.

### Ten Steps to Designing Your Covenant

1. Pick its Season (pp. 7-12)
2. Write down how many negative and positive attribute points you have to spend (p.13)
3. Choose the Setting of your covenant.
4. Design the Fortress, draw the layout
5. Detail the Inhabitants
6. Decide the Outside Relations
7. Choose Mystical Attributes
8. Choose Mundane resources
9. Work out Covenant Obligations
10. Record the covenant emblem, history, and current status.



# Four Seasons

*This is an excerpt from the famous tome "The Changing Seasons of a Covenant", which detailed a new means to understand the venerable institution of the covenant in terms of the four seasons of a year. Written by the magus Dionasius of House Bonisagus, it is a detailed study of the patterns of growth and decay which a covenant undergoes throughout its lifetime.*

As a covenant grows and matures, it moves through a variety of stages. It is these varying stages which give a covenant much of its character and which distinguish it the most from other covenants. I describe these stages as the four seasons of the covenant.

A covenant begins in Spring upon its founding and throughout its attempts to establish its presence in a region. After a covenant has achieved some measure of power and stability, it moves into Summer, during which it comes into its prime of strength and vitality. Autumn marks the beginning of the covenant's decline, but in this stage it has great political influence and reaches its highest status. The power won during Summer is maintained, and the covenant's influence begins to be used for good measure, but decadence and sloth set in. Finally the covenant decays into Winter, a time when it has lost its power, reputation, and influence, but still clings to the shadow of life. The covenant may be in ruins, and the few remaining magi and covenfolk have been marked by the aura and have become strange.

Some Winter covenants with determined and dedicated leaders or an influx of new blood may revive and start the cycle anew with the onset of a second Spring, but often the decay is too ingrained to be reversed. Many covenants simply fade away after the long darkness of Winter, and some are completely destroyed in the last days of Autumn.

This cycle is very similar to the life cycle of many human institutions, though the length and the particulars of the seasons vary from institution to institution, covenant to covenant. Some city-states, like Sparta, remain in power for centuries. Others, like Athens, had only a few brief decades of glory — but what a glory it had. Rome remained in Autumn for so long, because of the strength of the empire it had forged in its vigorous Summer. Some covenants remain in Spring only a few years, others seem unable to firmly establish themselves and remain in a state of flux and instability for centuries. Each covenant takes its own course through time, but whatever way it charts for itself, it always witnesses the inevitable unfolding of the seasons.

## Spring

We suggest that you make your first covenant a Spring covenant because that will give you the freedom to explore the game and the world as you please, without the interference of older wizards.

In a Spring covenant, the characters' magi were recently released from apprenticeship and have just founded the covenant, a place where they can be in charge and pursue the lives that they choose. We don't suggest that you roleplay through the actual

work of setting up the covenant (clearing the site, procuring supplies, obtaining grogs, building the first few huts), but go ahead if you want to. It can be fun to start from scratch. You have much work to do to make the covenant succeed: establish workable relations with the locals, find sources of raw *vis*, improve your small library, establish a good reputation in the Order, and so on. The player-character magi are fully responsible for the fate of the covenant, which makes for exciting roleplaying as the characters use what little they know to confront a variety of challenges. The rest of the characters in the covenant are new and unsure in their jobs as well. At this time the precedent is set for how the grogs, companions, and magi will interact with each other. The turn of grogs takes on its true character at this time, and a strong or weak leader can leave a mark that will last the lifetime of the covenant. All sorts of traditions may be created at this time, that will have a profound effect on the covenant's later history.

The challenges are many, and the dull moments few. Only the adventurous choose to create a new covenant rather than stay at an established one, but if the trials and tests can be survived, the rewards are great. You get to shape a covenant in your own image, and once it does achieve some degree of power, the magi who brought it to such exalted heights are the ones who hold all the strings. There is always the pride of having created an institution that will live past you, a covenant that will bear some of your image. As a player, a Spring covenant is also a lot of fun — life as the underdog can be great fun, the challenges never really stop, and any sort of victory usually means you have succeeded against the odds.

You may have a sponsor, an older covenant that gives you the resources you need to establish yourself. If so, be prepared to pay back these "gifts" several times over, as your growth brings you wealth and power. It is unlikely, however, that an older magus will actually live with you in your covenant, as the pace is too hectic, the library too small, and the *vis* too scarce.

Spring tends to be short, perhaps a decade or two, because if you cannot make it to the stability of Summer soon, you will most likely perish.

**Setting:** Many Spring covenants are located somewhere in the boondocks, or in an area not especially well suited for a covenant (for the better locations have already been taken by a covenant established long ago — there aren't that many good sites left, the Dominion is continually expanding). There should be something wrong with the location, but something the magi can later attempt to overcome.

**Fortress:** Unless the covenant has captured or commandeered an existing fortification, they likely do not have much in the way of buildings or walls yet. Conditions are likely to be cramped and quite primitive. Many necessary rooms such as a library, council room, or even the laboratories might not yet be completed. Magi may even have to share their laboratories (horrors!).

**Inhabitants:** The only wizards are the player characters (fresh from apprenticeship) who live by whatever rules they decide to create. Often they will decide that each magi will spend one



season a year scribing to expand the library. They may have a few grogs, likely with poor armaments, and a couple of companions (all player characters). The grogs probably have little discipline and a poor idea of what is expected of them. The turb has no tradition of loyalty or bravery to uphold, and is likely to be poorly organized. However, strong ties may be forged between the grogs, companions, and wizards, for they must rely so strongly on each other in order to survive. The covenant may have a few all-purpose servants to run things, or perhaps the grogs do all the manual labor. Most Spring covenants have no more than 5-7 member wizards.

**Relations:** While you will not have many enemies, you are not likely to have many friends either. Certainly other covenants will test you, as will local nobles, clergy, and creatures of power. Within the next few years you'll find out where you stand. Perhaps your covenant is founded on a site where another covenant used to collect *vis* — they might still try to make their yearly pick up. You're in the dark about most news, are behind on the local

Hermes gossip, and the redcaps might not even stop by as of yet. This is a time of building, and you have much to do to ingratiate yourself in the local political and social "scene."

**Magical attributes:** Your covenant is likely to have at least a +3 magical aura — why else would you establish the covenant where you did? Your laboratories are probably inadequate. If you have anything special, you're lucky. You simply don't have the resources, nor the time, to have much extra.

**Mundane resources:** You likely have no mundane library, are poorly equipped, and have very little excess money. For the time being you live from hand to mouth. Given effort, however, things will change for the better.

**Obligations:** Spring covenants invariably have lots of obligations; start-up costs are inevitable. It's like when you establish a company or corporation (like a roleplaying game company) — you'll likely be in hock to the bank for many years to come and beholden to those who deign to assist you.

## Rite of Entrance

When a wizard is granted membership in a covenant, there is often an involved ceremony to mark the occasion, in which the wizard takes the oath of membership, signs the charter, and becomes bonded to the covenant itself. Though this ceremony is rather simple compared to what is normal for medieval society or even for when an apprentice is made a magus, it does have a certain degree of solemnity to it — at least at the start. There are many variations on this ceremony, and most covenants have at least one or two embellishments, but the basic ceremony follows.

The magus seeking membership in the covenant must offer a petition to the magi of the covenant, in which the petitioner provides his or her complete credentials as well as an explanation of the magus's reasons for wanting to join. The magus who was offered the petition, if he or she chooses to help the petitioner, is called the sponsor. The sponsor guides the petitioner through the whole process, and serves as their advocate in the private council sessions. Often the sponsor is from the same house as the petitioner, and may even be a friend, but sometimes they are assigned to the petitioner by the covenant. If a petitioner simply arrives at the covenant, an announcement might be made at a council meeting that there is a magus looking for admission. Though the covenant often has a good idea about the magus before this, the initial steps are always informal. The petitioner almost never gets past this point unless there is a very good chance that he or she will be asked to join the covenant.

All the magi of the covenant gather together at a council meeting to discuss the petition. Every member must be present, otherwise the matter cannot be discussed. This is not a matter for a simple quorum to debate; it is far too important a matter. After the petition is read aloud, the petitioner is interviewed by the magi of the covenant, often at length. Magi typically seek other magi who have similar goals and outlooks on life, yet have different specialties than their own. A petitioner is far less likely to gain entrance if there is already an Animál wizard at the covenant, for instance.

The petitioner is escorted out of the council chamber, and private discussion begins. In order for the petitioner to become a member, 3/4 of the magi agree to the admittance. At this point either the petitioner is politely asked to depart, or is escorted in all due formality back to the council chamber.

At this time, the charter is usually read aloud, and though this might bore those who have heard it before, it stresses how important the charter is to a covenant. Usually the oldest magus at the covenant reads the charter, and no one is allowed to interrupt them.

Then one of magi gives a short speech about the covenant, expounding on its history and its past glories as well as its hopes for the future. They may comment on its current state of being. Usually this is done with all due honesty, so that the petitioner can be given a clear look at the covenant, and has a chance to back out.

Finally, the petitioner swears the oath of the covenant, often with their hand over the charter. A silver basin is brought out and blood is extracted from the petitioner (as well as a few strands of hair) which is put into a vial and stored in the magical treasury of the covenant. Once they are finished, the petitioner is a member of the covenant.

Each of the magi in turn then speaks to the new member, welcoming them to the covenant. These short speeches may be full of warmth, or may be extremely formal.

At the conclusion of the rite of entrance, a large feast is usually held, in which the entire covenant participates. This is often when the covenfolk first get to meet, or even see, the new magus (who instantly becomes their superior). On this first night however, it is tradition that they may say anything to the magus, and are allowed to treat him or her as a peer. Sometimes the magus ends up being dunked in a pond, bedded by a scullery maid, or having spirits poured down their throats (forcibly at times). It is tradition, and it is impossible to deny it. The magus is not supposed to use magic during this time, and is supposed to forget everything that happens. Many magi use this time to get a feel for what the covenant is really like, and how the covenfolk actually feel about the magi.

Upon the dawn of the new day, the sponsor shows the new magus around the covenant, ushers them into their lab (which may be shared with another young member), and generally initiates them into the daily ritual of life at the covenant.



## Summer

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A Summer covenant is in the prime of its energy and ambition, though it has not yet attained the peak of its influence and fame. The player-characters are important to the covenant, but the older magi who founded the covenant still rule and guide it. Your duties as younger magi include dedicated effort under the direction of these leaders, seeing to it that the covenant grows, prospers, and gathers what it can before the inevitable close of the last beautiful days of Summer.

The covenant is an energetic and dynamic force, now that it has the power to make its will felt throughout the land and within the Order of Hermes. When the capabilities of your magi are up to the task, you will be sent on the dangerous missions that will ensure the covenant's continued success. Your covenant's need to grow and its increasing demands for knowledge and *vis* will bring it into conflict with others in the Order and with those in society. Growth is never achieved without pain, grief, and great effort. As the covenant is still developing and facing a variety of challenges, the leaders will expect much of the player-characters. Personal differences among the leaders may lead to subtle or blatant power struggles, in which case the player-characters may be expected to take sides in the shifting web of alliances. If the characters serve the covenant well for decades, they may come into power when the covenant is at its peak of power and prestige, before Winter sets in. This would be a mighty and priceless reward.

Do not get the impression that there is constant strife between the covenants — it is usually only the Summer covenants which are on their way up that cause problems within the Order. Certainly the strife is not over matters which we, or governments, might find important. The world is vast and the magi are not interested in the petty trappings of power (not typically, at least). Covenants fight over knowledge, control over the Order, and most importantly, supplies of *vis*. Property and temporal power are not of interest to them.

Summer is the energetic and expansionist prime of a covenant, but it rarely lasts more than a century, as internal conflicts, a decrease in resources, and the inevitable sapping of vitality bring the covenant into Autumn.

Choosing a Summer covenant allows the characters to have some of the energy of a growing covenant without laying the full burden of decision-making on their young shoulders.

**Setting:** Because it has survived Spring, the covenant is likely to be located in a reasonably safe, stable area — or one that was made safe through the efforts of the covenant. Communities of serfs may have grown up around it, or the magi might have banished all sorts of settlements. Because it is a younger covenant, it is not likely to be set in a prime location.

**Fortress:** The covenant has grown since its earlier days, and is now a fairly large place. It may have a number of towers, battlements, and great halls. Each magus will certainly have their own private quarters and many of the older wizards will have their own laboratories. Younger magi may still have to share laboratories with one another. There is nearly enough space for everyone, though the covenant is bursting at the seams with people and activity. The growth of the covenant is constantly outpacing the availability of space within the covenant, and only upon the advent of the retrenchment period of Autumn will the builders be able to catch up.

**Inhabitants:** The founders of the covenant are probably still in their prime, and they actively lead the covenant in its continued

growth. Younger wizards are expected to set aside their own goals in order to aid the plans of their elders whenever necessary. Personal differences may have shown up between the leaders, differences that the younger magi might be able to exploit for their own gain. Playing the older wizards off upon one another is a dangerous, but potentially rewarding game. Endangering or neglecting to aid the covenant is a serious offense, for the covenant is still vulnerable, but risk taking is encouraged and rewarded. If a magus endangers the covenant, but successfully brings the covenant great gain, the averted peril is likely to be ignored. Many Summer covenants have around 10 wizard members.

The grogs are likely to have high Morale because of the covenant's success. They may however feel misused and underappreciated by the busy magi.

**Outside relations:** In the covenant's struggles to survive, it has made more than its fair share of enemies and allies in the mundane world. The covenant has only friends or enemies and is on neutral terms with no one; it has no patience for those who watch on the sidelines of conflict. If you are not a friend, you're probably an enemy. While the covenant has contacts and spies who can obtain some information, it is still in the dark about many things and is often caught off guard by rapid changes in events. Order of Hermes relations are neutral to poor, as the older covenants do not look kindly upon these young "whippersnappers" who seem to be enlarging their influence so rapidly.

**Magical Attributes:** Over the years, the wizards have fashioned a few small magical items to aid in the defense and maintenance of the covenant. As this was likely a priority, there are potentially a number of different useful devices, but by no means are they ubiquitous. The library has become fairly large and complete, it has tomes regarding every art. Most of the wizards have their own private laboratory adjoining their private quarters.

**Mundane Resources:** The covenant has most of the tools useful for explorations, such as mules, pulleys, lamps, and sturdy packs. It may also own many amenities for the covenant itself, including a forge and a carpentry shop.

**Obligations:** The wizards have few set obligations, although emergencies are frequent and the magi are constantly involved in various power struggles and intrigues with other covenants and mundane powers. The wizards will probably have to give up a season a year for mundane supervision of covenant affairs — and may give another season every three years for adding to the covenant library. In addition, expeditions will likely be constant and ceaseless interruptions in daily life. The magi rarely have as much time as they would like for rest or study.

## Autumn

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This is the most stable period of a covenant's history. An Autumn covenant retains the power it accumulated in Summer and has joined the ranks of other old, powerful, and well-respected covenants of the region. Yet at the same time, it has stagnated. Its prestige and influence has not really diminished — in fact, the covenant might have grown in power as it has learned to use its resources better — but the covenant is no longer growing and is slowly beginning to rot from within. The older magi are sitting on their laurels and enjoying the fruits of the long, perilous, and effort-filled Summer.

A weak covenant can be destroyed by its Autumn period within a decade, but strong covenants retain enough influence and status to keep themselves in power for many years, even if they



do not prosper. The most powerful covenants have extremely long Autumn periods, for they have the resources to sustain themselves for a very long time. As with Rome, their period of decline can be many centuries long.

At any point, a sudden crisis can plunge the covenant into Winter. If you are a member of an Autumn covenant, your main ambition is to maintain the status quo, sustain the covenant at its current level of power, and delay the decline. There is almost no possibility of increasing the covenant's powers — the pinnacle has been reached and there is no where to go but down. Risk-taking is frowned upon, and severely punished when it endangers the covenant as a whole (whether the effort succeeds or not), and efforts to expand the power of the covenant are not seen in favorable light. The older magi have everything they need, they simply wish to keep what they have, and making waves in the outside world is a quick way to bring trouble. The will of the wizards has been sapped — this is the truest mark of the decline of Autumn. It is what you need to watch for.

Your duty as a young magus is to do all the hard, dangerous, dirty work that your superiors no longer wish to do — such is the price to pay for being allowed membership in such a glorious covenant, peons that you are. Your greatest dangers are the covenant's many enemies, who may strike at you as its weakest link, and the internal strife that is bitter, sometimes heated, and ever latent. Most of you, if not all, are former apprentices of these older magi, and their long-held grievances may become yours. If you can survive your superior's power plays and their heavy demands, you can learn much from them, especially from their mistakes. Other than taking sides in the internal feuds and serving the covenant as required, the characters are free to do what they want. The resources of the covenant are staggering, and will make progress through the arts of magic swift and sure. You gain much by being a member of an Autumn covenant, yet the future only holds the grim prospects of Winter.

Playing in an Autumn covenant allows for the grandeur and scheming, power and paranoia that many players relish. But the aspect of the game that allows wizards to be free and independent is lost, for the complicated hierarchy of an Autumn covenant discourages independent initiative (though fighting against an ingrained hierarchy can be the basis of a fascinating Saga).

**Setting:** The setting of an Autumn covenant can vary a great deal from covenant to covenant, but since it was created quite some time ago, the covenant is likely to be situated at a very good site. In some circumstances, society may have grown up around it, perhaps even placing it within the Dominion. Other times the covenant is located far within the wilderness. Wherever it is, the covenant has practically become a part of the landscape, it has been here so long.

**Fortress:** The covenant has likely grown large, and the original part of the covenant has been overwhelmed by more and more expansions. Many covenants only grow slightly larger, preferring to keep a lower profile.

**Inhabitants:** There are many older wizards, though the founders have likely died off by now. Many Autumn covenants have as members 15 or even more magi. The covenant is run more by habit and tradition than by dedicated leadership, and personal differences have hardened into bitter, irreconcilable feuds. The younger magi will eventually have to take sides in the internal conflicts of the covenant, but at least they will be out from under the notice of the elders when they are out on an expedition.

The covenfolk come from a long, hereditary line, and they are

proud to serve the wizards. Unfortunately, continued exposure to the magic aura and to the various vapors from the laboratories have "altered" them ever so slightly, and they are not as mundane as they might seem (many have mystical virtues and flaws). These deformities, or whatever you might care to call them, only make the servants more devoted to the magi. There are a number of aged scholars, surgeons, astrologers, historians, and other experts, seeing to the incredible amount of knowledge amassed here. Visitors come from the world over to use the library and speak to some of the wizards or the scholars living here.

The grogs likely take great pride in being part of the covenant and work very hard to maintain the reputation of their turf. They are probably led by an established and autocratic leadership hierarchy with formalized and strict rules of conduct.

**Outside relations:** No longer concerned with expansion, you have reached mutually acceptable compromises with most of the local mundane powers, and the covenant may have even reached legendary status among the mortals. Among the wizards you are not universally well liked, for the covenant has much power. But even if they do not like you, no one dares oppose you directly. You had better watch your step, however, for they will invariably take advantage of any weakness that your covenant might demonstrate (which it will eventually, inevitably demonstrate). Your enemies might be working quietly against you, but they aren't going to stick their necks out too far — the covenant is too powerful. They are far more likely to plot and scheme for your downfall, working with your other enemies to make trouble for you. The better you are able to foil their plans, the longer the covenant will survive.

**Magical Resources:** Over the years you have gathered great reserves of *vis*, and have secured a substantial yearly harvest. The covenant has a large collection of magical devices for its protection, the convenience of the inhabitants, and their entertainment. Magical guards of some sort are common.

**Mundane Resources:** The covenant is well supplied with a wide assortment of excellent equipment, practically anything you could want on an expedition. There are a large number of workshops and artisans at the covenant. The library is expansive, though access to it may be controlled by strange traditions, or by a possessive librarian. (Newly initiated members have been heard to say "This library, alone, is bigger than my master's covenant!") The covenant has enough money to alleviate monetary worries — the characters can purchase almost anything that meets their fancy. However, if they buy a ship or a luxurious town house, the autocrat will start to ask questions.

**Obligations:** Since you probably have responsibility for running the covenant (doing all the mundane and boring chores), you might have to give up one or more seasons a year for the covenant. This is in addition to any journeys or scribing in the library that you might do. (Of course, this is a small price to pay for the resources you have access to.) The covenant as a whole probably has few obligations, others owe *it* their time, money, and service.

## Winter

The once mighty covenant has fallen to the forces of change and decay. Though it came perilously close to being utterly destroyed, a few aged magi hang on to the tattered remains of their former glory, having nowhere else to go. These survivors wait with weary resignation for the eventual, inevitable end.

Many of the wizards have paid for their years of magical study with their minds, or large parts of them. These older magi are not

likely to even have been the great heroes who brought the covenant to power; they are more commonly their apprentices, who had no part in the building of the covenant. They are simply the cautious and unimaginative heirs to a great fortune, who have squandered it in their efforts to cling to it. Old magi tend to be very strange, and a covenant run by decrepit and decadent magi is stranger yet. There may be remnants of other members as well, such as ghosts or the crazed familiar of a dead magus.

The player-characters might be apprentices of the elder wizards, and may have picked up the decadence of their masters. Or they may have been asked to join the covenant by a more farsighted older wizard, in an desperate attempt to rebuild. Young magi are out of place here, but despite the thick encrustation of traditions, feuds, and covenant rules, they may discover some way which will lead them to prosperity and a rebirth into Spring. One strategy is to avoid the strangest and most dangerous of their superiors, to take what you can from the covenant, and when you feel powerful enough, set off on your own to establish a new covenant. If you're really daring, you can try to overthrow your former masters, who now lack the determination and vision needed to run a covenant properly. These are dangerous alternatives, for old magi tend to be exceedingly powerful and would punish rebellion in the old way — death. A better idea, if you are devoted to your masters and determined to stay, is to take on the thankless and nearly futile task of rebuilding the covenant. What a magnificent accomplishment it would be if you were to succeed — to succeed against all odds (which would be a change, for usually in roleplaying, we have the odds stacked on *our* side). With skill, perseverance, and luck, you can bring the covenant back to Spring. But with only paltry help from former allies, harassment from long-time enemies, few dependable resources, ornery older magi always getting in the way, and abysmal leadership, you will have quite a job on your hands. However, if you can convince the elder magi to engage themselves in their specialized and perverse interests, you will be able to have much more latitude in what you do.

Since tribunals are traditionally held at the homes of the eldest magus in the tribunal, Winter covenants are often the sites of tribunals; so even if you do not choose to be based at a Winter covenant, you can still have fun occasionally roleplaying in one. See the example of Val-negra (on p. 58) as an entertaining place to visit ('cause you wouldn't want to live there).

Winter usually lasts only a few decades, during which time the covenant usually decays gradually or dies with sudden violence.

Create a Winter covenant if you have a taste for the bizarre or love having the odds stacked against you.

**Setting:** This is likely to be located in an out of the way place, with little strategic value. If the site of the covenant was actually valuable, it is not likely the covenant would still be around — someone or something would have taken it over by now. Many of the older covenants were established before the perils of powerful aura were known. Therefore many Winter covenants are based in auras of level 6 or more, which means they are located deep in the wilderness, in highly magical areas.

**Fortress:** The covenant is severely dilapidated, moldy, dusty, and cobwebby, with only parts of the covenant compound still inhabited (although a highly interesting Winter covenant would be one that seems like it's still in Autumn on the outside, a beautiful, clean well maintained fortress; yet on the inside, beneath surface appearances, it has clearly descended into Winter.)

**Inhabitants:** A few older magi remain, but they have little

concern for the younger magi, as long as they provide them with *vis* and, on occasion, agree to carry out their elders' strange schemes. The player characters will benefit from the older magi's guidance, but the things they require will eventually become onerous. The older magi are so powerful despite their decrepitude, however, that it would be dangerous to deny them what they want. They are bizarre, some having never recovered from magical near-catastrophes. Winter covenants may have around 10 members, rarely more.

The grogs are demoralized and all too cognizant of the decay of the covenant. However, since they are all, more than likely, born and raised at the covenant and of covenfolk stock, they have nowhere else to go. They have lived so long at the covenant that they may even speak a widely divergent dialect of the language of the nearby peasants, making communication difficult.

The deformities of the covenfolk have become serious and very apparent, they not only are strange, they look strange. Many may have left or have died, but a few stay to tend the magi, and they could not imagine doing anything else. The covenant is their entire world. They take comfort in the glorious history of the covenant and turf, but they anguish in the realization that they cannot match such glory. Everyone has feelings of hopelessness, and simply wait for the end to come. The leadership of the covenant is truly pathetic. (Pathetic companions can be more fun to play than you might imagine — try it out).

Almost none of the companions or magi will be from outside the covenant; it is a closed environment. For your Saga, you might want to invent a reason why a sudden influx of outsiders into the covenant would occur, providing new blood and new ambition for the run-down covenant. Such "new blood" would face serious opposition from many of the covenant inhabitants, who have become used their way of life. Alternatively it can be exciting to a group of characters, born and raised at the covenant, who at first do not realize that the covenant is in Winter and who know appallingly little of the outside world ("From what house is the King, is he an Archmage?"), to resurrect the former glory of the covenant.

**Outside relations:** Having retreated to the covenant, the magi have little to do with the outside world — even the politics of the Order concern them little. The covenant has diminished so much that none can stand to see just how far it has fallen, so most of the magi and covenfolk avoid even leaving the covenant. Few in the outside world even know that the covenant still exists.

**Magical Resources:** Your once-impressive stores of *vis* are quickly disappearing. Some sources are simply failing, drying up; others have been taken away from you through force and Hermetic politics. Something still remains of your once vast library. The player characters may be stuck with broken, weird, and worn-out leftovers from the laboratories of wizards that came before them, with no easy means of procuring better equipment. Scattered throughout the covenant are various magical devices and remnants of the same. Some are broken, some are no longer useful, and no one remembers how to operate a few. It is a strange place indeed, with magical artifacts littering its dusty halls.

**Mundane Resources:** The equipment is mostly left from earlier days, and is in terrible shape. You have only basic supplies for the most part, but you may have a few items of great expense that were somehow left over.

**Obligations:** It has no known obligations to anyone outside of the covenant (though there may be a few secret obligations which the older wizards don't like to talk about).



# Covenant Attributes

After choosing your covenant's Season, you will have to decide on the particulars. Where is the covenant? What does it look like? What are its strengths and weaknesses? The following rules will help you answer these questions and more. They describe elements of the seven different aspects of a typical covenant.

Your covenant will have many different attributes that may describe it; we list a great many of them in this supplement. You must choose the ones that describe your covenant the best. To help give your covenant variety without making it too much more or less powerful than it should, each attribute is given a number rating. After you have chosen what Season you would like to have your covenant be in, look on the chart below and see how many positive and negative attribute points you must choose. When you choose the attributes for your covenant, you must choose that many points of both good and bad things, adding together the sum of the positive and the negative attributes separately.

If you wish to have more negative points, you are quite free to take as many more as you feel appropriate. However, you may not take more positive points than is indicated on the purchase chart. If you feel you must absolutely have more positive attributes, you may take up to double the listed amount, but you must balance out each additional positive point of attributes with *two* additional points of negative attributes.

You may choose more than one attribute from each section, as long as both can reasonably apply. In certain cases, two attributes can definitely not both apply, such as choosing your covenant to be located on top of a mountain as well as on an open plain, but these cases will be obvious — use your own discretion. This is **your** covenant, so design in a way that will provide the most excitement for your troupe.

You will need to be aware of a few characteristics which the various attributes refer to — such as the watch, the politics roll, and the defensibility, described and explained below.

## Exempli Gratia

When we were making up the covenant of Mistridge for our own Saga, we had a variety of things in mind. First of all, we wanted a covenant that wasn't too extreme — we had already roleplayed that at Doissetep. Instead we wanted something a little more normal and sedate. Secondly, we wanted it to not be too removed from mundane society; the covenant needed to be built just outside of the peasant's farms; close enough to make interaction common. Lastly, we wanted it to be loosely organized so that wizards would be free to do as they pleased, and so that we would be able to have fun roleplaying out rivalries. To this end, we decided to make Mistridge a Summer covenant — established enough so we didn't have to constantly fight to keep alive, yet young enough to give our characters freedom. With a few basic ideas in mind we began to pick our attributes. With only 13 positive, we knew we would have to be careful, and using up the 11 negative without giving ourselves a powerful enemy wouldn't be easy either.

## Covenant Characteristics

In order to help you use and manipulate the strengths and weaknesses of your covenant, we have included four covenant characteristics designed to help integrate your covenants attributes with the game rules. As you create your covenant, you will be calculating four different characteristics: Defense, Watch, Contacts, and Morale, which will each play a part in the ongoing Saga. Many attributes affect these characteristics, so pay heed to them as you design your covenant. When you have finished choosing your attributes, you will need to add up all the modifiers they offer for these covenant characteristics and then fill them in on the covenant sheet. These characteristics can change over the course of the Saga, as per the judgement of the Storyguide, but never any more than one point per story (for all four characteristics).

Basically these characteristics give the Storyguide a rough idea of how good the covenant is in that particular area. If you want someone to penetrate the defenses of the covenant, and to be damned with the rolls, then make it so — if the covenant has a pathetic Watch factor it will make sense anyway. Making these rolls, however, can make help make the story seem more real to the players and less a product of your own whims and desires. These characteristics enable the players to create a covenant which has real strengths and weaknesses, and is not subject to the unadulterated imagination of the Storyguide. They make the covenant an institution, one which can withstand some of the tests of time.

### Purchase chart

**Spring:** 13 negative, 9 positive  
**Summer:** 11 negative, 13 positive  
**Autumn:** 9 negative, 21 positive  
**Winter:** 21 negative, 17 positive.

## Defense

There is always the possibility that someday a covenant will be besieged. In such an eventuality, you will need to know how well protected and defended the covenant is. Look up all your attributes and add up the total for your Defense — some attributes will ask you to subtract a certain number from that total, others will ask you to add to it. This Defense total should be marked down on your covenant sheet, for it indicates the defensive strength of the covenant. In the same manner as any other score in *Ars Magica*, you use it to modify rolls. When you make any number of different rolls related to defending the covenant from attack, this score will be one of the modifiers added to your roll. Exactly how it will be



used is up to the Storyguide (as are all characteristics), but we have a couple of suggestions that might be useful to you.

Firstly, unless you want to roleplay out specific battles (which some people do like to do) the Storyguide can simply calculate the strength of the attacking force (including its size, the ability of its leader, its equipment, and magical support), give it a score, (typically from 1-10) and then make a roll against the covenant Defense rolls. If the attackers' roll is greater than the defenders' they have penetrated the defenses and the two sides begin to fight inside the confines of the covenant. In this case, the player characters would give battle to expel those specific invaders. More rolls could be made later to see how the rest of the siege goes.

If you do want to play out battles in detail, you will have to make up your own system. We cannot detail one here, for reasons of space, but you will probably find that making up your own is a lot of fun. Use the base covenant Defense score as you would a characteristic in the basic *Ars Magica* game system, and add it to other rolls as is appropriate. Each group of 10 combatants can be treated as one unit (similar to a single character in the typical combat system). Look at the *Ars Magica* combat system (or the *certámen* system) for ideas. Miniatures battle rules might also be consulted.

## Watch

Preventing spies, assassins, and uninvited guests from entering is vital to the security of the covenant. There are those who have reason to murder a wizard, and the wherewithal to do so. Your Watch score indicates how well-guarded the covenant is, and how difficult it would be for someone to sneak in. It also indicates how much warning is given when the covenant is attacked or simply visited. A few extra minutes of preparation can make all the difference when a Quaesitor is about to visit ("Quick! Hide the Baron's pennant!"). You can average the Watch score to the roll of one particular grog who is standing watch (to be chosen by the Storyguide) so that their perception and alertness will also play a part in the covenant security.

A botch would probably indicate that the person simply walked in through the gate (which was left open) and suddenly appears in front of one of the wizards in their laboratory. "Good day to you too, Protantus, but tell me, how did you get past the guards?"

## Contacts

Information is of vital importance to a covenant, and missing information or a lack of information may lead to dire consequences. The place of *Intéllego* as one of the five techniques indicated how seriously magi take all varieties of lore. Wizards gain information through the use of spies and "friends" situated in high and low places in the region around the covenant. Warning of attack is naturally one of the largest benefits of a spy network, but knowledge of opportunities for political or magical gain is also very useful. Make a Contacts roll whenever you would like to find out political information (scholarly information is obtained by making a Scribe roll), and have a week or so for the information to come back. Simply use the Contacts score to the modifier of other rolls, which is made as per normal *Ars Magica* rules. Thus if a magus is trying to find out about the secret life of the Count of Foix, he would add his Perception plus Area Lore to the Contacts score of the covenant. Alternatively the Contacts score could be used on

its own, as the sole modifier to the roll. The Storyguide will have to determine the exact circumstances as well as the ease factor. Contacts can exist in both the mundane world and in the Order of Hermes.

## Morale

Many times during a story, you may want to test the loyalty or bravery of the grogs, for these warriors are not necessarily courageous or fanatically loyal. In the end, grogs are all too human (that is, after all, their essential charm). To each grog's loyalty or bravery rolls you should add the Morale of the turb, which fluctuates, depending on circumstances. If the grogs are mistreated or if they meet with a string of failures, they could begin to suffer from poor Morale—that can affect their loyalty, among other things. Use the same rules as govern reputation to vary the Morale of the grogs. Concerted efforts on the part of the magi can gradually increase their Morale, and a series of defeats, poor leadership, or abuse can quickly lower it.

## Oath of Covenant

When a wizard joins a covenant, they must make an oath that they will support and maintain that covenant. The very name "covenant" stems from this oath that the wizards take. The breaking of this oath is taken very seriously by the Order of Hermes, and it is not unheard of for a tribunal to grant permission to a covenant to form a Wizards' March against a member who purposely breaks that oath. Frequently, covenants have developed traditions of trials and punishments for members who transgress the rules of the covenant. Typically, if a member does not agree to the punishment given by the covenant council, they are expelled from the covenant (without their laboratory equipment or any books from the library). Usually this threat of punishment is enough to gain cooperation from the most stubborn of all magi. Covenants are essentially clans of wizards, and magi are usually loyal and cooperative with others in their family; though, of course, no family is ever completely at peace with itself....

The oath of a covenant may go something like this:

*"I, Caecus of House Tytlatus pledge my lifelong support and loyalty to Mistrudge covenant. I swear to uphold and protect this covenant regardless of the personal price. Over all the years of my life and throughout my studies and my travels, I will neither betray the covenant nor give aid to its enemies. In times of need, I will aid the covenant in whatever way I am able, and I will devote myself to its service if the need is clear. I will abide by the decisions of the majority of my fellows in this covenant, and I will treat these decisions as if they were my own. I will treat my fellows with respect and fairness, and I will not attempt to harm them in any way. Their blood is my blood. This I so swear, upon the honor of my house and its founder.."*

Like most oaths, it is not always followed to the letter and interpretations of it vary wildly. The spirit of the oath is clear however, and it is not often abridged or broken. Wizards typically take their oaths seriously. (Note: Magi known for breaking their sworn word are roundly distrusted and usually excluded from the mundane affairs of the Order.)



# ● 1 Setting

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Covenants tend to be far from civilized areas and the influence of the Dominion, where the power of the Church cancels magical power. When the magi choose a location, one of their first priorities is to ensure that the covenant is in a magical area, since the magic rating greatly aids the research of the magi who live there. Unusual areas, such as dense, dark woods; misty swamps; wind-swept mountains; and so on tend to the magical. Magical areas tend to have unique properties of their own, and while not worthy of including as an attribute, they certainly add a depth and romance to the covenant.

Covenants are usually far from populated areas so the magi do not have to bother with locals much. The Dominion, which is concentrated in populated areas, inhibits magic and makes the casting of it extremely dangerous, so magi try to live outside its influence. Magi often want to be near enough to towns to use them for transportation and provisions, but they are rarely closer than half a day's walk from a city. Other magi prefer to base their covenants somewhat near population centers, where they can recruit grogs, have access to good roads, buy sophisticated items (such as materials for books), and so on. Covenants large enough to be truly self-sufficient can be as far from civilization as they like, but they will have to have a large contingent of covenfolk to supply food, sheepskin (for parchment), and whatever else the covenant need.

Imagine it this way. Covenants are usually built on the edge of civilization, bordering on the uncharted wilderness. They are the half-way points between mundane society and the mystical wilderness, the magi are a part of both of these worlds. While some covenants are built in a city, or in the middle of a faerie forest, most are built in-between. The magi are not as mundane as the folk who live in the city (some of whom do not believe in faeries) nor as exotic as the faeries in the heart of the faerie forest; they are in fact a little of both. Magi live and breath in both worlds, and travel between them both regularly.

Conceive what type of terrain surrounds the covenant as well as the details of how it fits the locale. Where is the covenant located — atop a hill, on an island, built into a cliff, in a forest? This is very important when you consider the defensibility of a covenant. A number of examples of what you may choose are listed below.

You should also pick where in the world your covenant is to be located. If it is to be in **Mythic Europe™**, then you should pick which country it is in, and then in what part of the country it's located. Ireland, Scotland, and England are all excellent choices for the speaker of English, because of the amount of information that will be readily available to you. Southern France is another good choice, because it is the setting of many Lion Rampant adventures and supplements. If you have access to a good library, you'll be set to use almost any place. For now, you don't have to worry about details, however; just get a general idea of where you are going to be at, and make sure you have a general concept of what the terrain is like there (e.g. there are no deserts in Ireland, unless of course one was created magically — and that would be hard to imagine).

The covenant does not exist in a vacuum, and once the covenant is described, you should immediately begin to outline what lies around it: towns, villages, forests, mountains, lakes, rivers, major roads, faerie woods, and so on. A strong sense of where you are is vital to making the world seem real. Make a rough map of the area, realizing that the scale you use will be different from the modern scale — fifteen miles is a long days walk in these times. Your first map should take in an area no more than thirty miles to a side. Later on, you will be able to make a more detailed and accurate map, which can take in a greater extent of territory. If you are using **Mythic Europe** as your setting, you will want to get a general idea of which part of Europe you'll be in and what the terrain is like in that region (but don't worry too much about it). Modern maps of Europe can be of great assistance, just add a lot more forest (in between the cities and rivers, where the people don't live) and reduce the size of the towns and cities by a factor of 50 to 100.

You should be ready to detail the politics of the region in which the covenant is set. Is the Baron in charge, the King's sheriff, the Bishop, or is there just a large number of squabbling knights? Is the Church a decadent den of slothful and greedy priests, or is there a pious and devout Bishop who ensures that such sedition does not spread to his district? You'll actually pick those attributes later, as part of the Outside World section, but get a general idea of the covenant right now. These "details" could have a large influence on how the covenant is set up. If the region is politically unstable, then strong fortifications would certainly be in order.

*Here are some questions the troupe should ask itself: Where is the covenant? If it's in Mythic Europe, where is it located? What does the terrain look like around the covenant? What is the climate like?*

## Locations

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**Ravine -3:** The covenant is tucked away in a steep ravine of some sort. A ravine is a small, rocky, and rather steep sided valley. There is only one easy entrance to the covenant, but attackers can throw down rocks and missiles from the sides of the ravine, and even climb down on top of the covenant with the aid of ropes. Defense -1, Watch -2.

**Swamp -2:** There is a swamp all around the covenant. Though this aids in hiding the covenant, it causes innumerable difficulties. There is much disease (subtract 2 from all wound recovery rolls). Add +1 to Defense, but subtract 2 from Watch.

**Desert -1:** The covenant is situated in a desert, which makes it rather removed from the daily life of mundane society — exactly as most wizards like it. It will rarely be attacked because of the difficulty in crossing the desert. Most goods will be double the normal cost to procure, and there will be all kinds of trouble in maintaining the covenant. The desert is also a dangerous place to live and



traveling in and out of it will always be an adventure. Though there are no real deserts in Europe, parts of Spain are very barren, and of course your covenant could be located in north Africa. Add +1 to Watch, +1 to Defense, but subtract 2 from Morale.

**In a Valley -1:** The covenant is built in a valley of some sort, either an alpine valley, one dug into the lee of a mountain range, or perhaps simply a river valley. Your enemies can peer down on you from above, possibly to fire spells or hurl missiles, and attackers may have the advantage of the higher ground if you ever sally forth from the covenant walls. Defensibility -1.

**Forest -1:** Around the covenant there is a dense forest of some size. Although the trees do not necessarily come up to the walls of the covenant, they do affect its security. A covenant located in a forest can be hidden more easily, and will likely be less well known among the common folk. Take -2 to Watch.

**On flat ground 0:** The covenant is built on flat terrain.

**Hilly Country 0:** The covenant is located in hilly country, but not upon a hilltop.

**On a Hilltop +1:** The covenant is built on top of a small hill. +1 to Defensibility and +1 to Watch.

**River +1:** The covenant is located on a river. This aids the defense of the covenant and makes hauling supplies a much easier venture. The covenant will likely have its own boats, and will probably use them for most expeditions (most of the local cities are built alongside the river). A great deal of commerce may flow on the river; taxing it could be the covenant's primary source of income. Add +1 to Defense.

**On a huge rock +2:** The covenant is built on top of a huge cliff like rock which juts abruptly from the landscape. This adds +1 to Defense, and +2 to Watch.

**On a cliff +3:** Your covenant is built on top of (or perhaps in the side of; if it is a cave—see below) a cliff. Defense +2, and +1 to Watch.

**On an island +4:** The covenant is built on a small island, and therefore removed from the daily affairs of the mortals. Defense +3, Watch +1.

**On a mountain top +6:** Your covenant is built on the summit or on the side of a mountain or a very large hill. It is very difficult to climb up by any way other than on one of the trails which already exist (and are presumably defended). Unfortunately, you are rather remote from most human commerce and hauling supplies or even visiting the covenant can be a very difficult task, especially in winter. Take +4 to your Defense, and +2 to your Watch.

however, are not usually found in areas with auras greater than +5, because of the disturbing effects the magic has upon the grogs, companions, and even the wizards.

### Magical Aura

0 Aura: cost	-5		
+1 Aura: cost	-4	+6 Aura: cost	+8
+2 Aura: cost	-2	+7 Aura: cost	+10
+3 Aura: cost	0	+8 Aura: cost	+13
+4 Aura: cost	+3	+9 Aura: cost	+16
+5 Aura: cost	+6	+10 Aura: cost	+18

Strange things happen to people who live in a +6 Aura, or stronger, for longer than a year. They may change and warp, becoming less human and more and more magical—which can be faerie-like or even monstrous in effect.

Any wizard who lives in an area of +10 must make a Stm roll of 5+ or go into Wizard's Twilight (something like magical insanity—see The Order of Hermes for details) until they are able to make a Stm roll of 10+, for which they roll once every season.

### Exempli Gratia

Deciding on the setting of Mistridge was easy, because I had long been interested in Southern France, and I convinced everyone else in short order of how perfect it was. I had even gathered a little information about it, having with me a book about Languedoc, so we were well prepared. We decided to set the covenant in a valley in the foothills of the Pyrenees. We had no idea what the Pyrenees mountains were like, but looking at a map of Europe, they seemed interesting. They divide Spain and France, and looked to be fairly high and rugged, and in **Mythic Europe**, they would be the abode of many magical creatures.

Southern France had an intriguing culture, and was full of the romanticism of medieval life. Also, as we later found out, the crusade against the Albigensian heretics would provide a vivid political background to the setting.

We decided to make Mistridge set upon a hilltop (cost: +1) on the edge of a cliff, overlooking a valley. That would give us +1 to both our Defense and Watch, which gave us a start on getting decent factors in both of those. We took only a +3 Magic Aura (cost: 0), because Lisa thought that we were too close to the Dominion to have it any greater. We considered being located in a Faerie forest, but decided that our original concept of being more a part of the mundane world would suit us better. Nicole drew up a quick sketch of the covenant, while John mapped out Val du Bosque. While they were still doing that, we went on to the Fortifications section.

## Magic Aura

Most covenants are in magical areas (see the Supernatural Powers section in the Magic chapter of **Ars Magica**); this area can also be a Faerie area (which is quite similar to a magical area). Determine the bonus of the area for your covenant. This aura adds to all spells cast within the covenant (and indeed within the bounds of the aura) and most laboratory rolls receive it as a bonus as well. Therefore it is very important to the wizards. Covenants,

## Other Details

You may wish to be located in an aura other than a magical one.

**Infernal Area, varies:** Covenants located in an infernal area would be unpleasant places to live or work, and are exceedingly rare. They are worth -1 point per point of infernal aura.

**Dominion, varies:** The Covenant is situated among the farms and villages of the common folk — it is not removed from the pace of life among most of society. When the covenant was first created, it might have been located in the middle of a forest, but slowly civilization expanded around it. Though the covenant probably still has some sort of magical aura, it only appears during the night; during the daytime the Dominion holds sway. Take a magical aura score as usual, but it's only in effect during the night; this tends to make the magi into night owls. It's very rare for a covenant to remain situated within the Dominion, but if it has good relations with the Church and nobility, it is not so dangerous. The Dominion score usually is from 2-5. The price for this attribute is -1 point per point of Dominion.

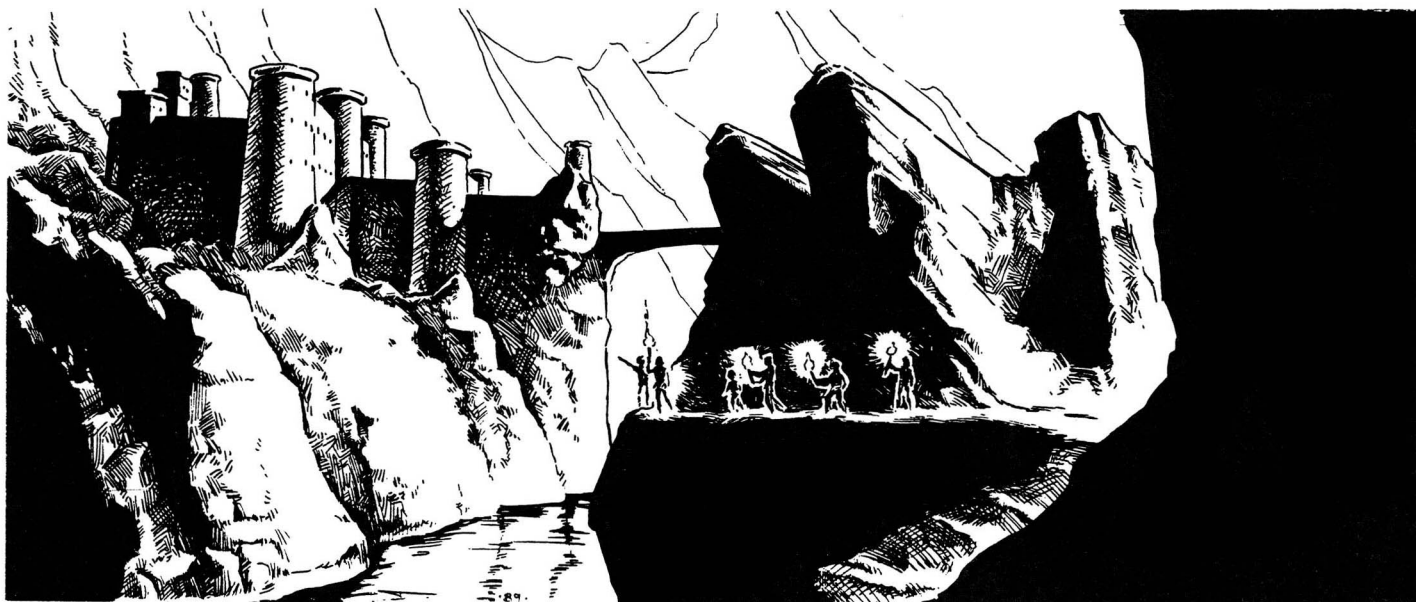
**A city -5:** Your covenant is in a city. Almost every city has a Dominion rating of at least 3, to be purchased separately. You might still have a magical aura, but it will arise only at night, in the underground areas of the covenant (if you've got them) — add +2 points to the price of the underground areas. Your neighbors will think you to be very strange even if they don't know you are wizards, and the stability of the covenant will always be in question because of the highly charged political nature of a city. Mobs could storm the covenant, learning only too late the danger of such

Even though they regularly face supernatural perils, the magi still must worry about mundane assaults. Covenants, therefore, are often fortified, much as a castle is. You must decide how well

folly, but at the same time heralding the end of the covenant as well. In short, a covenant based in a city would be highly intriguing, politically charged, full of stealth and secretiveness as well as danger and instability. Make a simple roll every season; if you roll a 10, make a political incidents roll (make up your own chart and have it contain details that apply directly to the history and structure of the city).

**Faerie forest, varies:** Surrounded by a faerie forest, the covenant is located in the midst of a very strange world. Though the magic rating is likely to be quite good, the side effects of having faeries involved in every aspect of covenant life can be very frustrating. The faerie aura adds to magic rolls. Such a location should be purchased by computing the relative benefit of the faerie aura to wielders of magic, and then the price reduced by four from that. You must roll for one extra botch on your lab rolls for every point of faerie power the forest has, as indeed you must on every stressful magic roll. Make a Mystic Occurrences roll every season.

**Underground +1:** Your covenant is located underground in a cavern or a cave complex. If your covenant is entirely underground, don't use the descriptions of the defensibility and integrity factors in the fortress section as they are given. Use the modifiers they give for Defense and Watch and then interpret how that affects the underground — a low Watch and Defense factor would mean there are hundreds of cave openings, and a number of wide tunnels leading to the central area of the covenant; a high Watch and Defense could mean there is only one entrance, and a well hidden one at that. Picking size will determine how large your underground area is.



# •2 Fortress

Even though they regularly face supernatural perils, the magi still must worry about mundane assaults. Covenants, therefore, are often fortified, much as a castle is. You must decide how well fortified your covenant is, if at all, and come up with a basic conception of its appearance.

Your covenant can be anything from a sprawling collection of fortified buildings and towers to a little group of squalid huts on a miserable rocky isle. Possible structures include lone towers, crumbling ruins, or battlements built into a cliff. There could be no fortress at all — the covenant is a group of riders and they carry everything (including the wizards' laboratories) with them. Often covenants have extensive caverns or tunnels beneath them (which sometimes haven't been fully explored).

When you are figuring out what the covenant looks like, keep in mind what kind of theme you would like your Saga to have; the appearance of your home can either add to or distract from such a theme. A covenant in ancient, haunted ruins would suit a Saga filled with sinister secrets and based on a grim view of the Middle Ages, whereas a covenant carved in the side of an immense slab of marble would be more suitable for a romantic and fanciful Saga.

*Here are some questions the troupe should ask itself: How large is the fortress? What does it look like? How many people can live there? Is there a formal meeting room, and in how good a shape is the covenant in, in general.*

## Layout

A covenant has many different types of rooms and buildings. To properly detail a covenant, you must have some idea of the layout of it, as well as an idea of what the different parts of the covenant look like. How many towers does the covenant have, if any? Are the towers made of rough hewn stone, polished granite, or glass? What does the covenant look like if there aren't any walls and towers — is it one big fortress?

Decide how your covenant is built and what it looks like, and be creative about it. Magi live a long time and you're going to be stuck with your creation for quite a while, so don't be boring. Draw a rough sketch of the covenant so you get an idea of what it looks like (and to make sure everyone is agreed on its appearance) and then make a simple map of it to use as a reference. Later on, you can make a more detailed and intricate map, but for right now, just rely on the crude one until you are sure you have what you want.

## Places in a Covenant

Listed below are some of the buildings or places you might want your covenant to have:

- **A council chamber**, where the the wizards meet to debate and decide covenant policy. It usually has a large table around which all the wizards can meet. In some covenants, there are chairs along the walls as well, for guests, companions, and high ranking grogs. Except in the most informal of covenants, the companions are not allowed to speak in the chambers unless given permission by the wizards. Wealthy covenants make this room one of the most ornate and beautiful in the fortress.

- **Guard towers** where the grogs can stand watch for enemies. Perhaps they are aided by magical guarding devices, which must be purchased in the Magical Resources section.

- **An extensive library** is the true heart of a covenant, and is one of the biggest reasons the wizards even bother living together. Without a library, wizards could not come close to attaining the knowledge and power which they possess.

The library of the covenant is a central area for the magi — this is where they will most frequently meet their peers as they rummage through old tomes. While magi often have private libraries, filled with notes that would be indecipherable to others, almost all covenants have central libraries where they can easily share their knowledge. Nearly every

library contains a copy of the Code of the Order of Hermes, the code that guides the conduct of the magi (see the handout in *Saga Pack™*). Most libraries also contain parts of the Peripheral Code, which interprets the Code and expands upon it.

The library contains three major types of tomes and scrolls. There are scrolls containing copies of magical spells (the most famous spells in the Order are all listed in *Ars Magica* itself), tomes concerning a particular art, describing ways in which ones mastery might be increased, and scholarly tomes containing mundane and supernatural knowledge, such as faerie lore, or Greek history, all of which can be very valuable to a wizard.

- **Connected to the library** of many covenants there is often an area for the manufacturing of parchment and the binding of books. Since the magi often do a great deal of writing, the need for parchment is quite high. If it is not crafted on the premises, large numbers of scrolls and books are brought in from a city each year.

- **Barracks** for the grogs — after all, they've got to live somewhere. Do they live well with rooms for themselves (and perhaps their families), or are they crowded together in a barn, with two men sharing each cot? (This will have an important effect on their loyalty.)

(Cont. next page)



- **Living quarters** for the other covenfolk. Some might be put in the same barracks as the grogs, though companions usually insist upon more comfortable quarters.

- Most covenants have a **great hall** where everyone can join together for a feast, though sometimes the antisociality of the wizards extends even to the absence of such a hall.

- Even the magi need food, so a **kitchen** of some sort is necessary. In some covenants, meals are delivered to the magi in their laboratories so that they do not have to interrupt important studies, but in other covenants the magi meet for each meal. The grogs and covenfolk also need places to eat, usually having mess halls for efficiency. Some grog **mess halls** double as **taverns** where the grogs get their rewards for their hard days work. (The mess hall can be an interesting place to roleplay in, especially when a wizard consents to come down "to have a drink or two.")

Good food is important to the moral of the grogs and even the wizards enjoy a pleasant meal. If food quality should drop, consider lowering the grogs' Morale as well. Some covenants are renowned for their enormous kitchens and superb cooks, others are noted for their green-tinted gruel.

- All but the smallest of covenants employ craftsmen who maintain a number of **workshops**. A smithy and a carpenter's shop are common, and many covenants have a mason's shop, a tailor's shop and glassworks. Some covenants (Autumn and Winter) will be so large that they have their own cooper, leatherworker, armorer, weaponsmith, and counting house.

- **Smithies** are a special example of a workshop. For while it is useful for maintaining the arms, armor, and tools of the covenant, some are also slightly enchanted, allowing the magi to use it as an extension of their laboratory and to construct magical devices therein. The wizards even use the non-magical ones to craft the basic elements of many of their magical artifacts.

- The wizards' **laboratories**, are chambers stuffed with intricate magical devices, arcane equipments, and wildly exotic spell components from every part of the earth. Often a number of books borrowed from the library (usually for months on end) will be lying out on the tables — especially if the wizard has an apprentice. Laboratories are kept in the best shape possible, and magi take pride in the plethora of equipment, fancy new devices, and elaborate layout they have. You should assign a place where each wizard has his or her laboratory, then at some point in the Saga, the player should detail what their magi's laboratories look like. Young magi or magi from poorer covenants are often forced to share laboratories. Though this may be annoying and may lead to arguments, it has no adverse affect on their studies. There are many stories of magi who, having shared laboratories as young magi, become friends throughout life, accompanying one another on expeditions and so.

- Adjoining and often part of the laboratory is the **wizard's personal quarters**. The wizards like to combine their laboratories and personal quarters for convenience (they're tied to their work), though they might separate them for safety's sake. The magi must sometimes keep projects going overnight, and over the years a strong partition between lab and sleeping pallet has saved several magi from the effects of

a botched experiment. The style in which the quarters are furnished depends on the tastes of the magi inhabiting them and on the wealth of the covenant. In Doissetep, some of the Arch-Magi live in lush quarters that rival those of Oriental potentates, but many wizards are so detached from worldly matters that they care for nothing more than pallets to sleep on and stark wooden furniture for daily needs.

- A **dungeon**. Wizards rarely seem to have a need for a prison to lock up mortals, but a jail of some sort sometimes comes in handy. Dungeons do not have to be underground — they can be stone huts, rooms in a towers, or even rooms of great luxury befitting a king. Normally the wizards desire the dungeon to be as far from them as possible, lest he cries of those incarcerated interrupt their studies.

Whenever a grog gets a little drunk, they are either carried back to their bunk or thrown in a cell to sober up. On rare occasions, the wizards might also find it necessary to imprison someone, sometimes for years. The covenant of Circulus Ruber in Hibernia (Ireland) is said to have prisoners locked in cells in their magical labyrinth who have forgotten their names. A covenant may even have facilities suited for imprisoning magi or other individuals with magical powers. This would require a magical device of great power (which must be purchased separately).

- **Torture chamber**. Wizards do not usually have a need to rely on torture as a means of obtaining information — magic is far more reliable. Tragically, magi are mortal enough to span the spectrum of human nature, and some are sadistic enough to enjoy torture for its own sake. Adjoining the quarters of a few very rare wizards are torture chambers — rarely is an entire covenant demented enough to have a covenant chamber of horrors. Often such wizards are censured by the Order of Hermes and forced to abridge their practices, much as the necromancers are.

- **Tombs**. When a wizard dies, they are usually placed in a crypt below the covenant where only wizards are buried. A ritual spell is usually cast at this time, which protects the soul of the wizard from becoming a ghost but unfortunately cannot do much else. Though many wizards seek Church burials, not many receive such sanctification, thanks to papal edicts against sorcery. Only through Christian burial can a soul be truly protected. Because the remains of an unsanctified corpse can be useful in certain types of magics, such as recalling a ghost to answer questions, a tomb is usually strongly sealed and may even be guarded (in the larger covenants).

- Are there any **secret sanctuaries** in the covenant? They can be vitally important in case the covenant walls are overrun and there is no place to run. Wizards often build secret rooms just to have a quiet space where they will not be disturbed, where they can store their more precious books, or where they can perform strange magical rituals that might not be condoned by their peers or by casual observers. Some covenants, such as Doissetep, are renowned for their incredibly intricate network of secret corridors, rooms, and spy holes. There is a legend that there was a secret corridor running off a secret corridor, beside a secret room, running off a secret corridor. A wizard knew about the first corridor but not the second, another wizard knew about the first and the

(continued)

second but not the third, the third wizard knew about the second and third but not any others, and so on. If you so desire, you can make things very complicated.

- **Most covenants have some reserve of money in case of emergencies**—even if they don't, they doubtless have a need to store their day-to-day funds. For this they have a **treasury**. This strong room is usually placed in the most secure portion of the covenant, and may be protected magically.

- **Besides having a treasury of mundane wealth, some covenants have a magical treasury as well**, though they may well be the same room. In the magical treasury would be stored the covenant's supply of *vis*, and any magical artifacts that are not in constant use.

- **Well or other water source.** Magical means might be used to procure the large amounts of potable water necessary for running the covenant. Mundane methods, such as artesian wells, are far more common (wizards do not waste time or *vis* performing tasks that are perfectly well done by normal means).

- **Trophy hall.** Wizards take pride in their accomplishments. For some covenants that means new spells they have developed or books they have written. Other covenants are more zestful and take pride in the beasts and monsters they have slain over the years. These covenants usually have a room full of skins and mounted heads of the various beasts slain throughout its history. Such a room often contains a mural that pictures the history of the covenant and perhaps a number of items of antiquity. Some wizards may choose to lounge here, meeting each evening to drink and commiserate with their peers.

- **Invariably a covenant will have some sort of infirmary.** Injuries are common following missions, and it is understood by the wizards that it takes special care to heal a wounded comrade-in-arms back to health.

- **Lavatories.** It is amazing how often people forget to include one of the most basic of human necessities into their plans for a building. Make sure you have some understanding of how the covenant disposes of its raw waste—do they simply dump it in the moat, or do they have the grogs cart it off (and who gets assigned that duty)?

- **Veterans' housing.** Grog sometimes do survive long enough to retire, and the larger covenants have created special quarters for them and older companions. While they no longer might fight, they certainly continue to labor for the covenant as servants or covenfolk. The magi value the accumulated wisdom of these older characters. Grog will usually retire no later than 50 years old.

- **Stables.** If you've got horses you've got to have these. It usually takes an area of five by ten feet for a stall for each horse. Above the stalls is an area where the straw and hay are kept, and where the stablehands and other lowly covenfolk may sleep.

- **Animal pens.** For hawks, dogs, drakes, and other strange beasts from the wilds.

- **Gardens and fields.** Fresh vegetables are always nice for the digestion, and many wizards are gluttons of one sort or another. Almost all covenants have some source of fresh food—in these squalid times it is vital to retain one's health.

## Size

The size of your covenant not only makes a great difference in terms of how much room there is in it for grogs, covenfolk, and magi, but also in how many warriors you need to satisfactorily defend it. You should be very careful to make sure the covenant is large enough to hold the number of inhabitants you wish to live there. If it is very large, but has less than 1/4 the maximum inhabitants, then you should consider it having other inhabitants as well—such as fell beasts or faeries.

**No Structure -7:** The covenant simply has no home base, the wizards are (as of yet) always on the move. Perhaps they move from town to town, renting a town house everywhere they go; or perhaps they set up their tents in different faerie forests and stay as long as they can. Why don't they have a permanent home? Haven't they found the right place yet, or is someone (or something) after them?

**Tiny -5:** A very small fortress (a two story tower, fifteen foot in diameter) with enough room indoors for only the wizards; everyone else sleeps outside. The grogs live in shacks or tents. Because of the squalid conditions in which they live, disease will be rife, and their Morale will be at -2 until more suitable quarters are found for them. For every two grogs you have under 20, reduce your Defense and Watch by one. The wizards all share one laboratory, so they get -3 to all their lab scores, and will undoubtedly get on each other's nerves a great deal (there is nothing worse than a magus on a short fuse).

**Limited -3:** A fortress with barely enough room for the wizards and their laboratories (albeit small ones, but small rooms are the norm in the Middle Ages) and up to 10 grogs. All the rest must live outside, those that do have the same penalties as the grogs in the tiny fortress. For every grog you have under 10, reduce your Defense and Watch by one.

**Small -1:** A small fortress, there is just enough room inside for the wizards (assuming very small laboratories) and up to 30 grogs (assuming very crowded conditions). For every 2 grogs you have under 20, reduce your Defense and Watch by one.

**Average 0:** The fortress is large enough to comfortably fit all the wizards and companions. There is enough room for up to 50 grogs (though it would fit 30 grogs more comfortably). There is a great hall, a kitchen, barracks, council room, a small library, and comfortable laboratories for the wizards. For every 5 grogs you have under 30, reduce your Defense by one.

**Large +1:** There is enough room for up to 100 grogs and quite a number of covenfolk. For every 10 grogs you have under 50, reduce your Defense by one. The wizards have spacious laboratories, and the library room is quite sizable.

**Huge +3:** The covenant is very large and there is enough room for 200 grogs inside (as well as the usual complement of covenfolk and magi). For every 10 grogs you have under 100, reduce your Defense by one.

**Extravagant, +4:** The covenant is extremely large, covering five acres or more, and there is enough room for 300 grogs. For every 20 grogs you have under 200, reduce your Defense and Watch by one.

**Immense, +6:** The covenant is too large to fathom, too intricate to map. Very special circumstances must have arisen for such a place to have been built, it is quite literally the size of a city. There is room for as many grogs and covenantfolk as you would like to have (within reason — under 5000 inhabitants). For every 30 grogs you have under 300, reduce your Defense and Watch by 1.

## Defensibility

All the mundane defenses of the Middle Ages are available to covenants that can afford them, including shield walls, towers, drawbridges, and so on. The knowledge and magic of the magi, however, give them extra possibilities. Sophisticated traps and secret passages are found throughout Doissetep, and most covenants have some magical traps as well. The simplest magical traps use the Waiting Spell to hold a destructive spell until intruders enter a vulnerable area. Alarm systems can be mundane, such as gongs, bells, or horns that are sounded during danger. Some magic alarms can detect intruders on their own and give the alarm. See more on magical defenses in the Mystical Attributes section.

Because of its location and battlements, your covenant will have a certain Defense value which is important when determining the effects of attacks upon the covenant. This index includes such details as whether the covenant has a moat or not, how high and wide the walls are, the number of towers, the number of layers of defenses, and the design of the battlements. Though the defenses are described in one particular way in the attributes below, your covenant does not have to follow that description; we provide it only as a visualizing device. A mighty fortress doesn't necessarily need walls, it might just be one extremely large tower, or it might be simply because the covenant is located underground and there is only one entrance. It's all up to you.

**No Defenses -4:** Whatever buildings there are, they have no defensive capacity, and there are no walls around them. Subtract 7 from your Defense and 5 from your Watch, though your location and the natural attributes of the site may add to your Defense and Watch.

**Weak Defenses -2:** The covenant has very weak and primitive defenses. There may be only a shallow ditch and an earthen rampart, or merely a few wooden walls slung between the buildings. Subtract 3 from your Defense and 2 from your Watch.

**Poor Defenses -1:** There really isn't much to the covenant — there is only a wooden stockade or a one squat tower. Subtract 1 from your Defense and 1 from your Watch.

**Walled 0:** A large keep, surrounded by an unbattlemented stone wall (there is no walkway on it), looking very similar to a simple castle of the feudal style

**Strong +1:** There is not only the central keep, but there are a number of towers spaced around the wall. Add +1 to Defense and +1 to Watch.

**Sturdy +2:** The covenant is very well built, and the central keep is very formidable. Towers are spaced around the wall (which has a walkway), and there is a large gatehouse protecting the entrance. Add +2 to Defense and +2 to Watch.

**Mighty +3:** The central keep is surrounded by two layers of walls which are supported by numerous towers and a moat. Even when the outer wall falls, the inner wall is able to repel most invaders. Add +3 to Defense and +3 to Watch.

**Impregnable +6:** This is a practically impregnable fortress. It has immense walls, at least forty feet high, and twenty feet thick, and many wall towers that allow for cross fire. The interior sections of the covenant are heavily fortified as well, and are high enough to allow defenders to fire spells and arrows, over the head of their compatriots on the walls, at their enemies on the ground. There may be three layers of walls. The outside wall is fairly thin, but the innermost wall is very thick and tall. There is likely to be a moat, and there may be several. The largest tower is known as the keep, and it is a place of final refuge, a small castle in itself. The construction of the fortress is very solid, and spells may well have sealed the blocks of stone together into one great mass (or it may have been constructed as one giant rock in the beginning). An impregnable covenant could also simply be a tall tower, of magical construction — you simply have to figure out what it is that makes it impregnable. Add +7 to your Defense and +5 to your Watch.

### Exempli Gratia

Choosing what sort of fortress Mistridge would be turned out to not be that difficult either. We wanted it to be simple and poetic, so we choose a tower — a very big tower built into the top of a small cliff, with tunnels underneath. Some of the magi would have their labs in the tower, while others would have theirs in the tunnels. Lisa wanted to have a place for the grogs to hang out at, a place where they could gather before expeditions, practice their martial skills, and gossip — so we decided to make some of the tunnels exit at the bottom of the cliff into a fortified compound. Everyone liked this idea so we decided to have this compound be the home of the grogs and the tower the home of the magi. The tunnels were for storage, refuge, and the strangest of the magi. We decided to make the covenant of average size (cost: 0), have a sturdy defense (cost: +2) which would give it a bonus of +2 to Defense and Watch. We wanted it well maintained (cost: 0), and we also took the attribute of having an underground area (cost: +1).

## Integrity

Often the quality of the building materials has a great effect on the integrity of the defenses and the living quarters. Poor integrity means the covenant is not only poor defensively, but it is a dirty, worn-down place to live as well.



**Devastated -7:** Nothing is left of the covenant; it is completely ruined. The wizards live in huts made from the rubble; everyone else lives in holes in the rubble. The site may be populated with magical beasts, etc. Take -4 to its Defense and -3 to the Watch, due to the extreme destruction done to its walls and battlements. Note: this requires that you had a fortress in the first place.

**Partial Ruin -4:** Huge areas of the covenant are in ruins. There are holes in the wall, broken doors (if any are left at all), and crumbled towers. Enough remains standing to slow down an attacking force, but not by much. Take -2 to Defense and -2 to Watch.

**Dilapidated -2:** A fortress, but dilapidated, with areas left uninhabited and unmaintained. -1 to the Defense, -1 to Watch. (Winter, Spring)

**Well maintained 0:** No change to the Defense or Watch factors. The covenant is in good shape.

**Improved +1:** The covenant has been extremely well maintained, with weaknesses in the initial design corrected over time. The wizards have added extra thickness to the walls, additional towers to provide for cross fire, and new traps and hazards outside the walls, among other improvements. All in all, the fortifications have improved over the years; add +1 to your Defense.

**New +2:** Your covenant has state-of-the-art defense technology. Either it has been rebuilt recently, or the defenses have been completely revamped. You require only 3/4 the defenders normally required. Add +2 to your Defense.

## Other Details

**Underground Area +1:** Under the covenant there are many tunnels and rooms, carved out of the rock. You may have up to

5000 square feet of space (don't bother to compute it out unless you really like doing that sort of thing) all of which is directly under the covenant.

**Underground labyrinth +2:** Under the covenant there is an extensive network of tunnels and rooms, all carved out of the rock. You may have up to 20,000 square feet of space, with tunnels stretching as far as one mile away from the covenant.

**Caves +1:** Under the covenant there is a series of caves, many of them unexplored. They cannot really be used for any practical purpose, for they are natural and very rough hewn, but are a great refuge and a wonderful place to go exploring. Who knows what lives down in those treacherous depths?

**Watch Tower +1:** The covenant has a very tall watch tower, which allows for continuous scanning of the region around the covenant as well as the outer perimeter of the covenant. +2 to Watch.

**Moat +1:** The covenant has a moat encircling all or most of it. Add +2 to the Defense.

# •3 Inhabitants

The most important aspect of a covenant is the people that compose it. The number and types of people determine many aspects of the covenant, such as how large it must be, how powerful it likely is, and so on.

A covenant has many more than its fair share of strange people. The wizards, who have been studying arcane arts for decades—or centuries—are universally strange. In addition, those people who would associate with the magi are usually strange as well. Many who would not be accepted in society come to the magi, who are so unusual as to be outside the standards of society. And if people arrive at the covenant strange, they only get stranger. Not only is the social atmosphere such as to allow idiosyncrasy to grow unhindered, but the chance for magical mishaps is ever-present.

A big question to answer is, "Who makes up the covenant? Are they only player-characters? If so, why are all these young magi together in the same place? If not, who are the other magi and why do they live there?"

Here are some questions the troupe should ask itself: Are there older magi at the covenant? How well do the magi get along with

one another? Are there a lot of grogs? What kind of Morale do they have? Does the covenant have any servants? Are there many educated people at the covenant?

## The Magi

Magi are the most important inhabitants of a covenant. Indeed, they are the only "members" of the covenant, and the only ones to have a formal voice in the governing of it. Others in the covenant are companions and hirelings, but they are not true members. It is the magi who have formed the covenant and it because of them that the covenant continues. This essential fact determines the hierarchy of the covenant, where naturally the wizards sit at the top.

Some covenants have a huge membership of magi—some as many as 30 wizards. Most, however, are substantially smaller. You may not want to detail elder magi fully, but at least give them some personality traits and get some idea about their magical

abilities. They will play a role in the story, but usually they are so occupied with their own interests that they do not interfere very much with the workings and protection of the covenant. In the best Hermetic tradition, it invariably falls to the younger hands to keep things going — older wizards have better things to do.

Generally, the more magi there are in a covenant, the better. With a greater numbers of wizards, there will be more knowledge to share. The wizards will probably write more texts on understanding the arts and using the various arts, and the characters may even be able to convince another wizard to become their tutor.

In a covenant of three magi, it is usually not worth the time of one magus to write down knowledge of the arcane arts for the others to study. It takes so long to write the information down that the magi could learn faster just by studying themselves. In a covenant of a dozen, however, what one magus writes down can then be used by eleven others, making it worthwhile for each magus to write information for the others to share.

On the other hand, an area has a limited amount of raw *vis*, the magic power trapped in a physical form that the magi need for their magic work, and notably for their longevity potions. If too many magi live together in an area of limited magic, they will have to venture far for their magical supplies, and it might become economical for some of the magi to leave rather than waste so much effort to get what they need.

In addition, many magi are uncomfortable in larger covenants, which allow them less personal control over the covenant's affairs. Since most decisions are determined by vote, increasing numbers means a decreasing value of your vote.

The value of the numerous magi and the limit on a practical number reaches a different equilibrium point for each covenant. In covenants where there are already too many magi, magi who have just completed apprenticeship usually must leave rather than continue their magical studies in those covenants.

When you are creating your covenant, create as many non-player wizard members of the covenant as suits you. Unless you have created an exceptional history for the covenant, any Summer, Autumn, or Winter covenant will have older wizards as members.

The following attributes may describe the inhabitants of your covenant:

**Divided -2:** The covenant is extremely divided along some sort of ideological grounds. Whatever the reason, the wizards separate themselves into two warring camps, and the cooperation between wizards of opposing sides is rare unless the covenant itself is endangered. Having the player wizards on opposing sides can make for non-stop, total, immersion roleplaying, but it can get to be too much after a while. I suggest all the player-magi be on one side of the dispute, unless you really feel ready for total chaos.

**Scheming -1:** There is a great deal of scheming going on among the various wizards, and they trust each other very little. Because of this, the internal affairs of the covenant may be in some disorder, and things are not likely to get better until the wizards can begin to work with one another again. Each wizard keeps separate from the others as much as possible, and will have favorites among the covenfolk and grogs who have more loyalty to them than the covenant as a whole. As a Storyguide, make sure you leave room in your stories for the intrigue to screw things up.

**Hierarchy -1:** There is a very tight hierarchy in the covenant, and wizards who have just joined (the player-characters) start at the bottom of the totem pole. They must work to be given any privileges, such as being allowed to use the library. This is an excellent environment for roleplayers who are not used to the troupe style play, for it allows the Storyguide to introduce stories easily (as well as control the pace and flow of the stories better).

**Leader -1:** The covenant has one magus who is the definitive leader of the covenant. They are likely to have been the founder, and several of the other magi are likely to have been his or her apprentices. Nothing can be done without the permission of this leader, and there may be personality clashes between this individual and several of the magi-characters.

**Normal 0:** The wizards work with one another when it concerns the covenant, but otherwise may have petty rivalries and long lasting feuds. These problems are always kept in the background however, and though the council meetings may get a little rambunctious at times, the wizards on the whole tolerate and respect one another.

**Loosely Organized 0:** The wizards work well with one another, but little is expected from them and they are allowed to do as they wish. The rest of the covenant works on its own without much interference from the wizards. No wizard is ever asked to go on a mission for the covenant, and even the council rarely asks much more from a magus than general allegiance. There are few rules, and even those rules can be broken without much difficulty.



**Cooperative +1:** The covenant has a university-like atmosphere, and the magi treat each other with respect and courtesy. There are proper channels for the expression of anger and resentment, and all problems are handled by the wizards' council. The older wizards keep an eye on the affairs of the covenant and strive to maintain the traditions — on occasion they may even give classes. Every season, there is a chance there is a class being taught on one of the arts. Magi rarely venture out into the world on their own, but usually go forth in groups of 2-4 (along with their grogs and other companions of course). The younger magi do not have to worry about the affairs of the covenant very much, simply because the older magi look after things so well.

## Apprentices

The apprentices are next in the hierarchy after the magi. It is the duty of the master to see to the care of the apprentice. In a covenant with enough apprentices, they sometimes meet together to share knowledge. They frequently are engaged in an intense rivalry as to who serves their master the best, and they each attempt to bring their master the most information about what the other magi are doing. Doissetep is renowned for the vehemence of its apprentice wars — these young magi-in-training know only too well that if they are to have any chance of gaining admittance into this covenant upon completing their training, they had better make a name for themselves now.

**Organized Apprentices +1:** The covenant takes the responsibility of locating and retrieving young children with latent magical power, and begins their training as well. The magi of the covenant need not search for apprentices themselves, and avoid having to do the first three years of training themselves (so the magus only has to do 12 seasons of training, all told). The apprentice also begins with at least a 3 Latin and Scribe score. When it comes time to pick an apprentice, the magi can pick from any of the children at the school. Those children who are not picked either are taken by wizards of other covenants (not without cost!) or become companions of some sort.

## The Grogs

To protect them from physical threat, the magi of a covenant usually employ a turb of grogs. Some turbs are well-disciplined under the direction of professional warriors (companions), while others are motley gangs of toughs.

Grogs are found in almost every covenant of any size. They are the hired guards who stand between the magi and physical danger. In addition to performing daily guard duties at the covenant, they protect the magi who must venture into dangerous areas in search of mysteries and knowledge. A variety of organization plans are possible concerning the grogs.

**Number-** The number of warriors you have is mostly important for defending the covenant when it is attacked. Your covenant will lose grogs in the course of its stories, but you can recruit more to replace them, always keeping your total near the number you have chosen. If you lose many grogs in rapid succession, you may find recruitment difficult; thus the initial number of grogs in your turb can be very important.

Recruitment of grogs may take place at the end of each story. Though the wizards may find and hire enough grogs to replace the number of grogs they are below their normal average, they may not expand the turb of grogs beyond its original size unless they do so through the normal Covenant Improvement rules. This expansion will also likely require a bit of roleplaying, because you will have to find a large group of mercenaries and then convince them to work for you.

## Armaments

Poor armaments allow grogs only inexpensive arms and armor. Standard armaments allow only inexpensive and standard arms and armor. Grogs with good armaments can each have one expensive item, but the rest must be standard or inexpensive. Superior armaments allow each grog to choose any arms and armor. These guidelines for grog armaments also include any companions who are part of the covenant. If you have no grogs, the armaments still matter, for if warriors are later recruited for the turb, that will indicate how well they are equipped.

## Discipline

Every turb has discipline problems — it's in the nature of warriors and mercenaries. Precisely how well the turb is disciplined, however, varies a great deal from covenant to covenant.

**Disorganized -2:** The grogs have poor leadership and discipline, though they might be loyal at heart. Give each grog a negative Disciplined personality score. You can do this by giving every grog a Disciplined score as you would normally and then reducing it by 5 to represent the state of chaos the turb is in.

**Organized 0:** The grogs are well-organized but not energetic. They are not disloyal, but nor are they dynamic.

**Highly Disciplined +1:** The turb is very well led, and has excellent discipline. The grogs are proud of their turb and work extremely hard to uphold their highly held traditions. They obey the orders of the magi instantly and rarely hesitate to carry out the commands given them. Each grog should have a positive Disciplined score. (Because this can take away from the freedom and some of the fun of playing a grog, you should think carefully before taking this attribute.)

The number of grogs a covenant has varies from covenant to covenant, but typically a covenant will not have an army of warriors — exceptions of course do exist. They simply have no need for one; armies were not very large in the Middle Ages anyway.



**Grog Armament Table**

	• Poor	• Standard	• Good	• Superior
0	-7	-6	-5	-3
5	-5	-4	-3	-1
10	-4	-3	-2	0
15	-3	-2	-1	+1
20	-2	-1	0	+2
30	-1	0	+1	+3
40	0	+1	+2	+4
50	+1	+2	+3	+5
75	+2	+3	+4	+6
100	+3	+4	+5	+7
150	+4	+5	+6	+8
200	+5	+6	+7	+9
300	+6	+7	+8	+10
400	+7	+8	+9	+11
500	+8	+9	+10	+12

• **Poor armaments:** grogs can have only inexpensive armaments.

• **Standard:** grogs can have any standard or inexpensive armaments.

• **Good:** grogs can have any standard or inexpensive armaments, and one item of expensive armament.

• **Superior:** grogs can choose any armaments that they wish. Additionally, the covenant has a large stock of assorted weapons in their armory.

If you don't want to worry about any other details about the grogs, simply ignore the following. They will make little difference in most Sagas, and largely serve to add levels of complexity to the wizard-grog relationship. Also, these details can be added on later in the Saga, as a part of Covenant Improvements (p. 42).

## Loyalty & Morale

The Loyalty and Morale of the turb are very important because a successful expedition so often depends on reliable and disciplined grogs. The grogs may be a tightly organized and disciplined fighting force or they may be a motley band of treacherous ruffians and criminals. Whatever the case, how strong their Morale is figures strongly in their effectiveness as a fighting force. The Morale of your grogs is paramount to the success you will have on expeditions. Their Loyalty insures the safety of the covenant. Disloyal grogs can spell the doom of the most powerful of covenants and the most potent of wizards. Many a covenant has slipped into Winter due to disloyalty on the part of their grogs.

**Rebellious -6:** The grogs are openly rebellious and dislike and hate many of the magi (but probably not all the player-wizards). They may be contemptuous of their leaders

and have very little pride for the covenant. This is a horrible attribute for the covenant to have, and regaining the trust of the turb will play a vital part in most of the stories to come. If you take this attribute, things will be exceedingly difficult. The turb begins with a -5 Loyalty score. Subtract 3 from Defense and Watch.

**Devastated -3:** The turb has extremely poor Morale, more than likely because of a series of defeats and a history of abuse by their leaders and the magi. Subtract 5 from your Morale.

**Disloyal -2:** The grogs don't give a hoot about the magi, and would rather be rid of them than have them around acting all high and mighty. The turb begins with a -3 Loyalty score

**Resigned -1:** The grogs do their job faithfully, but their hearts are not in it. Give them positive Apathetic scores. The turb as a whole has a -2 Morale.

**Divided -1:** The grogs are divided into distinct groups, each with its own leader, and the grogs are more loyal to their individual groups than to the covenant as a whole. Within these groups, they are quite well-organized. If a grog is put together with others from a different group, they suffer a -3 penalty to their Loyalty and Morale.

**Loyal 0:** The grogs have come to their present station through various means and view the covenant as many others would view their life's occupations. Life outside the covenant is not much of an option, so commitment to the covenant seems to be the best alternative. The turb starts with a Loyalty score of 0.

**Committed +1:** The grogs are committed to the survival and prosperity of the covenant. Each grog begins with a Loyalty score of +3.

**Strong Morale +2:** The grogs feel like part of a strong group and are proud to serve. Positive Loyalty scores. Add +2 to Morale.

**Fanatic +3:** A charismatic leader has raised the grogs to unprecedented heights of loyalty and energy. (Perhaps this could be a companion?) They are ready to die for the covenant. This extreme loyalty could have religious or metaphysical overtones. Each grog begins with a Loyalty of +6. Add +3 to turb Morale. (Summer)

**Undaunted Spirits +4:** The grogs are so confident and proud of themselves and their covenant, that it is hard to imagine them having higher spirits. Add +4 to Morale. Their Loyalty should also be a positive score, usually around +3. Add +1 to Defense and Watch.

## Training

Some grogs are very well trained, while others are barely more than disciplined brutes. This can make an immense difference on the fighting efficiency of your grogs. The training index determines the number of additional skill levels your grogs will have at the beginning of the Saga, as well as how much training they can each receive each year over the course of the Saga.

**Untrained Grogs -3:** When you get new grogs, you may put only seven points of experience on their combat skills.

Your grogs when they are first recruited have no combat experience, only training. Thus these new recruits will have a positive Cowardly score.

**Poorly trained -1:** Grogs get only their age + 5 points to buy beginning abilities. Your grogs always start out as green recruits, and do not have the benefit of previous experience.

**Average Grogs 0:** The grogs are normal, and are rolled up according to normal rules.

**Experienced Replacements +1:** For some reason (you pick why) the covenant is lucky enough to have access to grogs who have had previous combat experience. When you roll up a grog, add five years to their age (which gives five points additional experience).

**Proficient Grogs +2:** Make a stress roll every time you roll up a new grog, this is how many extra points of experience the grog has due to training (a botch indicates -7 experience points). This training might have been provided somewhere else (such as at a castle, or in a mercenary band), or more likely by the covenant. In the later case, it can be assumed that the grogs have been at the covenant for a year or more undergoing training.

**Ongoing Training, +2:** The grogs in your covenant may add one experience point every year to any skill, due to the ongoing training they receive. This point can be added to any skill which it can be assumed there is an instructor for (a companion or a specialist). Companions who live at the covenant many undergo this training as well. Such training is rare in the Middle Ages, especially for as low a class of folk as the grogs; normally only knights would be so well trained.

## Covenfolk

In addition to the grogs, there are many other mundane people who see to the daily needs of the covenant. These other inhabitants of the covenant can easily be forgotten when you design your covenant. Covenfolk are all the people who do the mundane jobs that keep the covenant going. They are cooks, gardeners, carpenters, sailors, goatherds, servants, grounds keepers, animal handlers, trainers, drudges, and whatever else a particular covenant needs. While they rarely enter play as pivotal actors in part of a story, including them in the covenant, and thus in the Saga, enriches play and stimulates roleplaying. The mighty tower of the magi is more real to the players if it has an old muttering servant making regular cleaning rounds through it (who just walks right into the laboratories, without knocking, when he wants to clean them).

There are many people at a covenant who come and go. They are friends of the covenant, but they are not employed there. Usually the covenant has some place for them to stay when they arrive. Many companions are considered to be guests because they spend most of their time away from the covenant.

Many covenants are starting to employ an Autocrat, a position first invented at Val-negra covenant in in the southern Pyrenees and first fully utilized at Doissetep. The title of Autocrat is only given to a person who manages the covenant and organizes its affairs so that the magi do not have to concern themselves with such details. An Autocrat is sort of a glorified personnel manager, and usually about as well-liked. Autocrats have proven to be extremely useful (with the possible exception of Calebais, which had an Autocrat that was sent from Doissetep) and are in great demand. They often are given rights that equal those of the magi. Autocrats make for excellent companions due to their power, responsibility, and their often quirky personalities.

Scholars are common and highly respected guests at a covenant — it is not unusual for covenants to invite the brightest and most learned of their intellectual peers in the outside world to join them for a time. Because of the rare and antiquated books found at the covenant, and of course the stimulating companionship of the magi themselves, many scholars actually accept. Some find the atmosphere of the covenant so refreshing and the intellectual freedom so exhilarating that many stay for the remainder of their lives. Priests and monks have been known to make protracted visits to covenants, and it can be assumed that these visits, more than anything else, have maintained the “understanding” that exists between the Church and the Order.

Scribes, astrologers, physicians, mystics, treasurers (aerarii praefectus), and such are often given special treatment in the covenant because they work so closely with the magi on a regular basis. The larger a covenant is, the more likely it is to have non-magi performing specialized positions. Your troupe can make use of non-player specialists (depending on what attributes you choose), and they can be of great service to the covenant.

Here are some of the specialists that might be at a covenant: Armorer, Astrologer, Master Carpenter, Blacksmith, Butcher, Scribe, Weaponsmith, Falconer/Animal Handler, Librarian, Scholar (pick in what area of knowledge), Physician, Treasurer, Trainer (pick which skills they are capable of training people in), and Autocrat.



**Scanty -2:** The covenant has only a few unskilled servants (of the most unsavory variety), and doesn't have any specialists. These servants are not likely to be very loyal to the covenant, but would not betray it readily. You should decide what the servants are like, and try to make them as interesting as possible (unsavory people are always interesting). No companions should be permanent residents of the covenant.

**Deformed -1:** The magical aura has had deleterious effects on the servants (and grogs as well), leaving them as weird or weirder than the magi — they are very strange folk indeed. Because of it, the covenant is an eerie place to visit. You should choose again from this listing to determine the number of servants and specialists. Make sure you make a list of specific ways in which the aura has affected the covenfolk — almost all the grogs should be changed in some way by it.

**Few -1:** You have only a few unskilled servants, who are loyal to the covenant, but are able to provide only the most basic services. The covenant does not have any specialists, except for any player characters it might have.

**Functional, 0:** In addition to the necessary menials and covenfolk, you have a few experts, such as philosophers, scribes, skilled craftsmen, etc. Make one pick from the list of specialists (above).

**Innumerable +1:** The covenant has a great many covenfolk, up to hundreds — many more than are really needed. The number of skilled covenfolk, however, is severely limited. Make three picks from the list of specialists (above).

**Specialists +1:** There are a number of scholars staying at the covenant who can be of great usefulness in doing research and answering questions put to them by the magi. Make four additional choices from the list of specialists (above and beyond any companions or other specialists you might have).

**Established +1:** The servants are hereditary and traditional, if not always effective. The servants all know what to do and all of them know their place — they do not get in the way. It is unlikely that there would be any traitors among them. Many scholars have come here over the years. An Autocrat runs the daily affairs of the covenant and keeps things well organized. Take three picks from the list of specialists (above).

**Scads and scads, +2:** You have more people running around the covenant than you can count — the covenant has the population of a small city (perhaps many of them actually live just outside of the covenant in a village). Working for the covenant are all the artisans, craftsmen, and skilled laborers that a wizard could ever require for anything they could dream up. For these people, the covenant is home, and it is where they plan to stay. Almost all the grogs (as well as many of the companions) come from the covenant as well, and are invariably more loyal to the covenant than they otherwise would be (if not to the magi). Add +1 to any Loyalty roll of a grog or covenfolk who was raised at the covenant. Make seven picks from the list of specialists (above) or make some up of your own.



### Exempli Gratia

We wanted the inhabitants of Mistridge to be fairly typical for a covenant. The player-magi would be the weird ones, so they would stand out all the more. We didn't want the older magi at the covenant constantly telling us what to do, so we wanted to be the only wizards who lived there. We decided that we would pretend our wizard characters had already lived at Mistridge for a number of years, but that the founder had only recently left. We wanted to keep things very simple, and by not having older magi as a part of our covenant, we did just that. Mark made up the young Grimgroth as his magus, Nicole made up Occulo, and Lisa made up Vulcris.

The wizards are only loosely organized (cost: 0), and squabbles between them are common. There is no real leader of the covenant, practically everything is decided by vote at council meetings, therefore some things simply don't get done.

We took fifty grogs with good Armaments (cost: +3). With that many grogs, we would be full to the gills, but it made sense because we were a growing Summer covenant. Because we wanted to let the grogs play a big role in our Saga (their lives would be one of its focuses — we planned to even have stories with just grogs), we decided to have them be highly disciplined (cost: +1) and committed (cost: +1). We chose to have our covenfolk be functional (cost: 0). We chose a scribe as our specialist, and decided to have our companions flesh out our list of specialists by being a grog sergeant, a scholar, and a physician.



# •4 Outside World

The covenant does not exist in a vacuum. It has a history and a relation to the others around it. Some covenants have little or nothing to do with the communities around them, but most at least have commercial dealings with their neighboring folk.

To get cooperation from the common folk, magi usually pick from two tactics: friendliness or extortion. Friendly magi will use their knowledge and magic to help the common people, while extortionists will simply punish those who refuse to cooperate. In the past, extortion has proven to be an unstabilizing factor for a covenant and for the Order as a whole. It is frowned upon by the Order (and the Quaesitori in particular), and wizards engaged in such practices will be closely scrutinized and retribution will come swiftly and surely if they have gone too far.

Either the Church or the nobility can be a formidable enemy of a covenant. The Church has the ability to cancel a wizard's magical power, and the nobility have a large number of well-armed and well-trained warriors at their disposal. Together or singly, they could, given sufficient numbers, overwhelm any covenant. Even a victory over these forces would require an effort and risk that the magi would not appreciate, and would forever turn society against the Order. Strained but peaceful relations are the rule. As long as the covenant does not actively encroach on the land of the nobility or the souls of the common folk, the nobility and the Church will usually leave well enough alone. Those who break the golden rule of non-intervention, those who dare break the peace, are severely punished.

Regardless of how careful the Order is, society is constantly in flux and changes are occurring, the peace may be at an end. The Order of Dominicans grows in power during the 13th century, and their lack of tolerance for unorthodox beliefs will lead to an increase in friction between the magi and the Church. The Inquisition, though not directly aimed at the magi, will certainly include them at times, and magi may soon find it difficult to travel freely in mortal society. The age of tolerance is perhaps at an end. Those covenants built the closest to society, or that have the worst relations with it, are likely to suffer the most.

Cooperation from or competition with those around the covenant — in the "outside world" — can be an important part of a Saga, and the information the covenant has about it can be vital. Don't pick all good things; it's the bad relations that often bring the most interesting stories.

Here are some questions the covenant should ask itself: How do the magi get along with the Church or the nobility? Do the peasants tolerate the wizards? Is the covenant clueless about events in the mortal world, or does it have spies everywhere? How do wizards from other covenants look upon the covenant?

## Contacts

How much political, social, and magical information the covenant has access to can be important. If the magi receive word about a unicorn in the nearby forest (and you know what their horns are worth) that no one else has heard about, it can be invaluable.

Covenants often employ spies of one sort or another, and since this is the medieval world, employment is usually on more informal terms — though it is rumored that Windgraven has organized a highly proficient network of spies and couriers.

What is known is that the Redcaps and the Quaesitori together have a broad network of informers, which keep them informed on the state of matters in the mundane world. Wizards are requested to inform redcaps of any interesting or unusual rumors, activities, or events that they might have seen on their travels. The house Jerbiton is also rumored to know much of the goings on in the mortal world, and that they share this information with one another. Their Domus Magnus, Valnastium covenant in the Southern Alps, is known to be a clearing house for all such information. (A Domus Magnus is a home covenant of a certain house, and is the home of the Primus, the leader of that house — see the forthcoming Order of Hermes supplement for more details).

If you wish to engage in a very political and intrigue-filled Saga, it would be highly appropriate to choose one of the positive attributes in this section. Remember, information is not only the key to winning any conflict, but it is the heart of any solution.

**In the Dark -3:** You have absolutely no sources of good, regular information, and redcaps visit very rarely (they may not even know that the covenant exists). The covenant is completely cut off from the world and is the apogee of a Rumpelstiltskin institution. It may be years until you hear that there was a war or that a wizards' tribunal was called. Take -5 to your Contacts score.

**Basic Information -1:** You hear the most important news (after it's a little stale of course), but have few resources for pursuing information. Redcaps occasionally visit, but only when very important matters have to be seen to. Take -2 to your Contacts score.

**Normal Contacts 0:** You have the contacts (and perhaps spies) that you need to get the information you ask for, but you wish you had more. (Summer)

**Good Sources +1:** Besides being well informed, you have a number of spies and contacts, all you need to pursue the information you need. Add +2 to your Contacts score.

**Excellent Sources +2:** You have a number of different sources you can turn to when you need to find out something. You have friends and contacts throughout the mundane and Hermetic worlds. Add +4 to your Contacts score.

**Exceptional Sources +3:** So much information comes in from travelers, visiting troubadours, spies, contacts in high places, scrying spells, and so on that it must be sorted through by underlings before it reaches the ears of the leaders. The covenant is an information clearing house of sorts. You not only can get information you ask about, but often information simply falls into your hands. Add +6 to your Contacts score.

## Hermetic Status

Your covenant might get along well with the other covenants in your area, or you might be seen as upstarts, aggressors, fools, etc. The opinions that others in the Order have of you will influence whether they help you in times of need, ignore your calls for help, or even band against you. At tribunals, this status is essential, and plays a large part in how well others listen to you.

**Conflicted -3:** You are trying to gain power, and that means trouble. Once you have the power, things will settle down, but for now, you have a struggle with the others in the Order who don't want to give up any power to you just yet.

**Questionable -2:** Your covenant has not proven itself yet, and since you may threaten the political balance of the area, you are not trusted. You will have to show yourselves to be capable and perhaps even take sides in any ongoing conflicts to establish your loyalties.

**Respected But Powerless -1:** You are respected and well-known in the Order, but have been left behind. The important decisions and actions are made without your input.

**Normal 0:** You have normal status in the Order of Hermes. You are moderately respected, but are not terribly well known.

**Trusted +1:** The Order of Hermes respects and trusts your covenant, though it pays it little special attention. Take a +3 reputation as Trusted.

**Dominating +2:** You exert great influence on the politics of the area through strength and energy rather than prestige. While you must work hard to maintain this power, covenants will think twice before crossing you. Others, however, want your power for their own and wouldn't mind seeing you fall. At tribunals, you are a force to be reckoned with, and many will vote on your side out of a mixture of fear and respect. Take a +5 reputation as Forceful.

**Revered +3:** You have such prestige and influence in the Order that you can turn almost any political conflict to your advantage. Even if others oppose you, they will do so with great respect and will avoid embarrassing you. If any one attempts to demean your covenant or speak against you without the proper humility, then many in the Order will turn against them. Take a +7 reputation of a type of your choice.

## Mundane Relations

How a covenant gets along with other groups and individuals in society can be very important. Persecution by the nobility or the Church can hamper the magi's freedom to travel in pursuit of their goals or even threaten the covenant itself. On the other hand, cooperative people can aid the magi in many ways, including providing information about events in the area. Be sure to explain why your relations are as you choose them. You should determine how well your covenant gets along with the peasants, the nobility, and the Church. If you have worse than hostile relations with

some group, then you should treat them as an enemy and choose the appropriate attribute (see p.31)

**Hostile Church -3:** The Church is somewhat hostile towards the covenant, and would like to see it eradicated and destroyed. They make no move as of yet, for the covenant is a power to be feared, but if the chance ever presents itself, they are likely to take steps against you. No help or aid will be given to the covenant at any time, and the magi will certainly not have the benefit of church burial or the remission of sins. Those who work with the magi are threatened with excommunication, a threat which may actually be carried out.

**Hostile Nobility -2:** The local nobility seethe with resentment towards the covenant. They hate and despise the magi and would like to see them all killed. If they can ever do anything to make progress towards this goal, they will do whatever they can. Small skirmishes may take place with the nobility, but usually haughty scorn is all the covenant ever faces.

**Fearful Peasants -1:** The needs of the covenant have conflicted in the past with the needs and sensibilities of the local peasants, and they are generally against you. They are more fearful of you than hostile, but will do what little they can to hinder you. No peasant will speak with a magus, if he or she can possibly avoid it, nor sell food to a wizard or a companion. If anyone ever attacks the covenant, they could easily get the aid of the peasants.

**Little Interaction 0:** The covenant has little to do with the outside world, though you may be known in tales and by the more knowledgeable folk. The Church and nobility are certainly not friendly, but at least they are not overtly hostile. The peasants are likely to avoid you too.

**Tolerance +1:** For mutual benefit, you and the powers that be have set aside your differences as long as neither oversteps certain prescribed limits of behavior. The covenant has neutral relations with the Church, nobility, and the peasants, and is fairly well tolerated. There is little hostility or fear expressed towards the covenant, though the actions of the magi could quickly change this. You are accepted as a natural part of society (though you may not be entirely welcome at times).

**Unknown +1:** No one in the mundane world knows about you and therefore no one bothers you — but if suddenly you start making yourself known, you could be seen as a threat. You must choose other attributes that help explain why no one in the mundane world knows about your existence (is the covenant hidden underground, or located in the wilderness?). Add +3 to Watch.

**Friendly Peasants +1:** The peasants near the covenant are quite friendly towards the covenant, and look upon it favorably. The magi are perhaps seen in the same light as the nobility and are accorded great respect. The magi may have to do certain duties (pick other appropriate attributes) to stay in good favor — such as be the judges or the protectors of the community. Add +1 to Watch.

**Friendly Nobility +2:** Some of the nobles, but not all, in the region near the covenant are friendly with you. They certainly do not feel threatened by the covenant. The

wizards are frequently invited to attend weddings, tournaments, and all sorts of feasts. They treat the wizards like intriguing curiosities, strangers from an alien land, though sometimes true friendships do strike up. This is a good attribute to choose if your covenant is, like Mistridge, located in Languedoc (southern France); there the liberal Provençal culture tolerates and even encourages such interactions.

**Friendly Church +3:** The Church, or elements of it, are very friendly with the covenant. You exchange information with the monks at a local monastery, make visits to the Bishop, and attend services at the cathedral. There is a firm understanding grown up between you, and in all matters of mutual interest you meet for closed discussions. (To have this attribute, your wizards must be sympathetic to the Church and must be open believers—or at least good fakes.)

### Exempli Gratia

The outside world was important to us, because we wanted to have most of our stories concern medieval society. We wanted to be on fairly good terms with the local church and nobility, simply because we lived so near them and didn't want to constantly deal with hostile neighbors. So we chose to have the attribute of tolerance (cost: +1) which would mean, basically, that they would leave us alone. We chose to have only normal Hermes relations (cost: 0). Kira wanted to have a merchant friend (cost: +1) so that we had a good solid base of operations for our stories in the city. After a short debate, she convinced the rest of us, but in return she promised to design the city of Foix for the Saga. In order to have an enemy to focus our energy on, someone who was trying to prevent our growth, we decided to have an enemy covenant (cost: -3), which as an added bonus got rid of some of our negative points. Lisa quickly got an idea for Windgraven covenant and started working on it, while the rest of us went on to the mystical attributes section.

## Liege Lords

Some covenants are so involved in mortal society that they have become part of the feudal system. In such circumstances, they may have vassals and subjects much like a lord would.

**Manor +1:** The covenant owns a manor, including a number of serfs, as well as a knight and his family (who would make an excellent companion). The covenant likely gains much of its income and resources from this manor.

**Barony +4:** The covenant is not only a part of the feudal system, but it has achieved high recognition within it. The covenant owns the equivalent of a barony, and is very much a part of the medieval world. A barony typically contains over 40 manors, 10 of which are under the direct control of the lord, and 30 of which are owned by 15 or so knights (who are the Lord's vassals).

## Enemies

Your covenant might have enemies, people, or groups who hate the covenant and seek to destroy it. They continually plot against the covenant and thus provide an excellent aid for storytelling. Enemies must be played by the Storyguides as real threats to the covenant's well-being.

**Persecuted by Hell -5:** Satan or one of the higher devils has taken a personal dislike for the covenant and is actively persecuting all its inhabitants. This will plunge the covenant into deep and lasting conflict with the minions of Hell. If you choose this attribute, do not forget to make the demons as menacing and dangerous as is required. Remember—this is persecution, not harassment. It will be a central theme for the entire Saga.

**Enemy Covenant -3:** Another covenant is your active antagonist; it seeks to diminish the power of the covenant in any way possible.

**Open Conflict -2:** You have many active enemies (all of them small potatoes), but you have the resources to keep them at bay, most of the time. Your enemies, however, may rally for a concerted effort to destroy you.

**Conspiracy -2:** You're powerful enough to have enemies, but too powerful for them to attack you openly. Be sure, however, that they are working against you, secretly, slowly, and surely. They have formed a conspiracy, and meet regularly to plot against you. While they slowly amass power, they feign ignorance as to their plot against you.

**Powerful Enemy -2:** You have a powerful enemy. This could be a Count, a Bishop, or even a Faerie King. This enemy





wishes to harm the covenant, either for person vengeance or simply to get the covenant out of the way. Whatever the reason, your enemy is not likely to ever give up in their efforts. More than simply a nuisance, this enemy is able to create much discord and trouble for the covenant. You may wish to take this attribute, and then allow the enemy to naturally emerge over the course of the Saga.

**Grudges -1:** The flames of past conflict have shrunk to glowing coals of animosity. Your enemies do not actively pursue you, but there are many who would threaten you if it were easy or profitable.

**None 0:** You have no enemies, yet.

## Friends and Allies

Many covenants have formed friendships with other organizations in the world; some have even signed treaties and pacts. You can choose some of the following attributes more than once, e.g. you could be friendly with more than one covenant.

**Friendly Covenant +1:** You are on very good terms with one other covenant. In times of need, they are very likely to send you aid and sustenance, though you may be expected to do the same in return.

**Mystical Allies +1:** A creature of great power and potency has befriended the covenant. Perhaps it is a giant, a wyrm, or a highly intelligent unicorn. Whoever, or whatever this ally is, the covenant is greatly aided by their friendship.

**Faerie Allies +1:** You are good friends with the faeries of a nearby forest or mound. You are invited to parties and have organized a pact with them. You may even be allowed to collect *vis* on occasion, though you would certainly owe them a favor if you did.

**Merchant Friend +1:** In one of the major cities in the region, the covenant has employed a merchant to be their agent in all matters of commerce. This friend of the covenant organizes their annual purchases at the summer fair, and has it brought to the covenant. The house of the merchant is used by the magi as a place to stay when they come to town. Add +1 to the Contacts score of the covenant, due to the connections of this fellow.

**Mentor Covenant +2:** You are not only friendly with this covenant, but it is the sponsor of your covenant and offers you aid and advice above and beyond the call of friendship. When you are in desperate need, it will likely come to your aid. You should take an obligation that makes sense of why they continue to aid you so strongly.

## Reputation

Each covenant has an identity, a reputation, a certain individual character. Though covenants often outlive individual magi, they maintain constant reputations. Magi of a certain sort attract other magi of like nature, so that when the originals die, they leave behind others like them. On the other hand, if your covenant is young, it might have yet to make a reputation for itself.

This can be a reputation among a certain group of people. You can choose different reputations for different groups of people. Some groups you might wish to have a reputation with are the Order of Hermes, the common folk (in the region around the covenant), or the Church.

**Abysmal Reputation -1:** The covenant is very well known, but not under a favorable light. Visitors from the covenant are likely to be received with fear, anger, or contempt. Take three different +3 reputations (with negative connotations) among three different groups of people.

**Neutral Reputation 0:** Though there may be stories circulating about the covenant, both good and bad, no strong reputation has yet been formed, though a reputation may later appear.

**Excellent Reputation +1:** The covenant achieved wide renown, and is held in high favor by certain groups of people. Visitors from the covenant are likely to be treated with courtesy and may even be offered special hospitality. Take three different reputations of +3 (with positive connotations) among three different groups of people. If you want one of the reputations to be among a wider group (such as all of Languedoc), you can only have two. If it is to be among all of Europe, you can only have one reputation.



# •5 Mystical Attributes

Most covenants have some sort of mystical attributes. After all, these are the homes of wizards, who are wielders of mighty magics; some of it is bound to "rub off" on the covenant itself. Mystical attributes can be natural to the area itself or enchanted items made by the wizards.

*Here are some questions the troupe should ask itself: How large is the arcane library? What shape are the laboratories in? Does the covenant have magical artifacts and if so what kind?*

## Arcane Library

The library is vital to beginning magi as it will greatly speed their education. Especially in older covenants, access to the library might be restricted. You pick the spells that you have written down in the library by adding together their levels, and not exceeding the amount allowed by your selected attribute. When the attribute calls for a die, you make a simple roll, and record the result as the library level in that art.

**None -5:** Your covenant has no arcane library (which is very rare — did it only recently get destroyed?).

**Pathetic -3:** Three arts with 1 die each. 20 Levels of spells.

**Poor -1:** One die for all the arts. 50 levels of spells.

**Standard 0:** 1 die +5 in three arts, 1 die in the rest. 100 Levels of spells.

**Good +1:** 1 die +7 in three arts, 1 die +2 in the others. 200 levels of spells.

**Restricted +2:** The covenant has an outstanding library, but its access is severely restricted to the older magi. Only the younger magi who do favors for the older ones will be allowed to study from it (and only a few seasons at a time).

**Excellent +3:** 1 die +10 in three arts, 1 die +5 in the others. 300 Levels of spells.

**Outstanding +5:** 1 die +12 in three arts, 1 die +8 in the others. 500 Levels of spells.

**Remarkable +7:** 1 die +14 in three arts, 1 die +11 in the rest. 600 Levels of spells.

## Magical Laboratories

The quality of your equipment can greatly affect a wizard's ability in the lab. Acquiring better labs could require an extended expedition — they don't just grow on trees!

**Dangerous -5:** Your lab equipment is so fragile and antiquated that it is dangerous to use — the covenant laboratories are horrible places to work in. You are always considered to be experimenting. Take -5 on Lab totals, and roll two extra botch rolls.

**Inadequate -2:** Gain a -3 penalty to all your Lab totals. This inadequacy is often due to the practice of shared laboratories, whereby two wizards share the same lab, but invariably get in each other's way.

**Shared Laboratories -2:** Laboratory equipment is so scarce that at least four magi share each lab, and they all can't use it at the same time. Only two of them can use it at one time, so the players have to decide among themselves who uses it each season. A wizard who does not have access to a lab can still study from the library, can do any sort of scribing, can look for or train an apprentice, or can (of course) go on an expedition.

**Superior/Inadequate -1:** That means superior labs for the leaders & inadequate labs for underlings (beginning magi). You have to advance far in status and influence before you are allowed a superior lab — until you do, your laboratory is definitely considered inadequate. This attribute cannot be taken in a covenant consisting only of player-characters.

**Standard 0:** The labs of your covenant function normally.

**Well Equipped +1:** Because your lab is so well equipped, you gain +1 to your Lab totals.

**Superior +3:** Because of the excellent manufacture of your lab equipment, as well as the plethora of different devices that you have in it, gain a +3 bonus to all your Lab totals.

**Excellent +5:** Your lab equipment is of the finest manufacture in the world, and included many an apparatus that is found only in your laboratories (they were perhaps invented by one of the magi). These labs give you +5 to all your Lab totals and allow you to make one less botch roll (though you always make at least one).

### Exempli Gratia

We weren't all that interested in magical resources — not because we didn't find them interesting or useful (on the contrary), but because we were running out of positive points (we only had two left). So we took it really easy in this section, and were very careful which attributes we chose. We almost went back and changed our earlier purchases, but in the end we decided to stay with what we had chosen.

In order to get rid of some of our negative points, we decided to take inadequate labs (cost: -2). It wouldn't be a lot of fun, and it would let our enemies at Windgraven advance in the arts faster than us, but we had to get rid of those points. Our library would be pathetic (cost: -3), another thing which would hurt us sorely in the future. In the end, we couldn't afford to take any magical artifacts, though that disappointed a lot of the troupe. We could only hope that we could obtain some later on in the Saga. We took an average Aegis of the Hearth, only a +15 (cost: 0). With some misgivings, we went on to the Mundane Resources section.

## Magical Artifacts

These are the magical artifacts and devices the covenant possesses as well as any natural magical effects of the covenant. They can be a great boon to the running of the covenant. We cannot list every magical attribute you might want to include with your covenant, but we give you enough examples so you can roughly calculate the artifact's cost using them as a scale to measure by.

**None 0:** You have no magical items at your covenant.

**Natural Enchantment or Minor Enchantment +1:** There is some sort of natural enchantment at the covenant which the magi have little or no control over, but which can be used for beneficial purposes if used correctly (ie. a magical wind which blows up a cliff could be used to provide conveyance up the cliff face if the proper transportation device was created). A minor enchantment of some sort can also be obtained at this price.

**Average Enchantment +2:** The covenant has a device or enchantment of average magical power.

**Moderate Enchantment +3** One or two useful things created to protect the covenant, such as a warning signal or a fierce beast that prowls the woods outside the covenant, looking for trespassers (meals). (Summer)

**Major Magical Enchantment +4:** The covenant possesses a magical device or enchantment of great value and power.

**Extreme Magical Enchantment +5:** The covenant has a powerful magical enchantment, with extreme powers.

### Examples:

**Shrouded +1:** The covenant has the spell, Incantation of the Shrouded Glen, permanently cast about it, therefore uninvited visitors are rare. +1 to Watch.

**Friendly Forest +1:** The covenant is protected by a circle of preternaturally thick and tough forest, that slowly moves in on people who stop while walking through it, and constantly changes the paths that run through it. Some who walk through the forest, and are not friendly towards the covenant, may find themselves on a path that never ends. +1 to Watch.

**Mist +1:** The covenant is perpetually surrounded by mist, and its entrance cannot easily be seen. This may be what prevents others from knowing about the covenant.

**Magical Illumination +1:** There are devices to create light throughout the covenant.

**Scrying Pool +1:** The covenant possesses a scrying pool, which allows a wizard to peer at locations far away. This works in a similar fashion to the spell, Enchantment of the Scrying Pool (InAq 30).

**Minor magics +1:** The covenant has a small number (up to 6) of very minor magical enchantments, of dubious value—such as weird traps, talking statues, or self opening doors.

**Alarms +2:** There are a few alarms found in the covenant, which warn about intruders. It could be talking gargoyles or a bell that rings when a stranger walks in. +2 to Watch.



**Copper Door +2:** There is a magical door in the covenant, made of copper. This door protects the covenant by being unable to be opened by any who do not know the secret password (or magical incantation/spontaneous spell). If someone attempts to bash down the door, they will have great difficulties because of its strength. Add +1 to Defense.

**Invisibility +2:** The covenant is completely invisible, though it is detectable by magical means. This is less useful than it might sound, because word of such a magical castle would travel fast and far. Still, in certain circumstances invisibility could prove to be quite practical.

**Cauldron +2:** The covenant has a magical cauldron which doubles the amount of whatever is cooked in it, including potions. Often used for cooking food for the covenfolk.

**Magical Map +2:** The covenant has a magical map of a certain region that changes as things change in real life; thus it is always accurate. This map could be woven into a carpet, scratched onto a wall, or appear in a magical pool. The map can display a region of any size (from a city to all of Europe), but physically it is not more than 5 feet across; and thus for a large sized region, all detail would be lost.

**Guardian +3:** There is a magical guardian of the covenant, a large creature with great powers. It could be a pair of stone golems that stand on either side of the main gate, or a group of trolls that live in the forest outside of it. The power of the guardian should not exceed 70 combat factors (that is, the Atk, Def, Dam, & Soak scores combined). Increase your Defense by +1.

**Decayed Devices +3:** The covenant may have numerous (not more than 6) protective and useful enchantments and devices (all of +1 cost or lower), but all of them are broken, worn out, or working in quite peculiar ways. Occasion-



ally, they may even backfire and harm those who are using them. Additionally, you may have up to 6 very minor magical artifacts of dubious worth, also all decayed, such as weird traps, talking statues, or self opening doors.

**Sealed Gate +3:** A certain portal in the covenant is completely sealed, and cannot be opened by anyone other than three of the covenant magi enacting the ritual together (a scroll about this ritual is found in the arcane library). Treat it as a level 80 ReTe spell, if someone attempts to break it down.

**Magical mounts +3:** You have 1-10 magical mounts (perhaps in addition to your other mounts) which not only will accept a magus riding upon it, but have a special magical attribute as well. Roll a stress die and consult the chart below for each mount:

**Botch:** The mount is a griffin and can fly with a rider. It's very unruly and aggressive and has an enormous appetite after it's been flying. You need a Ride ability of at least 3 to even mount it, and must continually make Ride rolls to stay mounted.

**0:** The horse is both intelligent and evil tempered, and will not allow anyone but one particular rider to mount it. It delights in making well placed kicks at grogs (or important dignitaries) who stand too close to it.

**1-3:** The horse looks like a pony, but is as strong and can carry as much as a large draft horse.

**4-5:** The horse has a huge stamina. It can run all day without resting.

**6-7:** The horse is intelligent and can speak, but usually will only speak to the grogs, never to the magi or companions (those foolish grogs, thinking a horse can talk!).

**8:** Horse has fangs and eats meat. Damage is +18 for a bite.

**9:** Horse can jump twice as far as a normal horse, and has astounding agility.

**10:** Horse is extremely large, and can carry a huge sized human. It is over 17 hands tall.

**11+:** The mount is a Pegasus, and can fly, but the rider must have a Ride ability of at least 3 and must continually make Ride rolls to stay mounted.

to cast, and this attribute is the easiest way to get use of it. (Ritual spells, in general, cost 1 attribute point per 20 levels of the spell.)

**Golden Ship +5:** The covenant owns a golden ship that can fly, as well as sail in the sea. It requires the use of spontaneous Auram magic to employ, a Rego Auram spell of 50th level is enough to make it take off, and a Rego Auram of level 15 is enough to have it change course, using winds that are already present. Only one covenant in the Order of Hermes is known to have such a ship, and they use it infrequently (at least in the air) to avoid condemnation by the Church.

**Demon Ward +5:** This works in a similar fashion as the faerie ward, only it protects against demons. It does not, however, work against the demons of the highest three echelons (luckily these demons almost never tread the earth).

## Source of Raw Vis

Some covenants are lucky enough to have ready sources of raw *vis*, such as trees that bear magical fruit or springs that run with magical water. If you want to have lots of stories about hunting for raw *vis*, don't take a raw *vis* source. If you don't want the pressure of constantly finding *vis* to support your lab activities, take a generous source. Remember that after a while, it gets boring to always be on the prowl for *vis*. Each source of *vis* can only be of one variety, but you can take as many different sources as you would like.

## Protected Vis

The *vis* that is described below is protected *vis*, which is found upon or very near the covenant grounds (assuming it is a magical area). There are a variety of forms which it might take, but it is important to note that the *vis* is an attribute of the mystical nature of the site from which it springs, and is simply not found everywhere. This is a guaranteed source of *vis* — the covenant will receive it once a year on a certain season (possibly on a mystical, auspicious night of some sort). It is possible that someday the covenant may lose this source of *vis*, due to changes provoked or not prevented by the covenant. Protected *vis* implies a certain level of actual protection.

**No vis 0:** The covenant has no regular supply of protected *vis*.

**Meager Supply +1:** The covenant receives 10 points of *vis* per year, of any variety (choose at beginning of the Saga).

**Regular Supply +2:** The covenant receives 20 *vis* a year, of any variety (choose at beginning of the Saga).

**Plentiful supply +3:** The covenant receives 30 *vis* a year, of any variety (choose at beginning of the Saga).

**Extravagant supply +4:** The covenant receives 40 *vis* a year, of any variety (choose at beginning of the Saga).

**Lots-O-Vis +5:** The covenant receives 50 *vis* a year, of any variety (choose at beginning of the Saga).

**The Bell of Calebais +4:** Check our adventure, *The Broken Covenant of Calebais*, for details. The bell includes 12 diadems. (We include this only for reference as to the worth of this famous artifact.)

**Faerie Ward +4:** A magical ward covers the entire covenant and prevents faeries from entering it, no matter how powerful. However, it must be renewed each year in a ritual ceremony, on the Summer Solstice, and if that ceremony is interrupted, the ward fails.

**Portal +4:** There is a magical portal at the covenant that leads to one other place (as per the spell *Hermes Portal*, ReTe 75). People can also use it to return to the covenant. This is an excellent way to conduct stories in two different (entirely unrelated) locales — such as Languedoc and Ireland. The spell itself is very difficult to find, as well as

## Contested Vis

The other sort of *vis* you can choose is contested *vis*, which is not at all guaranteed or protected. Contested *vis* is claimed by someone or something other than the covenant, and the covenant will not always receive it. Each year, the covenant must send a representative to collect the *vis* (usually entailing a short story), who must engage in some sort of contest (whether it be a fight, *certámen*, or trading riddles). The outcome of the contest should be based on the ability and the cunning of the contestants. I suggest that you don't require a story every time to get the *vis*, but that you have some quick way to resolve it. Some examples of contested *vis* are *certámen* with a magus from a rival covenant, an insult or joke contest with the Faerie King's jester, combat with a powerful troll, a dream adventure at a magical spring, or a yearly wager with a bored dragon.

**No *vis* 0:** The covenant has no regular supply of contested *vis*.

**Minor Supply +1:** The covenant may receive 20 *vis* a year, of any variety (choose at beginning of the Saga).

**Major Supply +2:** The covenant may receive 40 *vis* a year, of any variety (choose at beginning of the Saga).

**Outrageous Supply +3:** The covenant may receive 60 *vis* a year, of any variety (choose at beginning of the Saga).

## Aegis of the Hearth

If you do have an Aegis, the cost per year for the *vis* is not a requirement for you to procure. It is assumed that it simply comes from the stores of *vis* collected each year on the covenant grounds. However, if you wish to make it an obligation to find and collect

this *vis* each year, it makes a lot of sense. You may later wish to increase your Aegis. In such a case, a character would have to learn it, you would have to acquire the spell from another covenant, or you could use the normal procedure for changing attributes (see p. 42).

**No Aegis -2:** Your covenant has no Aegis of the Hearth (at least not written into the library, though a character may have it in their private grimoire).

**Low Aegis -1:** Your Aegis is +5.

**Average Aegis 0:** Your Aegis is +15.

**Good Aegis +1:** Your Aegis is +25.

**High Aegis +2:** Your Aegis is +35.

**Extraordinary Aegis +3:** Your Aegis is +45.

## Other Details

**Haunted -2:** The covenant is haunted by a collection of strange ghosts, some of which were undoubtedly magi.

**Demons Infested -3:** Demons frequently "visit" the covenant, and cause strife and conflict among the inhabitants. The magi may not even know of this, because the demons may be invisible, but soon they should learn of it. Later on, the demons may come in force. Why do they come?

**Faerie Plagued -2:** Faeries are constantly found at the covenant, causing mischief and generally making things chaotic for the magi. All characters should roll for an extra botch any time they zero out on a roll when inside the covenant (this includes laboratory work).

# •6 Mundane Resources

While magical resources (such as the arcane library) weigh most heavily on the minds of the magi, mundane resources are necessary as well. The covenant needs a constant supply of food and basic goods to keep it going. The magi could make these things on their own, but it would require the expenditure of time and raw *vis*, the magical power that magi find highly valuable to their work and study.

Most covenants get their food and such from nearby communities, much as the nobility and the Church do. Either they have cooperative relations with the local peasants, or they actually own the land as nobles do. In either case, some work must be done in cultivating the favor of the peasants or at least administering the area. Magi often have friends of the covenant to see to such mundane details.

The magi need many specialty items for their daily work, including ink, fine tools, parchment, glassware, etc. If they are not near an area where they can purchase these, they regularly take trips to areas where they can buy them. Sometimes merchants make special arrangements with a covenant and bring a yearly or seasonal caravan of goods to the covenant. However, remember

that this is the Middle Ages and people were far more self-sufficient than we are today. A large covenant would have its own artisans: its own carpenters, glassblowers, masons, and weaponsmiths. They might even have their own mine. As long as they have a local source of food, they would not need much from the outside world.

*Questions the troupe should ask itself: Where do you get your food (farms, imports, herding, magic)? Where do you get your supplies from? How well equipped are you? Do you have a merchant friend at the nearby city who takes care of your business, or are you mostly self-sufficient? Be sure to keep in mind the choices you've already made for your covenant's relations, and how they may affect your mundane resources.*

## Mundane Library

The mundane library can cover all non-magical knowledges. Magi and educated companions can study from a library and thereby increase their knowledge scores. Also, one can use the library to look up a piece of information and make a knowledge roll using the library's score as a bonus in place of one's own, even after you have already made a roll to see if you knew the informa-

tion. If you spend a season doing research, you may add the library score to your own and then make a roll to see what you know. This is often work that more established covenants leave to hired scholars.

**No Library -2:** You have no mundane library at all; your shelves are empty. (Spring)

**Inadequate -1:** The library is inadequate for the purposes of research, take 10 experience points in various knowledges.

**Modest Library 0:** Take 3 different knowledges and make a simple roll on the Mundane Library chart for each to see what level you have in that area.

**Map Room +1:** The covenant has a large collection of maps of the world, and has many maps of the region surrounding the covenant. Some maps may even contain secrets of great value, if only they could be deciphered. To see if the map room contains a map of your choice, make a simple roll—if you get an 8+, the map is there.

**Excellent Library +2:** Take 10 different knowledges and make a simple roll on the Mundane Library chart for each to see what level your library has in that area. You also have an experienced cadre of librarians who can aid the magi in usefully employing the library.

**Decaying Library +2:** A potentially wonderful library is falling apart due to the lack of care. Roll as you would for an Excellent Library, but make a stress roll instead of a simple one, with a result over 10 indicating a level 5 in that area and a zero indicating the books in that area have decayed beyond readability. With some reconstructive work, there might be even more knowledge here for the finding. Some books are priceless due to their age and authorship, though it may be difficult to locate exactly where in the library they've been put.

### Mundane Library Chart

Simple Roll	Knowledge level
1-2	1
3-5	2
6-7	3
8-9	4
0	5

## Equipment

A covenant is assumed to have adequate equipment for its needs, including tools, rope, camping equipment, and so on. You can decide to have more or less equipment however. This is mostly important for expeditions, when the variety and quality of the equipment can sometimes make the difference between success and failure.

**Inferior Equipment -1:** The covenant has little more than the basic supplies available, such as rope and torches.

**Standard Equipment 0:** The covenant has most of the tools useful for explorations, such as pulleys, lamps, and sturdy packs. It also owns many amenities for the covenant itself, including a forge and a carpentry shop. It may own a few small boats (less than 10 feet long) as well.

**Worn Out 0:** Most of the useful supplies are available, including some rare and valuable items, but everything

is worn with age. Equipment will break easily and with regularity. Nothing new can be obtained or built, certainly nothing of a character's design. (Winter)

**Excellent Equipment +1:** You have practically anything you could ever want or need on an expedition. Even if the covenant does not have it in stock, it can be manufactured quickly in one of the many workshops at the covenant by a skilled craftsman—even such things as siege machines or water mills. Characters can design a new piece of equipment and have it built for them (but remember that this is the Middle Ages—certain things, such as wall clocks, simply cannot or would not be made). The covenant owns a number of small boats; include a few 10 feet in length.

### What a covenant needs regular supplies of (and thus, what it needs money for):

- Food
- Sheepskin (for making parchment)
- Armor & weapons, unless they have a skilled weaponsmith
- Ink & quills (use special quills, such as ostrich feathers, for writing magical texts)
- Cloth, from which their servants can make clothing
- Leather (for binding books and making clothes)
- Glassware (for the laboratories)
- Precision alchemist tools & equipment
- Exotic materials of all sorts (for rituals and enchantments), e.g. frog warts, ostrich feathers, Bavarian agates, and porcupine needles.

## Source of Income

A covenant must have some way through which it can obtain regular supplies of food, wine (or ale), weapons, and laboratory equipment.

Where does the money come from? Is it taxes collected from the local fishing village, a silver mine, taxes collected from merchants travelling on a local road, the selling of magic potions to the local burghers and nobility, or actually earning a living through exploring ancient ruins and slaying fell beasts? Trade does exist between covenants, and many of the wealthier ones would be glad to trade silver and gold for rare spell components and *vis*.

Covenants are assumed to have some source of income. When magi set up their covenants, they are sure to find a way to support their turf and themselves, whether it be a mine they discovered with magic, or a toll charged on the mountain pass they built. With their magical powers, obtaining money is usually not difficult, even though wizards do not value it much.

You must decide how your covenant gets its money. It could own farmland and serfs that bring it food and enough goods to trade. The magi might handle such transactions personally, or



they could have reeves see to such matters. Determining the source of your income can plant the seed for later adventures, especially when enemies attack your economic roots.

If you want, you can decide that money will not be important in your Saga and that the covenant is always assumed to have enough for ordinary expenses and excursions. The Storyguide will intervene when the covenant attempts to fund any major undertakings, but the coins in the coffers are left uncounted. If you like keeping track of money, however, it's easy to do so. Determine expendable income for the covenant and keep track of expenses from adventures.

**Impoverished -3:** You have no regular source of income, and must scrounge for silver every time you wish to purchase anything at all. The essential supplies of the covenant, such as food and basic repair materials are taken care of, but there is no money for anything else.

**Poor -2:** You have very little money, and magi should not spend more than 50 silver pennies on each journey they undergo. Finding a larger supply of steady income may be the goal of a whole series of stories.

**Reserves -1:** You still have ten thousand silver coins in your coffers, but no way to replenish those reserves once it's gone. Some day it will run out, and you will have to find some more, somewhere, somehow.

**Contested Source of Income -1:** Perhaps another covenant, nobles, or even a heinous beast of some sort hinders the covenant in the easy collection of money. Each year, when the income is collected, there is a contest or fight of some sort — this should be roleplayed out (or alternatively, a roll could be made). If the covenant fails, that will be a year of impoverishment, grog Morale will go down by 3, and magi will have to go on expeditions with little or no silver in their purses.

**Comfortable 0:** Magi can pretty much spend as much as they wish, but they cannot afford to purchase anything particularly ostentatious (like Persian rugs).

**Wealthy +1:** The covenant has quite a bit of money and the characters can purchase anything of normal value that they please. There is not enough money for expensive items such as ornate jewelry or hunting lodges.

**Extravagant +3:** Don't worry about money; the characters can pretty much spend as much as they want. The magi can live extremely luxurious life styles, if they so please. If the characters are underlings, they may have to report and explain some of their particularly extravagant expenses. On an expedition, the magi can bring along enough money to actually buy themselves a townhouse to stay in when they visit a city.

## Mounts

Some covenants support stables and a small herd of horses. Though most magi are themselves unable to ride (due to the sensitivity of animals to Hermetic magic) companions and even grogs may use horses.

**No Mounts 0:** Your covenant, like most, has no mounts. Remember animals usually do not like magi, especially

horses, so wizards do not usually keep them around.

**Poorly Mounted +1:** The covenant has some horses, and a small stable, enough for a few of the companions to be mounted (not more than five). Some of the mounts are not even horses, but are donkeys or mules. The covenant certainly has a few pack-mules to use on expeditions.

**Well Mounted +2:** The covenant has a large stable, with enough horses for all the companions and a few of the grogs (so there can be a roving patrol). Add +1 to Watch.

**Special Mounts +2:** This attribute is taken in addition to one of the other mounts attributes. It simply means that there are a few mounts who have been specially bred to accept a magical rider, such as a magus. These horses are somewhat magical in nature and would be worth a great deal to other magi (there is even a danger that they might be stolen).

**Superbly Mounted +3:** The covenant has such extensive stables and a selection of mounts, that practically every person at the covenant can be mounted at one time. (Note: Even the wizards can ride, if they are not offensive to animals — see the Virtues section of *Ars Magica*). Add +1 to Watch.

## Exempli Gratia

The mundane resources of the covenant were not a top priority, but we certainly didn't want to be impoverished. We had two positive points left to spend, and this was our last chance to use them up, without having to go back to earlier sections. We chose to take an inadequate mundane library (cost: -1), simply because it would match our arcane library. At this point John commented that the exalted Mistrudge library was probably just a bookshelf in the council room — that seemed to make a lot of sense, so Nicole wrote it down. We took excellent equipment (cost: +1) because we didn't want to worry about what we needed during an expedition. Since we wanted to focus on roleplaying, we didn't want to have to concern ourselves with getting a hold of specialized equipment. We also decided to be wealthy (cost: +1), for exactly the same reasons. Mark came up with the idea of a silver mine in the mountains, and was assigned the task of fleshing it out for the Saga. While he was scribbling down his ideas, we went on to the last section, Obligations. (Only later in the Saga would we discover the mystical pool within Mount Tierné.)

## Ships

Many covenants are located near the sea or near a river, and require some sort of water craft. Boats in these times do not come cheap, so they must be purchased as an attribute. The covenant will own a dock of some sort which is located in a sheltered harbor. This may be located near the covenant (if possible) or nearby, perhaps even in a close city. If the boats are wrecked, the covenant will probably have enough in its coffers to buy another after a year (unless your Saga dictates otherwise).

**Boat +1:** The covenant owns a small vessel, not more than 30 feet long, which is capable of sea travel (but is not especially seaworthy). It could simply be a large river barge

—if so it can be very well crafted with numerous cabins (otherwise it has no cabins, and is an open vessel). It safely holds up to 10 people for up to two weeks. The covenant also owns a number of other small vessels, such as row boats or perhaps a small barge.

**Ship +2:** The covenant owns a large, seagoing vessel, at least 50 feet long, but not more than 80, with a mast and

perhaps with oars as well. It can hold several tons of cargo, and is relatively swift. It has several enclosed cabins, and is very sturdy. Some of the grogs are trained sailors and can sail the vessel expertly. It can safely hold up to 35 people for up to month at a time. The covenant also owns several small tenders, 10 foot long boats, and the other equipment necessary to the sailing and upkeep of such a boat.

## •7 Obligations

Obligations require raw *vis* or time on a yearly basis. These obligations represent what the covenant needs to do in order to be sustained. Obligations may be how a covenant supplies itself with income or how it pays off a debt incurred when the covenant was founded. If an obligation is not obliged, then dire retribution may come to the covenant. The Storyguide should be sure to punish the covenant, if the magi ignore their obligations. A covenant is always intricately bound in the world around it, and obligations represent the way in which it finds itself limited and beholden to others. This is your chance to get rid of all those extra negative points that you haven't found a place for yet.

*Here are some questions the troupe should ask itself: How many negative points are left to be spent? Does the troupe want a large number of obligations? Is the covenant deeply obligated to others? Should the magi have to waste a season each year on covenant business?*

### Time

For various reasons, the player-magi might have to interrupt their studies. Possibilities include participating in Order of Hermes councils and such; working for other groups, such as nobility; and running the covenant itself. A certain amount of time for normal magi obligations has already been computed into the things a magi can complete in one season, but this aspect represents additional, abnormal obligations.

**Potions -3:** The wizards must each produce one batch of potions each year for sale to the mortals in order to keep the covenant running. Thus, one season a year is always spent on work for the covenant.

**Commitment of Time -3:** As payment for being allowed in the covenant, each magus must work one season per year as a scribe, diplomat, supervisor, lab assistant, or the like. Each magus character only has 3 seasons a year to use on productive study; one season is always spent on these tasks for the covenant.

**Divination -2:** The magi must spend one season answering the questions of mortals, or divining their future. This work may bring in useful information, however. +2 to Contacts score.

**Judge -1:** The magi must serve as judges for the common folk of a certain region. These simple folk (farmers, shepherds, fishermen etc.) rely on the magi to dispense justice.

The covenant must always have a magus with those common folk, therefore each magi will lose a season of study every few years. Usually only the young (i.e., player) magi are forced to fulfill this onerous duty.

**Free 0:** You can spend your time as you like.

### Raw Vis

Some covenants need annual expenditures of raw *vis* to keep them going. Maybe this is out of an obligation to other magi, who might have provided the site for the covenant or some of the covenant's resources. Perhaps there is a magical gate to Hell which needs to be kept firmly shut with *vis*. Determine why you are expending the raw *vis* so you will know what goes wrong on any year that you fail to do so. *Vis* spent to power normal protective rituals, such as the Aegis of the Hearth, are in addition to any other raw *vis* obligation. The need for raw *vis* can be a source of story ideas, as the magi must continually hunt down new sources of magic. On the other hand, it can limit story possibilities if the magi must continually adventure to quench their appetite for *vis* and have less time to pursue other goals. Most covenants do not owe *vis*, or if they do, it is assumed to be covered by the regular sources of *vis*. If yours does, make sure you balance it out with something good.

**Vis Obligation -1:** The covenant must expend 10 points of *vis* yearly as rent, fuel for protective enchantments, protection money, etc. You can take this obligation in multiple units, thus you could have a *vis* obligation of 50 *vis* points yearly, for an attribute cost of -5.

#### If you want to worry about money, here are some travel costs (in silver pennies)

Travel, per person, per day	1
private room for two, in an inn, per day	2
passage on a ship, per person, per day	3
pay per companion, per day	5
pay per grog, with combat pay, per day	5
replace slain grog	100

## Exempli Gratia

Well we still had two negative points left, so we had to fill up on Obligations. This didn't worry us very much, because we figured they would give our Saga its flavor. We ended up taking Protection (cost: -1) because it fit in so well with our silver mine. Mark had already imagined that there were goblins giving the miners trouble, so we made protecting the miners into an attribute. With only one negative point left, we decided to pick Favors (cost: -1), only no one could figure who we owed a favor to. We were stuck until John came up with the idea that our characters didn't know either. The founder of the covenant had made some bargain with some entity when she created the covenant, and some day in the future that creature would come to us to collect.

With that we were done designing our covenant. We took a short break and started on the assorted details. Kira and Nicole went to work on rolling up a few grogs, Lisa began to write the covenant history, and I began to write the first story, "The Mayday Curse". There was a lot more work to do, but we had split it up so no one person would be overloaded. We decided that by our next game session, we would have an overview of each of our areas written up and would present them to the troupe. The Mistrudge Saga had begun.

**Protection -1:** The covenant must protect something or someone against attack, such as a village, a creature, a tribe, or even a tree. It is the responsibility of the covenant to protect this person or thing, and failure to do so will lead to dire consequences. This is an excellent excuse for a story. Each year make a simple roll, on an 8+, something happens.

## Other Features

In addition to all the practical decisions you make about your covenant, you can make up any number of details. Just as personal details flesh out a character, so do such details let a covenant come alive. You will want to decide a number of mundane details, such as where the covenant obtains its supplies, where the grogs eat, what the grog marching song is like, or what the most common curse word among the covenfolk is (perhaps it's the name of a wizard). You should decide who runs the mundane aspects of the covenant, who leads the grogs, and who makes sure the supplies are ordered. You should figure out who supervises the covenfolk, how council meetings are called, how the wizards treat one another, and how disputes between wizards are handled. Following are some more general features that also need to be considered:

## Other Details

**Ally -1:** You have an ally and if that ally is in trouble, you are committed to helping them. If they are committed as well as able to aid you in return, in a time of crisis, then this cannot be considered an obligation and is worth no points. This attribute is only for an ally who will not or is unable to assist you substantially in return for your assistance.

**Superiors -1:** You are obliged to follow the specific commands of your superiors, the older magi in the covenant. Their commands may range from the petty to the outlandish, though usually they will have to do with the functioning and survival of the covenant.

**Humiliation -1:** Each year, all the magi are forced to humiliate themselves in some way, appearing before some person or group of people. This should give the covenant some kind of poor reputation (because of people laughing at them) with the Order of Hermes or some other relevant group. This could be very a very silly requirement of a decadent Baron (one whose land the covenant is built on) or it could be the very serious demand of a magus who bested the covenant's founder in *certámen*.

**Favors -1:** You owe favors to someone of importance, or maybe to a great many different people. The people could ask for a favor at any time, and they are not likely to ask for something easy. The pride and reputation of the covenant are at stake, and the characters must comply if at all possible.

**Missions -1:** The covenant must make a simple roll each year and get a 5+ or be forced to go on some mission to upkeep their supply of income or *vis*.

**Covenant History:** How did the covenant get to where it is today? What has happened in the past that might affect the future. What is the background of the covenant, was it ever located somewhere other than where it is today. In the past, who has it sided with at tribunals? Who were its enemies or its friends in days past? Are there any black marks in its history, any events that simply are not spoken of? History can often be a great lead into a story, and can provide the entire Saga with a special feeling of realism.

**Covenant Charter:** You could write up your covenant's charter, using the one provided in this supplement as an example, and then have all the magi sign it. This can add a sense of realism to the Saga, and can provide for a useful document for magi to "lawyer" about at council meetings.

**Covenant Emblem:** Almost all covenants have an emblem of some sort — often it is a badge or a brand put on the grogs' armor. It is sometimes referred to as the "covenant sigil" by older wizards, though use of that term is slowly diminishing in favor of "covenant emblem."

**House Alignment:** Many covenants are heavily associated with one particular house of the Order of Hermes (see p. 35 of *ArS Magica*, as well as our upcoming supplement, *The Order of Hermes™*). You should decide whether your covenant is aligned with one house or another, and then decide which house it is to be. Encourage the players when creating their magi characters to choose that house as their characters' house, or you may even make it a requirement (some covenants are entirely composed of wizards from one house).





# The Covenant in Play

Rivalries between magi can be very destructive to the covenant, though they can turn into very exciting and involving stories. We suggest that you avoid any clashes that weaken the covenant, and discourage others (both as a player and as a character) from taking actions that would do so. The covenant, is, after all, the most important "character" and it would be a shame to cripple it in the process of having a good time. Intense rivalries also tend to sour friendships between players and act to destroy the unity of the troupe. We have seen cases where a rivalry has escalated to such a degree that the entire Saga came to an end. While I personally find such rivalry to be the most interesting of roleplaying, it must always be contained. Allow rivalry between characters, but make it clear that all the characters must put the covenant first — the characters should all be loyal towards their home.

## Improving the Covenant

As you play, the covenant will develop and improve over time. As rule of thumb, it costs 1000 silver pennies or 100 raw vis points to "buy" one point worth of covenant resources, that is to buy a new positive attribute or pay off a negative one. (Note: if one of your attributes is having regular supplies of money or *vis*, then that supply cannot be used to buy an attribute). Usually this "buying" means some kind of investment, not actual purchase, and it almost always entails some sort of story. Sometimes it requires no loss of money or raw *vis* at all, only the equivalent value in some form of service. Be sure to rationalize changes instead of just changing numbers — all improvements should require some sort of effort on the part of the characters. Covenant improvements make for excellent rewards for a story, as all of the characters benefit equally (plus it makes the adventurers "returning heroes" when they get back to the covenant). If these covenant improvements are made a complete part of a story and are achieved through successful roleplaying, the cost can be cut in half or given without the money or *vis* cost. I encourage you to make all improvements part of a story, as rewards for a job well done. Use the *vis* and silver costs listed above only as a general guide to how difficult it is to improve a covenant (for difficult it is indeed).

As time goes by, the Seasons will change as well. One of the hardest things to do will be to decide when your covenant moves onto another Season. The numbers won't change, no attributes will change — nothing real, in fact, will change, all you will be doing is acknowledging that the covenant has progressed and changed. If you think the covenant has moved into another Season, mention it to the troupe and see what everyone else has to say. If you all agree, then the covenant indeed is in a new Season. If most of the troupe disagrees, you can still keep your own opinion. In the Order of Hermes, there are frequent debates over which covenants are Autumn, which are Summer, and which have moved into Winter. If the magi can't agree, why should you?

## Incidents

If you have no story prepared and are at a loss for something to do, it's always fun to have something happen to the covenant. Such "incidents" can be instant adventures. Covenants are often embroiled in the events of the world, and magi may be forced to leave their sanctuary and take definite action — sometimes they don't even have to leave, they simply have to take action. Below, there are three charts of random incidents that can involve the covenant. They include Political, Mystical, and Hermetic incidents. Simply make a stress roll on the chart of your choice and interpret the result to your Saga. Some troupes make a simple roll every year for each type of incident. If they roll a 0, they roll again on one of the charts below to see what kind of incident occurs. Even if you do not actually roll on these tables, you can scan them for ideas to help you come up with your own stories.

## Political Incidents

**Botch — Plague:** e.g. A plague sweeps across the countryside, devastating the political and economic structure of society, and even the covenant is put into peril. Who in the covenant comes down with the plague, and how do the characters attempt to combat it and cure the victims? This could be a very frightening and taxing story, and it will definitely devastate the covenant. All kinds of attributes will change, probably for the worse (perhaps it's the beginning of Winter).

0 — **Famine:** e.g. Because of a three year drought, a famine sweeps the countryside, making food very hard to find for the covenant. It causes great chaos and suffering among the peasantry and there may be peasant uprisings as a result. This should make traveling through the Dominion an eerie and sobering experience.

1 — **Festival:** e.g. There is a great celebration among the common folk. A Prince is born, a war ends, or a cathedral is finally completed. Perhaps the magi are even invited to join in the festival.

2 — **War:** e.g. A local noble becomes involved in a bitter squabble with a neighbor, and a protracted war begins. Perhaps the noble comes to the covenant asking for help, or maybe the war hinders the magi in a variety of ways.

3 — **The Inquisition:** e.g. The Inquisition has begun in a village near the covenant and scores of suspected witches and heretics are being "questioned." Some are even being burned. Many of the friends of the covenant are among those being held. Slowly the covenant is drawn into the fire, for the covenant itself is being implicated. Companions who live outside of the covenant are in mortal

danger. What is behind the Inquisition? Often there is a political motivation. A monarch or powerful noble might be out to get someone or something — perhaps the covenant or its wealth.

- 4 — **Catastrophe:** e.g. A sad event occurs among the common folk. A King dies, a Bishop is murdered, or there is a great fire in the city. Word of this reaches the covenant — how will this affect the covenant and how do the wizards react?
- 5 — **Threats:** e.g. A rash noble makes threats to the covenant, he may even ride with some of his knights near the covenant. The Code forbids the magi to attack him before he attacks them. Who does the Church side with and how does it react?
- 6 — **Rumors:** e.g. Rumors are rife about the covenant among the common folk. Specifically, they say the covenant is murdering babies and stealing their souls. Many babies have died recently. Is anyone purposely spreading these vile rumors? Will it affect the covenant adversely?
- 7 — **Besieged:** e.g. A crazed and wild hermit from the forest of Nandion leads a large group of peasants to the covenant to pray for its destruction. He is a man of True Faith, so something may indeed occur. If magi overreact, it could be the start of a war.
- 8 — **Supplies Endangered:** e.g. Merchants who supply covenant with supplies are being hindered or may even have stopped their visits entirely. Why? Perhaps there are bandits, the merchants may be being blackmailed, or they may simply have had a turn of heart. But where now will the covenant get its supplies?
- 9 — **Diabolism:** e.g. Information of a diabolic cult emerges and members of the Church and nobility are likely involved. What do the magi do?
- 10+ — **Envoy:** e.g. A Church envoy comes to covenant, wishing to speak privately with the magi. Whatever it is about, it is bound to be interesting.

## Mystical Incidents

- Botch — **Dragon:** e.g. A sleeping dragon has been awakened and it has taken offense with the covenant. It seeks to obtain a huge ransom from the covenant, perhaps in the form of food (living mortals), or perhaps in the form of powerful magics it wants created. This immensely powerful creature could destroy the covenant if its needs are not met.
- 0 — **Curse:** e.g. A curse affects daily life at the covenant. What is the curse and what can be done?
  - 1 — **Supernatural:** e.g. All mystical creatures at the covenant, who do not have a Parma Magica (this include companions with tation and what can be done?
  - 2 — **Faeries:** e.g. A small faerie visits the covenant and befriends a grog, causing mischief.
  - 3 — **An Enigma:** e.g. A strange plant with mystical properties suddenly begins to grow in the middle of the covenant. It

could be a tree, or it could be an ivy that will eventually cover everything. Do the wizards have it cut down (can it be cut down?), or perhaps can it be a source of *vis*?

- 4 — **Invitation:** e.g. The wizards are invited to visit a faerie forest for a feast. The Faerie King (or Queen) would not only like to get to know them better, but has a need for their services....
- 5 — **Ghosts:** e.g. A ghost appears at the covenant on certain mystically auspicious nights. At first only the grogs see it, but eventually everyone sees it. The ghost wishes to pass on to the next life, but it needs to be properly buried. For a time it does not make life easy.
- 6 — **Rot from Within:** e.g. Some of the grogs, and perhaps even some of the companions and magi (if the players agree), are found to be diabolists. Is this true or is it a sinister plot to divide the covenant? True or not, who do you trust and who do you turn against?
- 7 — **Night Prowler:** e.g. A strange and quite magical beast begins to prowl around the covenant at night. What is it and what does it want?
- 8 — **Strange Visit:** e.g. A strange old mystic floats down to the covenant seated on a small cloud. The mystic is very esoteric and distant but seems curious about the daily life of the wizards and grogs. He has a strange story to tell, once he finds the right person (who happens to be the puniest grog).
- 9 — **Touch of Magic:** e.g. A flower begins to grow on solid rock inside the covenant walls, no one can figure out what is happening, though everyone is curious. Somehow it has an effect on the covenant, though it has no overt powers. An excellent excuse to roleplay normal life inside covenant.
- 10+ — **Demons:** e.g. A demon begins an active campaign to destroy the covenant.

## Hermetic Incidents

- Botch — **Investigation:** e.g. A group of Quaesitori come to the covenant (accompanied by some other wizards of great renown) and begin an intensive investigation, the nature of which they will not say. The wizards are warned that if they do not cooperate, a tribunal will be called and the covenant will be heavily censored. The question is, what the heck is going on?
- 0 — **Redcap:** e.g. A redcap visits the covenant bringing news of great interest.
  - 1 — **Message:** e.g. A letter arrives from wizards at a nearby covenant. In it the wizards make a proposal....
  - 2 — **Petition:** e.g. A wizard with a petition comes to the covenant. What is the petition about (calling for a wizards tribunal, or perhaps for a war against the common folk) and will the wizards sign it?
  - 3 — **Scholar:** e.g. A wizard visits the covenant and wishes to use the covenant library for a season or two. All the wizard has to offer in return is a map, or perhaps some interesting information....



- 4 — **Quaesitor:** e.g. A Quaesitor (see *Ars Magica* p. 134) visits the covenant and adds a new tome full of additions to the Peripheral Code of Hermes to the covenant library. At this time, oaths and agreements can be made so that they can be witnessed by the Quaesitor. Wizards may try to befriend the Quaesitor, or may decide to ignore the visitor.
- 5 — **Strange visitor:** e.g. An elderly wizard (perhaps a hedge wizard) visits the covenant. After eating a copious amount of food, he or she asks to speak to a council of the wizards. What's up?
- 6 — **Intrigue:** e.g. There is a great deal of gossip about the covenant or one of its members among the magi of the Order. What is this gossip about? Is it true or false, good or bad, and what effect will it have?
- 7 — **Challenge:** e.g. Another covenant challenges your covenant's claim over a source of *vis* (or alternatively some possession of the covenant). The conflict may build into a Wizard's War, or could be brought to the attention of a tribunal.
- 8 — **Tribunal:** e.g. A special wizards tribunal is called — there is to be a trial of a wizard. Is the covenant especially involved in some way?
- 9 — **Turb:** The grog turb is in an uproar over a challenge made by the grogs of another covenant. They seek satisfaction on the field of glory — they wish for a tournament!
- 10 — **Refugees:** e.g. A wizard arrives at the covenant along with his companions and grogs asking for sanctuary — someone or something is pursuing him. Do you offer him refuge, and is the covenant attacked or embroiled in a dangerous situation as a result? If they refuse, the covenant's status in the Order may drop drastically.
- 11+ — **Wizards War:** e.g. Another covenant declares Wizards War against one of the wizards at the covenant. Their reasons for doing so might not be very clear.

## Charter of the Covenant of Mistridge

This is an example of a charter that a covenant might make up. This is the actual charter from the Covenant of Mistridge, as it stood in 1197. You are given permission to photocopy these pages for personal use only.

This be the charter of the covenant of Mistridge, founded in the year of our lord 1067, in Val Du Bosque, of the Grand Duchy of Languedoc. This covenant was written and signed under the auspices of the venerable Magus Ventarialis of House Quaesitoris, valued for her wisdom.

### Dedication

This covenant is forthwith dedicated to the pursuit and exchange of knowledge, to the advancement and mastery of the magical arts, and to the fostering of peace among the magi of the Order of Hermes. This dedication is made not in name only, but shall be the guiding principle of our lives together. May the Order of Hermes be preserved and may our small efforts add to its continued growth and strength.

### Requirements of Membership

Each member of this covenant shall be a member in good standing of the Order of Hermes. In the event a magus is cast out from the Order, they shall also be considered cast from this covenant as well, without any delay. A magus who wishes membership in the covenant of Mistridge must be

sponsored by one of the members, who shall present them to a full council of the covenant. If three magi out of four vote to allow them to join the covenant, they shall be welcomed into our fold, and given the immediate status of a member in good standing. If the council wishes to ask for a service or an amount of *vis* as a precursor to permission to join the covenant, then that must be decided by a majority vote of the high council of the covenant.

### Rights and Privileges

The members of the covenant are granted the following rights and privileges, for as long as they remain members in good standing of the covenant of Mistridge. If one of the servants who has been entrusted with the responsibility to oversee the finances, the equipment, the grogs, or the library of the covenant has good reason to believe that a certain resource is in perilously short supply, they may delay providing it to a magus until a council meeting has been called.

All members of the covenant of Mistridge are entitled to the basic rights of the food required for good health, all mundane resources required for their ongoing studies, and the right to attend and speak at a meeting of the covenant council. This right cannot be denied by a vote of the high council, regardless of circumstances.

A magus in good standing is entitled to access all other equipment and supplies of the covenant which they find necessary to requisition for the functioning of their laboratory or for the purposes of an expedition, except that which is denied them by a vote of the high council of the covenant.

A magus in good standing, who is about to undertake an expedition beyond the walls of the covenant, is entitled to a portion of the covenant coffers, not to exceed a withdrawal of 1 coin out of every twenty which is found therein.

A magus in good standing is entitled to access the skills and talents of any and all of those who live and work at the covenant, and owe their time and service to the covenant, for the purposes of an excursion outside of the covenant, except when this is denied to them by a vote of the high council of the covenant.

A magus in good standing is entitled to access the full library of the covenant, both mundane and arcane, including any and all tomes which may temporarily be in the hands of a wizard. Each magus is allowed to keep a book for no more than one season before they must allow another magus to read from it. Any wizard's access to any book may be denied by a vote of the high council of the covenant.

A magus in good standing is entitled not only to attend each and every council meeting, but to be given adequate notice of such a meeting to be held. A magus in good standing is also entitled to call a meeting of the high council of the covenant.

## Duties and Responsibilities

The members of the covenant are pledged to respect the following responsibilities:

Each magus must surrender one half of the *vis* acquired on expeditions and place this without any delay in the covenant's *vis* stores.

Each magus must surrender one half of the silver or resources which they acquired on expeditions and place this without any delay in the covenant coffers.

Each magus must spend the amount of time demanded by the vote of the full council to govern the covenant as well as to guide the covenfolk in the maintenance of it. Each magus has the separate and independent responsibility to ensure that the covenant functions smoothly and that it stay strong and vital.

Each magus must donate to the covenant whatever they cannot make use of themselves. If a magus discovers something for which they have no purpose, then it must be given to the covenant. A member of Mistridge cannot sell what they do not use — only the covenant is allowed to buy and sell. Though this stipulation be thought by many to be foolish, it shall be taken seriously by every member and it shall be obeyed. If the council of the covenant believes that one of the members of the covenant owns that which they cannot use, or that a member has sold one of their belongings, they should lose their status as a member in good standing.

## Council Meetings

A high council meeting can be called by any member in good standing of the covenant of Mistridge. A council

meeting can be called for any reason and can be held at any location in the covenant, though they are to be held in the council chambers if no other arrangements have been made. If a magus strikes the bell in the council chamber three times, that shall indicate to all wizards that a council meeting is to be held and that they should immediately make themselves in attendance. If a magus strikes it only once, it shall mean that there will be a council meeting in one hour.

Once each year, upon the eve of the winter and the summer solstice, a regular council meeting will be held in the council chambers.

A council meeting has no right to make decisions affecting the covenant as a whole unless there is a necessary quorum. A quorum is attained when at least half of the living members of the covenant who are present at the covenant and can attend the meeting actually do so. Without the quorum, no decisions can be made.

## Authority of the Council

The authority of the council is over all the resources of the covenant and has the power to discipline or reward those persons who have decided to reside at the covenant. The council has the authority to command the covenfolk of the covenant to perform any task. The council has the authority to select a warrior to become the grog sergeant and to select a person of a learned nature to become the Autocrat.

The council also has some limited authority over the magi who are members of the covenant and the authority to take away a magi's status as a magus in good standing. A magus is considered to be a magus in good standing of the Covenant of Mistridge for so long as the council of the covenant, by a majority vote, does not take away some, or all of the rights and privileges of said magus. The majority vote of the council has the power take away any privilege or right that is granted by this charter to a magus in good standing in the covenant of Mistridge, except for any of the basic rights, but cannot place any additional Duties or Responsibilities upon a magus other than those already delineated by the charter. When a magus loses any rights or privileges, that magus is no longer considered to be in good standing.

All members of the covenant of Mistridge are considered to be free-acting, independent spirits, and while they shall not be bound to the covenant of Mistridge in word and deed, neither shall the covenant be held responsible for the independent actions of one of its member.

In this we pledge our highest aspirations and beliefs. By the word of everything we hold to be true and just, we swear to obey the stipulation of this charter of the Covenant of Mistridge till death do betray us to this oath.

And if we fail, may the most rigorous of all masters, the Arts themselves, betray us and lead us into pain, failure, and dismal, eternal solitude.

# Lariander

**Symbol:** *A tree circled by five points of light*

**Season:** *Spring*

**Year Founded:** *1192 A.D.*

**House Affiliation:** *House Tremere*

**Aura:** *Faerie Aura 6 (effective Magic Aura 3)*

**Members:** *Six Magi — Julian, Valfraine, Dominic, Restaralin, and Perniciel of House Tremere; and Audrey-Sparrow of House Merinita.*

**Defense:** +1   **Watch:** -3   **Contacts:** -4   **Morale:** -5

**Number of Grogs:** 30

**Armaments:** *Poorly equipped*

**Library** —

Cr:4	In:—	Mu:—	Pe:—	Re:—
Ar:—	Aq:1	Au:—	Co:—	He:—
Ig:—	Im:—	Me:—	Te:9	Vim:—

**Major Lore:** *Code of Hermes 3; nothing else*

**Outside Relations:** *They have contact with their former covenant, Albision, and not much else. Of course, they have close contact with the faeries of Shadisrel forest.*

This young covenant is located in a highly mystical and magical area, for it is built in a faerie forest. This provides a very enchanting and fanciful setting for the Saga, which is based loosely around the theme of "lost boys." It concerns a small group of young and inexperienced magi who are out on their own for the first time — out from under their masters' constant supervision, harsh discipline, and ruthless domination. All of the magi hail from the same covenant, Albision, a powerful covenant in northern France, also affiliated with House Tremere and renowned for its rigorous discipline, aesthetics, and lack of humor. Alone in an exotic faerie forest, these immature magi are finally doing whatever they feel like doing and experiencing more than their share of chaos and anarchy. For the first time, they are out from under the thumb of their strict masters, and they are bungling everything. Things are getting out of hand, little productive work is being done, and the covenant is quickly devolving into a state of anarchy. As a Spring covenant, Lariander is a vivid example of how precarious and unstable things can be when you first found a covenant. The effort of building a covenant is difficult work indeed and these magi will face much turmoil, conflict, and an untold number of setbacks in the years to come. They need help if they are to survive, and the best help they could get would be a little sound advice.

## Location

The covenant of Lariander is located in the south of France, one day's journey to the southeast of Toulouse, inside the Shadisrel faerie forest. It is built in the western arm of the forest, built in a glade of ten immense cedar trees, which is nearly surrounded by a strange, mystical marsh. Just to the north of the glade, there is a small lake, which is also surrounded by the marsh. Only a weeks walk to the south is Mistrudge covenant. The magi of Lariander have visited their fellows there for advice on a number of occasions. In the future, it is likely they will run to them, beseeching aid or even sanctuary.

The Shadisrel faerie forest is one of the largest such forests left in France. The legends concerning it always mention the "moving trees". It is said that the branches will sway even if there is no winds, and that some trees will move from place to place from day to day. Though no one at



Lariander can claim to have seen a tree actually in motion, evidence of such motion has been discovered ("Sir, I'd stake my reputation on it. I'm sure this path went around the lake last week!"). The faeries will say nothing of it.

The climate is temperate, and inside the forest itself the touch of winter is never felt. Shadisrel forest is a very beautiful and lush environment and there is abundant animal life, plants, and fruits of all varieties. It is a thick maze of wildlife and plants, and the undergrowth in many places is too thick to walk through (and woe to him who uses the edge of an iron blade on those plants!).

## Fortress

Lariander covenant is a loose collection of treehouses and buildings spread out through the grove of ten cedars. The cedar trees are all fantastically and weirdly shaped, and looking like gnarled old men. Flowers and blossoms are found throughout the glade, and will reblossom even after being trampled. This beauty is diminished by the ragtag collection of shacks and cooking pits. Thorny hedges planted in shallow ditches circle much of the strand of trees (a primitive sort of wall), and wild berries grow on them year around. These berries are fermented as well as slightly magical, and many of the covenfolk spend much of their free time eating them and getting drunk. They are a major source of the covenant's decadence — even the magi have eaten them from time to time. Different varieties of berries grow in bushes all around the covenant and the swamp, each variety has different effects (a few of them even magical), but almost all of them are addictive.

Faeries are often found within the covenant, spending their time laughing at the mortals, mimicking them, or playing pranks on them. The treehouses are out of bounds to the faeries, by order of the Faerie King, but sometimes the more outrageous faeries will harass even the magi. Not long ago a faerie went into a wizard's laboratory and poured the contents of a vial into a boiling cauldron — thereby ruining an experiment that had taken an entire season to prepare. The magi of Lariander are quickly learning the down side of being located in a faerie forest.

The magi rely on their location in a "haunted woods," the edges of their grogs' swords, as well as their own magic, for defense — this covenant has no walls, towers, or underground refuge. If the faerie forest was penetrated, it would quickly succumb to attack. Lariander was only recently established, and while it has great potential, it is still in a very tenuous and disorganized state. The only buildings are a few shacks on the ground, in which the covenfolk live, and the treehouses where the wizards have their laboratories.

The covenant was founded with the permission of his Most High Lordship, Aldarin, King of the Faeries of Shadisrel. In return for this favor, however, they have promised to help guard the forest from all encroachments by mortals (especially the hated farmers, who slowly expand their fields), ignore all but the most severe of the practical jokes of the sprites and other mischievous faeries, and aid the king in his war against the Unseelie Court (which sends out periodic excursions from Faerieland). These are difficult promises to keep, but in return the wizards have acquired a beautiful place to live, are protected by strong allies, and have an unmatched system of spies. Additionally, they have acquired a steady supply of *vis* by living in the forest (though if they collect more than 50 pawns of *vis* a season, the king will become perturbed).



There are eight treehouses, each in its own cedar tree, and the council room is a treehouse located high in the large willow, found in the middle of the ten cedars. The various treehouses are connected by rope walkways for the convenience of the magi. While most of the grogs live in the stone huts on the ground, some live in smaller treehouses near the laboratories, serving as private guards to the wizards. Ropes and ladders hang down from most of the treehouses, and wizards will lower a bucket if they need something from the ground. Around the willow tree there is a spiral staircase that ascends into its great boughs and goes to the council room. From the willow, walkways extend to three of the cedars, but like all the walkways, ropes, and ladders, they can be unfastened or dropped during an attack.

Since this is a newly-founded covenant, much construction is still underway — one treehouse is not yet complete, many unconnected ropes still hang from the trees, and a small construction crane (one with a long, counterbalanced swivel arm, that's used to reach up and down as well as around) sits near a tree. Lumber and tools are in piles around the area.

There is a small swamp on three sides of the grove. This mystical marsh has more than its share of mist and the will-o-wisps have been proving a serious menace to the covenant. King Aldárin chose this site well, clever ruler that he is, for he protects himself from the wisps by interposing the magi, and weakens the magi (who are potential rivals) at the same.

Lariander covenant has a simple alarm system. One blow on the watch-horn means that the grogs and the one magus designated to be on alert that day must respond and size up the problem. Two blows indicate a problem of general concern to the covenant — the covenfolk are to retreat to defensible positions, all grogs are to get into battle readiness, and all the magi are to check out the situation. Three blows means an assault in progress, and all due haste must be made to protect and defend the covenant. Unfortunately, some of the watch grogs tend to overreact to visitors, and blow the horn three times much too easily.

## Inhabitants

Lariander has a rag-tag assembly of grogs, the most experienced among them serving as the leaders. All in all, the turb lacks organization, largely due to the effects of the faerie forest. They have become increasingly demoralized.

The grogs all hail from Albision covenant, and volunteered (or were volunteered) to join the apprentices when they left to found a new covenant. Many of them thought the move would lead to excellent prospects for advancement, and could provide a little adventurous as well. Things did not turn out as they thought it would. The insanity that so often pervades a faerie forest has turned the once highly-disciplined and well-trained turb into a motley gang of drunks and rebels. Some faeries actively encourage this, especially the sprites, and will often tell gossip (both true and false) about one grog to another. The grog captain does not know what to do about the anarchy of the turb, and often berates the wizards for allowing the chaos to continue.

The wizards have no leader, for they will acknowledge no one as their superior. The governing of the covenant is always done as a committee, and though they were close friends as apprentices, they now often squabble and feud. This only adds to the confusion and chaos that is found at Lariander.

There are other inhabitants at Lariander, though few at first realize that they are sentient beings. They are the trees. Each of the cedars was once a human who became a tree upon their death. As the legend goes, long ago there was a faerie princess (daughter of Aldárin) and she fell in love with a mortal. He was not like the faeries, for he was full of vigor and life, and could love as completely as only a mortal can. For years this man stayed with her in the forest, and their lives were entwined in perfect love; yet eventually he died. She was completely distraught and had him buried in a beautiful glade beside a lake, where Lariander is situated today. Though she never recovered fully from her grief, many, many years later she fell in love with another mortal, and for as long as he lived, she loved him as well, for she had much love to give. When he died, he too was buried in the glade, beside her other lover. Though she wept for many more years, she eventually fell in love once again, and as before it was with a mortal, and as before he died. This happened eight times more, and each time they were buried in the glade with the others. Each time also, a tree grew up from their grave, a cedar tree which contained the wisdom, thoughts, and

love of each of the lovers. When her tenth lover had died, she was most distraught and her tears did not stop flowing for more than seven years. She wept in the grove for so long that she took root and began to sprout leaves. Within a few years she grew into the willow tree that now stands at the middle of the covenant. On nights of the full moon, you can hear her weeping still.

The only wizards are the newly released apprentices; if you choose to use this as your own covenant, they will be the player-characters. If you wish to use Lariander as a covenant near your own, simply create the personalities of the five foremost and most active wizards, along with a general idea of what their most powerful arts are, and you'll be ready to go.

## Outside Relations

Lariander has very little to do with the outside world; indeed it does not know much about it. Coming from the north of France, the inhabitants as of yet know very little of the political structure of mundane society or of the other covenants within the Doissetep Tribunal. Though they generally know of it, they have no idea how dominant and menacing Doissetep can be towards smaller covenants — they do have a lot to learn. They have their work cut out for them, if they are to avoid being stepped on. Many covenants would love to get their hands on the *vis* contained in the Lariander forest.

Unbeknownst to the magi of Lariander, Bellaquin covenant is very angry with them, for Bellaquin has long claimed Shadisrel forest as its private *vis* hunting grounds. No one before has ever challenged their claim, because of the ferocity of the faeries who lived there and the legends of the haunted trees that could move. Though in fact Bellaquin has never found it easy to acquire *vis* from this forest, they want to reserve it in case it some day proves to be of value. Besides, they need to show the "band of young upstarts" who is in fact in charge in these parts. They feel that a simple show of strength now can prevent problems later on. Conflict with Bellaquin is likely to escalate in the near future and this could cause immense difficulties for the magi of Lariander, especially as they begin to interact more with the Order of Hermes.

## Mystical Attributes

The covenant's mystical aura is very strong. Unfortunately it is of Faerie nature, and that causes more than a few problems. Though it gives them a good bonus to their magic rolls (+3), it also causes them to make 6 extra botch rolls every time they roll a zero on a laboratory roll. The magi of Lariander rarely care to try arcane experimentation.

Each season, at least so far, the covenant is allowed to collect *vis* from the various plants in the swamp. Usually this yields 50 pawns (points) of Herbam *vis*. However, the will-o-wisps in the swamp violently oppose all attempts to obtain the *vis*, and each year's harvest is a game of feints and rapid grabs for plants. Each year the magi's tactics change, as they attempt to out-fox the will-o-wisps, but these erstwhile opponents are getting tougher and tougher to trick. The will-o-wisps (known as Ignis Fatuus, e.g. "the foolish fire," by most magi) are much more than hovering lights. Any human who is unfortunate enough to be caught by them is robbed of most of his or her memory. The magi especially dread being caught, but without them the hunt could not be successfully pursued.

The covenant does not possess any magical artifacts or devices, but there are few mystical attributes about glade itself. Inside the encampment, right next to the willow tree, there is a huge boulder, which looks vaguely like an enormous man with a long beard, curled up and asleep. The boulder is not a man, but a faerie giant, and whenever the moon is full, rising high in the sky, he awakes and walks out of the encampment to have a little stroll. Unfortunately, he usually knocks over a couple of the buildings and drags a few of the tents behind him as he leaves. The grogs have taken to calling him Grump, because of the deep grumbles and grunts he emits in the hour before he wakes up. The wizards hope to find a way to make him part of the protection for the covenant, for he is immensely strong and, even after he awakens, he has a rock-like skin (+40 soak), and his rock fists can inflict great harm (+30 dam). He usually awakens when the strange weeping is heard (that of the faerie princess) — Grump was once her servant and now he continues to guard her.

The covenant also has a serious, potential, mystical problem, but the players have decided not to detail what it is yet. All that has been decided is that somehow the "moving trees" are involved. At some point in the

future, these trees will begin to move, and will cause problems for the covenant. (Idea: Think of how the Church and nobility might react if the moving trees began to reclaim farm land). This way however, there is something hanging over the covenant, that no one really knows about—a sense of dread anticipation and lurking mystery are brought to the saga.

## Mundane Resources

Lariander is an impoverished covenant, possessing few luxuries or supplies beyond the most basic staples. At times, even food is hard to come by and everyone must turn to the forest for supper. This has caused some interesting reactions (like when Larno, the grog sergeant, started to swell up). It is not a wise thing to freely eat the bounty of a faerie forest—while it may be tasty, you never know what will happen to you.

The covenant has inadequate equipment, and much of what they did bring with them from Albision is broken and there is no one to fix it. The magi go on their expeditions very poorly equipped, as do the grogs.

## Obligations

Albision, from whence most occupants of Lariander hail, provided much of the assistance in establishing the covenant. The magi of Lariander have little idea of what they have gotten involved in. They owe a great deal to Albision, and their charter states that they must assist Albision whenever it is necessary. If there is ever need at Albision, the wizards of Lariander are expected to come to its aid—essentially they are the lackeys of Albision. If they did not aid them, Lariander would be in hot water after Albision dealt with its troubles. Additionally, the magi of Lariander are obliged to make copies of any books they write or acquire, and send them to Albision. This can be a very time consuming process, at least until they obtain the services of a competent scribe.

Lariander has no reliable source of income and no easy means to establish one. However, the most basic food and equipment requirements can be met by the forest itself. Any sort of improvements the magi would like to make on the covenant will have to be paid for with coins that are specially obtained (through a story). The magi have begun to consider trading *vis* for silver coins, but they have made no move to do so as of yet.

## Story Ideas

Since Lariander is based in a faerie forest, it makes stories very easy to come by, the faeries being a nearly infinite source of good stories and faerie *vis* always supplying an excellent motivation. However, before you run any such stories, you will need to come up with an elaborate background for the forest itself, and have a firm grasp of what makes it work. Below is a short outline for a story to introduce the characters of your covenant to the “new kids on the block.”

## Meeting the Neighbors

**Scene One.** A Redcap comes to the covenant and tells of a new covenant that was recently established in the Shadisrel faerie forest. Only after questioning will the magi learn any more details. The Redcap only knows its general location. The Redcap's secret plan is to get the magi to visit Lariander, so her first venture into that forest won't end in her death—they are to be her shield. The characters must decide to send a delegation, either to gain a new ally, to trade protection or silver for *vis*, to discover the secret of how to live in a faerie forest, to learn Faerie Lore, or to assist the Redcap and gain status for doing so. Library research will show that the forest is claimed by Bellaquin, a problem the wizards at Lariander don't themselves know about yet.

**Scene Two.** A group of magi, companions, and grogs journey to the forest, guided by the Redcap. On the way, they meet a deserter from Lariander, a high-ranking grog who couldn't take the chaos anymore and was returning to Albision, but is reticent to discuss his reasons or the covenant. Do they capture him as a mutineer, or do they let him go?

**Scene Three.** They enter the faerie forest, which at first seems quite normal. After walking for a few hours along the path, they discover that they have made no progress. The redcap suggests they leave the path, if someone else doesn't first. After half an hour, the forest becomes more and more faerie-like—their first encounters with the faeries of the forest are strange, but non-violent. Some faeries are aggressive and appear well able to repel invaders (satyrs, for instance). The characters somehow need to

find the right path, and the best way to do that is to befriend a faerie of some sort and persuade the faerie to guide them to Lariander. The magi may need to appear before the Faerie King before they are shown to Lariander.

**Scene Four.** The group walk into the covenant compound, where they are (likely) met by the magi of Lariander. But first the grogs on watch blow the horn three times, thinking they're under attack, and all of Lariander lurches into frantic and clownish activity. The magi of Lariander are profoundly embarrassed. Once they recover, the characters are shown around the covenant by the proud magi—they are its very first guests.

**Scene Five.** Attention shifts to the grogs (totally exclude the other characters). They are shown into the “berry hut” where the Lariander grogs spend much of their time, and are likely shocked by how degenerate those grogs are and how abysmally-defended the covenant is because of it. But when they get their first taste of the fermented berries, things begin to get quite merry. Let them roleplay out, across the whole covenant if need be, their drunken and somewhat hallucinogenic reaction to the berries.

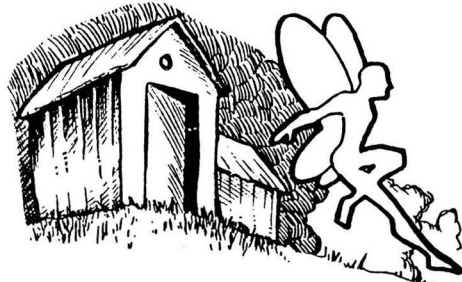
**Scene Six.** The magi begin negotiations in the council room, beginning first with formal niceties but quickly moving into what the covenants have to offer each other. During the second half of the negotiations, faint weeping is heard, but the Lariander magi pretend not to hear it. Try to make this part of the story interesting for the magi—a chance to make great gains for the covenant (a source of *vis*!), but remember that Lariander won't sell its soul for a handful of silver. Nothing can be formalized of course, until a Quaesitor is present. (According to the Code of Hermes, for an agreement to be truly binding it must be witnessed by a magus from House Quaesitoris.)

Late during these negotiations, the Redcap gives a letter to the oldest wizard at Lariander. The letter is from Bellaquin covenant. It demands payment of 20 *vis* per year for use of the forest. The Redcap had the letter all the while, and was only using the player-characters to travel through the forest. How do the characters react? The Lariander magi certainly aren't pleased with them.

**Scene Seven.** Meanwhile, Grump awakens (because of the weeping of the willow), and there is pandemonium in the camp. The drunk player-grogs find themselves in his path, and must move quickly to get out of the way in time. If they try to fight Grump, they will probably be killed. The sorry state of affairs at Lariander are again starkly revealed.

**Scene Eight.** Depending on the reactions of the players, things could conclude in a variety of different ways. Negotiations could be postponed or even cancelled, or the characters could get something extra from Lariander. The Lariander magi will easily fall apart if questioned about the state of their covenant, will beg for advice and aid or even refuge, and may even fight among themselves in front of their guests. They are scared and very sorry little kids who want to go home, but unfortunately Lariander is home. They are truly desperate, and have no one to turn to—if they turn to their old masters for help, they will never be free again. Some of the Lariander magi would rather face death than that. Depending on how they play it, the player-magi could gain a great deal. Remember, Lariander's greatest resource is its *vis*, and they also have six sigils among them. Lariander could make a great friend for your covenant and an excellent ally as well, but it all depends on what the characters do.

You will need to decide where the forest is located in reference to your covenant. Work out the name, personality, and a few basic statistics for the Redcap. Fill in the faerie forest scene with as many of your own weird faerie encounters, including something to do with its peculiar trees. You will have to come up with a concept for the forest which describes how it functions and the rules under which it operates. Make up the personalities of the six magi who are at Lariander, including fun ideas on how they interact. If your players like *certamen*, you might need to give them statistics as well. Make up a few of the Lariander grogs, including a gruff and degenerate leader—be fun. Draw up a rough map of what Lariander looks like.





# Bellaquin



**Symbol:** *A red plumed hawk clutching a scroll, inside a gold circle*

**Season:** *Summer*

**Year Founded:** 1016

**House Affiliation:** *House Jerbiton*

**Aura:** *+3 at the strongest point, rapidly deteriorating to a Dominion aura of +2 in the surrounding land.*

**Members:** *12 Magi; Tolomae, Henry LeBarre, Teslil, Valgravian, The Great Maernae, Augustus, Nebitrus, and Paritage of House Jerbiton; Artephius of House Tremere; Norbert of House Ex Miscellanea; Davnavolus of House Bonisagus; Quaerstus of House Criamon.*

Defense: +2 Watch: +2 Contacts: +8 Morale: +2

**Number of Grog:** 30

**Armaments:** *Normal*

**Library —**

Cr: 3	In: 10	Mu: 6	Pe: 8	Re: 15
An: 7	Aq: 8	Au: 3	Co: 2	He: 5
Ig: 1	Im: 6	Me: 8	Te: 2	Vi: 4

**Major Lore:** *Hermes History 6 Church Lore 5*  
*Legend Lore 5 Church Knowledge 5 Humanities 6*  
*Magic Theory 5 Local Lore 4 Mortal History 4*

**Outside relations:** *Intimately involved with mortal affairs. Holds in fief, three manors.*

This covenant is a rare example of how deeply involved the wizards can become in the world of mortals. Typically, wizards live in remote locations, far from the chaos and fast moving world of general society. In contrast, Bellaquin is located smack in the middle of the mortal world. It is liege over a number of villages and two knights are its vassals. The covenant is deeply involved in local politics and has very good relations with the nobles of the region.

Above all else, however, this is a covenant of bards. These magi are all deeply concerned with music and the arts and have a highly refined sense of aesthetics. Their love of music transcends even their interest in politics. All kinds of musicians, entertainers, and artisans can be found within the very beautiful walls of Bellaquin. These wizards have surrounded themselves with the cream of European artists and intellectuals. Their undoing is likely to be this decadent and growing obsession with art.

Bellaquin was founded 180 years ago in the ruins of a destroyed castle. The founding wizard of the covenant had been the court wizard of the Baron DuBelle who had lived there, but the count and all his kin were slaughtered by the Count of Toulouse's army. The castle walls were torn down, the fields and villages of the serfs were burned, and the wizard was driven off. But within years, the magus returned and began to live in the ruins, since the area was left barren and all the common folk had left, the magical aura had returned. Forest grew up where there once were fields and villages, and magical creatures returned to haunt the old groves that once were the grazing ground of the village swine. Slowly, new members were attracted to the castle, and it eventually became a full covenant.

But then the common folk began to return — land was short, and people were taking their plow to every fertile acre of land in reach. At first the wizards resisted, but gradually they came to accept the settlers. Over the years, they grew to be the lords of these serfs, and soon they came to be a part of the local aristocracy. Through great effort, they were able to protect certain woods and wild lands located within their fief, but for the

most part, the covenant came to be in the center of a heavily settled river valley. Over the years, the covenant has grown to be more and more involved in local politics and now plays a major role at the Baron's court.

## Location

Rising high above the Denier river valley, atop a rocky mount, is Bellaquin. It is not more than four days journey east from Toulouse, in southern France. The covenant is surrounded by the fields and villages of the common folk, but within less than a days travel there are several very small faerie and magical forests (they are actually now just glades within a larger mundane forest).

The climate is quite temperate and temperatures rarely drop below freezing. The valley is quite fertile, with the low lands being sowed with grains of all varieties and the rocky hills being overgrown with grape vines. The wizards produce a special wine made from a particular type of grape vine, for their exclusive consumption. Though this vintage travels poorly, it is in wide demand in the Order, and Bellaquin will on rare occasions trade it for *vis*. The Dauphin (as the Crown Prince of France is called) is also known to have a fondness for it.

## Fortress

The four towers of Bellaquin can be seen from almost three miles away. These slender round towers, made with a peculiar red sandstone, are each almost 60 yards high. Each tower is topped with a conical roof, surmounted with flag posts bedecked with a host of many-colored banners, and a few of its windows have glass. The 100 yard long walls which connect the four towers are also made of the local sandstone, and the whole covenant glows with an amber hue at sunrise and sunset. Through the gate (which is normally left open) can be seen a wondrous fountain, ornately and beautifully crafted, with a central water spout that rises over ten feet high. The central area of the covenant is not paved (except in the back courtyard); rather it is a carefully tended, very large formal garden. It is a complicated mosaic of bushes and vines, hidden nooks with stone benches, winding cobbled lanes, and an exquisite array of flowers and small shade trees which make it an ideal place to spend the afternoon. Many of the covenant's inhabitants, including some of the wizards, spend much of their afternoons and evenings here. Rare is the occasion when the notes of a lyre or harp cannot be heard floating through the gardens.

The walls between the towers are actually buildings as well, and from the wrought iron balconies built into their second stories (and from the inside faces of the towers) many other inhabitants of the covenant sit to read or socialize.

The centerpiece of the covenant are the ivy covered battlements of the old castle, where many of the wizards have their laboratories. Located in the middle of the covenant, the strongest part of the aura is here. There is much history to this old building, as its crumbling towers and sagging walls would suggest. Long ago this was the abode of the Baron and the covenant was later founded after its destruction in the war. The council room of the magi is located at the top of its largest tower, and from its windows one can see all of the covenant.

Behind the castle is the courtyard, where much of the daily life of the covenant goes on, and where the grogs practice their martial arts. It is here that those visitors of grog status will likely spend their time.



## Inhabitants

Bellaquin covenant has an organized group of mercenaries, mostly trained with the same weapons and fighting styles, and lead and trained by an ex-mercenary captain who made his fortune fighting the Moors and is now "retired" at Bellaquin. A powerful and capable leader, Montague, has shaped the turb into a more potent fighting force than it was previously. However, due to the decadent atmosphere at the covenant, and the miserable discipline of the grog turb, he has found it difficult making them as tough and prepared as they should be. In addition, there are a handful of grogs with specialized abilities who do not fit into this military group, including several trackers and scouts.

The grogs almost all come from a single family that lived at the covenant for generations. The Bellier clan is devoutly religious, though it is also loyal to the magi. They have served the covenant in many different capacities over the years, and would be fierce in protecting their home. However, they are not the most ferocious of warriors nor the most dedicated, and there is much left to be wanted in their military performance. Folk of the Bellier clan are more interested in attaining higher status or better appreciation of art, than they are in war. As covenfolk, they are most practiced and discreet, and serve the magi well. As warriors, they are one of Bellaquin's greatest weaknesses. Orders are liable to be ignored unless the grogs understand their purpose and believe they will be of value. The grogs are quite simply too cultured and educated to make for good warriors, for they have a weak aggressive instinct, moral qualms, and no taste for blood.

The older magi at Bellaquin are in some ways like authoritarian parents to the rest of the inhabitants. They insist that younger members value and patronize arts, as they do. Any activities that display the wilder, less sophisticated aspects of human nature are severely chastised — the young magi are expected to become as sophisticated and genteel as the older wizards. Yet the older magi are still very aggressive in the pursuit of *vis*, rather hypocritically, and will go to nearly any length to achieve political success. The ambitions of the covenant certainly lie in the area of achieving greater and greater influence among the mortals.

This covenant expects little from a newcomer other than an oath of loyalty, but it is not likely that they would admit any new members. It has established itself as a solid covenant of twelve members, who all share many of the same ambitions and beliefs. Though they are not in need of more members, they would perhaps accept membership from magi who have something to offer. To join Bellaquin, one must first spend two years scribing in the library and offer a donation of three queens of raw *vis* (30 raw *vis* points). Since the library is already strong, only a competent magus would have anything worthwhile to add. Inexperienced magi, then, generally could not join the covenant. If you are using Bellaquin as your own covenant, it is assumed that all the wizards have already paid their three queens, and are not required to add to the library, but you must fabricate some reason why the covenant purposely sought out "young blood."

## Outside Relations

The magi at Bellaquin maintain extensive relations with the nobility in the region around the covenant — they are in fact an accepted part of the aristocracy of Languedoc. Because of their vassals, both of knight and serf status, they are considered to be nobles of sorts. They are invited to banquets, weddings, jousts, and even the yearly court of the Baron. Nobles visit the covenant for advice, and often stay a month or so to take advantage of the luxuries and stimulating atmosphere found there. These southern nobles are renown for their love of music and frivolity as well as their liberalism, thus their friendship with the wizards is not so strange as it might seem. The King of France once visited Bellaquin, though that was the present king's father, and it was not an official visit. The magus Tolomae however, has attended the king in Paris, and is in constant correspondence with the king's chamberlain.

The wizards take advantage of their position in the local aristocracy to manipulate political events in their favor. Being largely drawn from house Jerbiton, these wizards relish their contact and involvement with the mundane world. They are avid collectors of gossip and are the confidants of many a young knight or maiden. The children all delight in the magical tricks the wizards can do — these wizards are almost seen as friendly old

uncles by the local aristocracy, and the wizards strive to maintain that reputation by appearing absentminded, clumsy, and even simple-minded. Because they cannot fight, most nobles find it difficult to take the wizards seriously, so they treat them like they would a priest — with condescending respect. The magi strive to never give any cause to let the nobles be frightened of them — they find the nobles' attitude towards them to be very useful. The more powerful magics are never employed within eyesight of the nobles; only the weakest spells are ever used in their presence. Thus the nobility does not know the real extent of the wizards' power, and think of them more like tricksters and entertainers than as potent practitioners of the magical arts. If they even discovered the truth, things could quickly become dangerous.

The covenant's relations with the Church are not nearly as good as their relations with the nobility, but there does exist a state of mutual tolerance. The Church of southern France is more interested in accumulating wealth than it is in pursuing heresy, anyway. However, envoys from the Vatican have come to the region with a Papal Edict ordering the local officials to aid them in the investigation of heresy. Though they are mostly interested in the Catharist heretics (see *Ars Magica*, p. 137) it is known that they are shocked at the involvement of the local nobility with the wizards at Bellaquin. There is bound to be trouble in the upcoming years — trouble that may involve the entire Order of Hermes. As for the present, all members of the Church are forbidden to visit Bellaquin. Though some priests and monks ignore this edict, it has served to isolate the covenant from the Church and has severed many of its contacts. (These growing problems have caused some speculation in the Order that Bellaquin may be teetering on the edge of Autumn, if not Winter)

To make matters worse, the wizards at Bellaquin have harbored and are harboring several important members of the Catharist heresy. These heretics interest the magi, because of the dramatic potential they seem to show for changing the political dynamics of the South. The magi are most impressed by how they have managed to convert so many of the nobility and have swept through so many towns. If the Cathari are to come into power, Bellaquin wants to have its foot in the door.

Bellaquin is being advised by several of the more respected magi in the Order to make preparations for moving their covenant to a more remote location. These older wizards fear a war could occur between the mortals and the Order and they hope to avoid the calamity by removing the source of potential contention. They see a grim future for relations between the Order and the outside world; a future which the magi of Bellaquin think they can avoid. They are firmly convinced that they can remain not only in contact with mundane society, but as a part of it. They work very strenuously to prevent conflict between society and the Order, and strongly resist all efforts within the Order to force them to move their covenant.

Some wizards, mainly those of House Flambeau, believe that a war is inevitable and are urging the covenant to increase its involvement in local affairs, in the hopes that some nobility will actually side with the Order, rather than with the reformers. All wizards, regardless of which opinion they hold, are watching the events unfold at Bellaquin with the utmost interest. A redcap comes and leaves Bellaquin several times each week with private messages, new proposals for a protracted negotiation, and the occasional public notices.

House Quaesitoris sides heavily with Bellaquin in most matters, because it believes the magi of this covenant have the best grasp of mundane society and the best chance to do any good for the Order. This gives Bellaquin many unofficial powers over other magi and other covenants, which makes it formidable indeed. Due to this growing power, there are rumors constantly traveling around of "unnatural relations" between various member of Bellaquin covenant. What exactly this means is anyone's guess, but many have their opinions, for they are jealous of Bellaquin's power. Some of the Quaesitori suspect that Doissetep, which is very aware of the growing power of Bellaquin and its vital importance to the Order as a whole, is responsible for these rumors.

Among the common folk of France, Bellaquin is a name of legend. Bellaquin has been a part of the medieval society for so long, that it has become a part of its lore. Of all the covenants in Europe, it is the most well known, and its name is most oft mentioned when an outsider speaks of the Order of Hermes. Common folk often assume a wizard is from Bellaquin, and think of it almost like the garden of Eden or Shangri-La — they would love to visit, but fear they cannot for the good of their souls.

There is an old adage among the wizards of the Order, that you never know who you will meet at Bellaquin. This is actually more true than some might believe, for Bellaquin excels in finding ways to make magi beholden to it, and it is common for magi to visit to bring information. Bellaquin often rewards those who aid it with permission to use their library.

## Mystical Attributes

Bellaquin possesses a number of magical artifacts and devices, some of which are spoken of as legend among the common folk. Among these items is the enormous Horn of Maeceile (which causes terror in those of impure motive), the Tapestry of Rentalin (which can reweave itself and display scenes of selected history), the infamous Web Map (an old roman map which shows the mystical links between all the temples of Mercury — many of which are now in ruins), the Illuminator's Tablet (a marble desktop, a relic of the Cult of Mercury in Rome, that will add beautiful illustrations to any document, to reflect the spiritual significance thereof), the Reflecting Pool (which reflects sounds, not images, but only once and always at a later date), and the Fountain of Algrid, which creates an ambiance of pleasant contemplation and insightful concentration throughout the entire covenant — +1 to most lab research, plus it makes music or oratory sound better. Additionally it counteracts the effects of a magus's Parma Magica, to divorce them from the subtle magics of life, so that music can be appreciated in all its mystical splendor by even a magus.

The arcane library is of average size, but it contains one or two works not found elsewhere. Some Hermetic scholars travel to Bellaquin purely to study them; however, they do so only after a prearranged payment. Bellaquin does nothing for free and their preferred payment is some sort of information (preferably about the mundane world).

## Mundane Resources

Bellaquin is a wealthy covenant, and possesses much in the way of luxuries and supplies. Anything it does not already have, it can have made or purchase in short order. Along the river it has docked a small ship, capable of ocean bound travel, and there are stables just outside the covenant with room enough for 100 horse (though the covenant only has 50 itself). In the villages there live enough crafters to construct the largest buildings.

The covenant itself has a huge collection of mundane books, many of them written in the vulgar form (that is, Provençal, rather than Latin). It is particularly well stocked with the old ballads as well as popular romance poetry. The library also has a huge stock of religious and military treatises.



The covenfolk are all permitted to read from this library and many of them make use of this privilege — because of this many of them have become very well educated.

In one of the buildings looming over the gardens there is a large clock, made in Germany, with chimes and half a dozen mechanical wooden figures that come out at noon and at midnight to ring the bell. The wizards think of this clock more as a work of art than a machine. The aesthetic value of it seems to greatly outweigh any useful application of the device, though several of the wizards have attempted to get the covenant to schedule itself according to the bells. The grogs dislike the hourly bells, and hate the way it so regulates their daily schedule and forces them to always have to be on time — they are given to loudly cursing them whenever it tolls.

## Obligations

Because of its exposed political situation (that of being located within and as a part of mundane society), Bellaquin owes much in the way of favors to its allies and friends. Due to its role as a feudal overlord, the covenant is expected to fulfil the traditional feudal obligations as well. These include supplying the Baron with twenty fighting men for up to 60 days each year, for use in whatever war the Baron might desire to engage in; to come to the aid of the Baron in case he is ever attacked by an enemy; to provide part of the money required to ransom the Baron if he is ever taken captive; to pay court to the Baron once a year (the wizards are expected to do this in person); to provide hospitality to the Baron and his entire entourage when he visits as well as lesser hospitality to other visiting knights; and to provide monetary aid when the Baron or one of his children gets married. The vassals of the covenant, naturally, have much the same obligations to them.

Sometimes these feudal obligations go in direct conflict with certain aspects of the Code of Hermes, such as when the wizards get involved in a mortal conflict when they aid their Baron in a war. The Order largely ignores such infractions (at least so far), and the covenant itself avoids sending wizards in such circumstances, preferring instead to simply send grogs. The information Bellaquin receives, and passes on to the Order through House Jerbiton, is considered valuable enough to excuse most transactions. Bellaquin is considered the primary contact of the Order with the mundane world, and is used to send messages to various potentates and kings. The system of friends and contacts that Bellaquin has among the nobility is very wide stretching, and through it they can send a letter directly to almost any major ruler. Those in the Order who would wish to deal with the world of European nobility usually do it through Bellaquin. It is the gateway to the ruling class.

Bellaquin owes a great deal to the Order, for it is technically violating the Code of Hermes. In return for being allowed to sidestep certain portions of the Code, it must supply the House Quaesitoris with whatever information they require. Additionally, they must provide certain services when called upon to do so by the Doissetep Tribunal (the most important tribunal in the Order). These obligations vary widely and are not often called upon, but it is possible that someday they could have serious ramifications for the covenant.

## Story Ideas

There are many possible stories you can use with Bellaquin. Most of the them should somehow concern the mundane world and Bellaquin's role as the Order's "gateway" to it (much as Austria was once Western Europe's gateway to the Warsaw Pact). If your characters are interested in art and music, Bellaquin would be a particularly pleasant place to visit. To those with a sense of art and culture, it is an enchanting place — a refuge from the brutality and vulgarity of the medieval world.

## The Bluff of Bellaquin

**Background.** This is a story of intrigue and politics, involving one of the most intensely political of all covenants, Bellaquin. It revolves around an unofficial tribunal that was called by Bellaquin, and it leads to the discovery of the problems which Bellaquin is presently facing, and thus introduces the players to a prospect that could radically change their Saga — the destruction of the Order of Hermes. The details are for you to decide,



but Bellaquin is under immense pressure to stop all wizards from interfering in mortal affairs and even abandon its own covenant and move out of the Dominion. An envoy from the king, a delegation from the Vatican, and even three local Barons have all come to the covenant with complaints and demands, and to make things more confusing, a tribunal is being held at the same time. The magi of Bellaquin are struggling mightily (and successfully) to keep all the balls in the air, and even to gain an advantage out of the situation, but the characters could screw everything up. Before this story can be run, the character-magi must have at some time interfered with mortal society in some negative way (used magic in public, threatened a noble, burned a village, etc.). They are being called to Bellaquin to answer for that activity.

**Scene One.** An invitation comes to the covenant inviting a magus to come visit Bellaquin for a intercovenant council (a small, unofficial tribunal) which is sponsored by Belithuse of house Quaesitoris. The letter says that it is a matter of mutual interest and benefit. A magus from the characters' covenant is dispatched to attend this council (along with the rest of the expedition for protection). Even if they do not find the meeting of interest, the covenant itself is renowned for its beauty and luxury and the magus might discover some useful information among its visitors.

**Scene Two.** Along the journey, they meet a magus who is also going to the council, but who is very anti-Bellaquin. This immensely fat man, the Magus Oramasus of House Ex Miscellanea, lives alone in a forest in Gascony. He is very jolly, but can work himself into a rage, especially when Bellaquin is involved. They learn from him much about Bellaquin, including his opinion that it is a bully ("They think it's wrong for me to stop the peasants from chopping down my forest!"). Most importantly, they learn that Bellaquin is having increasing problems in getting along with the mundane society.

**Scene Three.** They arrive at Bellaquin—be sure to describe its beauty well. They must wait at the open gate until one of the magi is available to greet them (which could be up to half an hour). The magus is shown to a room and the grogs are put in the care of the servants at Bellaquin, who put them up in the most luxurious quarters they have ever imagined (which you should encourage the grogs to destroy, so later they can get into big trouble). The grogs are told to stay out of the garden (though educated or somewhat sophisticated companions can easily get permission to enter it) and that the courtyard and quarters of the covenfolk is where they should spend all their time. They are also told to leave their weapons in their rooms. The magus is told that the meeting begins the next day, but the gardens are accessible for the magus's entertainment until then.

**Scene Four.** Turn to the grogs and let them explore the covenant as only a grog could. The covenfolk of Bellaquin treat them with complete disdain, speaking openly of "those primitive Huns." However, there are other small groups of grogs from other covenants at Bellaquin, so fighting and other contests can take place. What should really attract the attention of the grogs however, is the encampment of knights outside the covenant walls. These knights talk about their lord, "the Prince," who is inside "telling those infernal sorcerers that they've got to go." They are gruff and tough, and will gladly fight any grog who challenges or offends them.

**Scene Four.** Turn now to the companions and the magus, and ask them what they do. If they wander through the gardens, they will meet some people of very serious note. Among them will be a young man who is reading from an arcane tome of Hermes, who is very unassuming and quiet, yet also highly intelligent. Only later should the characters find out that this is the youngest son of the King of France and his envoy at Bellaquin. They may meet the Cathar priests, a few scholars, other companions from a visiting covenant, a few of the Barons, the Papal envoy, and will certainly come in contact with a plethora of musicians, dancers, and storytellers who stroll through the gardens. They can spend many enchanting evenings in the gardens. However, they may overhear a few conversations or witness a few fights, which gives them even more clues that something is amiss at Bellaquin.

**Scene Five.** There are three Quaesitori attending this tribunal, so it should be clear to the characters that it is a serious affair. After the players get truly comfortable, then Bellaquin pulls the big surprise. They threaten the player-magi with trial at a full tribunal unless they stop "violating the Code" and cease their "pathetic interference in the affairs of the mortals, and hence the affairs of Bellaquin." This will have to do with what the players' covenant has been up to recently, so it's up to you to make it all fit together. Lately, Bellaquin has been having troubles in its relations with the nobility, and they are blaming the activities of four covenants (as well as the magus Oramasus). They are warning these covenants, who all have representatives at the tribunal, that unless this interference stops, they will take action. The Quaesitori back up what they have to say and threaten to stop visits to the covenant for three years unless "changes are made."

**Conclusion.** Somehow the characters have to deal with what is going on, and that probably requires them to get involved in some of the layers of intrigue (to which you will have to add copious amounts of detail). They need to find out what is happening, and so they need to speak with the Prince, the Barons, and the Papal envoy. They will find out that Bellaquin itself is part of the problem, and may become somewhat aware of the enormity of the game that Bellaquin is involved in and the reach of its tentacles, which stretch across the mundane world. They hopefully will find out that they are way out of their league, but that if they play their cards right, they can come out ahead.

**You will need to decide where Bellaquin is located in reference to your covenant.** Work out the personality, a few basic statistics, and other details for Oramasus. Detail the members of the baronial, papal, and royal delegations at the covenant—you'll need personalities, motivations, and interrelationships at least. Work out a complicated intrigue to involve the characters, something that touches on what they need to do, but actually involves others. Make up the personalities of the major magi at Bellaquin, including ideas on how they will try to manipulate your characters (remember they're good at it). Make up a few fun things for your grogs to do, as well as ways for them to get in trouble. Draw up a rough map of what the covenant looks like.





# Doissetep

**Symbol:** *A fiery dragon eating its own tail*

**Season:** *Autumn*

**Year Founded:** 876

**House Affiliation:** *None*

**Aura:** 6

**Members:** 23 Magi; *Quimrik, Herot, Nysakean, Alarmon, Charles Van-Huse, and Oxioun of House Tytalus; Lupus Mortus and Tertious of House Flambeau; Micheal-Jay the Wolf of House Bjornaer; Misgaeroten, Ladkyis, and Yuelgoet of House Tremere; Tintia of House Mercere; Asidnael and Norik of House Jerbiton; Vid, Retistius, and Alexander DuQuill of House Verditius; Protantus of House Quaesitoris; Benzigotrin and Crininion IV of House Criamon; Cerebus Facto and Sharissel of House Merinita.*

Defense: +7    Watch: +11    Contacts: 0    Morale: +4

**Number of Grogs:** 300

**Armaments:** *Superior*

**Library —**

Cr: 20	In: 13	Mu: 14	Pe: 20	Re: 19
An: 14	Aq: 13	Au: 23	Co: 18	He: 13
Ig: 24	Im: 12	Me: 17	Te: 18	Vi: 15

**Major Lores:** *The library at Doissetep is so massive that we've given it an overall Library Score of +7. Use this as the modifier to your stress roll to see if you've found the answer to any question instead of the score for that particular knowledge.*

**Outside Relations:** *Very strong within the Order of Hermes but almost nonexistent with mortal society.*

This autumn covenant is the most powerful covenant in the Order of Hermes, though it is not known in the mundane world. Located deep in the Pyrenees mountain range, it is far from civilization. It looms grotesquely and gloomily on top of a dark, cold mountain, and inspires fear and awe in most of those who see it, especially when the bitter winter wind rushes across the mountain top. It is a grim place, filled with fierce and unkind people. Inside, the covenant is not any more cheerful. As famed and powerful as it is, the motivations and ambitions of Doissetep are not widely known, and its organization and membership are a secret. It lurks mysterious and somewhat sinister in the minds of most wizards, and many fear it.

Doissetep's organization is unlike any other covenant's—it expects a great deal more loyalty and obsequiousness from its members than most covenants. Doissetep has, arguably, the best library and other magical resources in the Order of Hermes and is therefore very attractive for young magi to join. Prospective members are expected to provide many years of service, including leading grogs on dangerous missions, in order to pay for being accepted into membership. They are also expected to give their utmost loyalty to the covenant, and inevitably they do.

A hotbed of rivalry and intrigue at all levels, both among the magi and in the grog turb, the wizards at Doissetep believe that such a strife-ridden environment fosters strength. They believe in the principle of enlightened self-interest, as it was first expounded upon by Pontifex Xeirdon, and trust that no one would go as far as to betray the covenant in the course of pursuing a rivalry. If any were so foolish as to endanger Doissetep, their punishment would be harsh indeed.



## Location

Built high on a small plateau, atop one of the largest mountains in the Pyrenees (the mountain range that divides France from Iberia), stands an enormous and labyrinthine fortress. Located in the western half of the rugged mountain range, it is a very isolated place. The Pyrenees have always been a strongly magical area, and have been able to support a large number of wizards (*vis*, as always, is of the utmost concern to the wizards). Doissetep is thus well able to supply all of its members with adequate amounts of *vis*. From a distance, you can see its dark bulk rising atop the conical mound of Mount Celidar, with the rest of the high range of the Pyrenees spreading out behind it. It is a cold, desolate, and extremely beautiful place.

Doissetep itself is extremely hard to reach, for there is only one trail which climbs Celidar, and it snakes its way up the mountain through innumerable switchbacks and alongside huge precipices. Even the trail to Mount Celidar is a rough climb; it is impossible for any kind of wheeled vehicle to make the journey, and even horses have a rough time of it. Usually mules are used when supplies are brought to the covenant. There is a trail nearby which runs from France to Iberia, and a very small side trail runs to it from Doissetep—so there really are two ways to get to the covenant.

From the foot of the mountain, you can see nothing of the covenant, but as you make your way up the twisted trail that climbs slowly to the summit, the vast extent of the covenant suddenly makes itself known. At a bend in the trail, called Fabym's rest (where some hapless soul from long ago met his end—an unfortunate fall you know—and the willowy remnants of his ghost are rumored to linger here still), you get a panoramic view of the covenant. Framed between the two rock walls of the chasm, through which the trail crawls, stands the legendary covenant itself. Few ever have ever forgotten their first sight of Doissetep.

## Fortress

Built gradually over the centuries, Doissetep is now so large that no one has been able to construct a detailed or even accurate map of it for decades. It is a labyrinthine place, exotic in style, and befuddling in organization or logic. A score of towers litter the mountaintop, each of a different design and appearance, mixing together into a forest of rock. The architecture is extremely eclectic, and contains elements of Roman, Gothic, and Muslim design as well as other styles of unknown origin. The covenant is therefore a hodgepodge of styles, and no attempt has ever been made to maintain an architectural standard. While some builders have been ostentatious and concerned with appearance, the overriding concern has been practicality. There are squat basalt towers, flowery romanesque pavilions, pillared arenas, all encircled by huge battlemented walls (which are also a cacophony of differing styles). By this time (1198), the covenant has completely covered the mountain top, and any new construction is normally preceded by the demolition of one of the older buildings.

Between various buildings, enclosed wooden walkways are suspended above the ground, built to provide fast and warm conduits between the various towers and buildings for the magi and their apprentices (it can get cold up here in the mountains). No ordinary grogs or covenfolk are allowed in these corridors, unless accompanied by a magus, apprentice, or consors (described below).

One of the most important of the buildings is a very old Roman temple, dedicated to the Roman god Mercury. Though it has been centuries since it has been used in that function, the "priests of Mercury" still use the temple: the wizards at the covenant, who are descended from those original priests, still use it as their council hall. The temple is of a style similar to that of many Roman temples. It is a huge rectangular building with an enormous frescoed roof, held up by rows of pillars. The walls are just inside the first rank of pillars, leaving enough room for a small porch which completely surrounds the temple. Inside, there are tiled mosaics across the floor and walls, and a gold covered statue of Mercury still sits at the far end of the hall. Numerous small rooms are located along the sides of the temple. Though only used occasionally, the temple is very well maintained, and is a place of great beauty.

Beneath Doissetep, halfway down Mount Celidar, there is a small village of mountain folk, which is called Osprey by many. The inhabitants of this little hamlet, who try to scratch out a few small gardens on the rocky slopes as well as herd goats, mostly eat the scraps and refuse dropped from the fortress above. A few of the villagers come to work for the covenant as the lowest class of servant, and the wizards employ the rest of them as informal spies and scouts. ("My Lord, I saw a group of travelers when I was gathering the goats.") When grogs and *consortis* don't have time to trek into the warm valleys of Languedoc or the city of Barcelona, they will go slumming down in Osprey. Because of the invaluable silver they bring with them, the villagers offer them nearly any pleasure. Osprey is often used as a term of exclamation or disgust by the covenfolk.

There are two ways to gain entrance to Doissetep — one is to take the narrow switchback trail up the mountain, a route not recommended in high winds or in the winter. The second is to enter a tunnel dug into the side of the mountain, whose entrance is concealed by a small waterfall, and walking through it until you reach a chamber with a shaft that extends upward to the covenant. This area is guarded by an immense man (some say an ogre) named Gorodon, who is usually assisted by several other grogs. Three other tunnels, which are the only entrance into the warren of caves and caverns that lie in the depths of Mount Celidar, also stretch out from this chamber.

A carved wood platform of questionable durability waits in Gorodon's chamber. It is actually a primitive elevator, operated by a system of pulleys, counterweights, and rusty chains. This elevator sometimes gets stuck and has been known to break — usually the inhabitants of the covenant use it only when speed is of the essence or the weather is terrible outside. It can lift a group with a maximum of three people up the 300 foot shaft, to a huge copper door with the symbol of Doissetep (an image of a dragon eating its tail) imprinted on it. Only those who know the secret words (Latin ones of course) can open this magically sealed door. This door opens onto a short corridor which leads into the kitchens and the Great Hall.

## Inhabitants

There are many different people who live at Doissetep. Doissetep has twenty-three magi and over a dozen apprentices. It is said that over 300 grogs live here as well, including nearly thirty *consortis*. The total population of this mountaintop community certainly makes it the largest covenant in the Order. Exactly how many people do live at Doissetep is unknown, for it is but one of the innumerable things Doissetep keeps secret.

## New Members

After five wizards have died or in some other way have left the covenant, Doissetep sends out a decree to all the wizards in the Order of Hermes, announcing that a search is in progress for new member candidates. Typically scores of magi, young and old, come to the mountain in hopes of passing the tests and becoming members. Doissetep holds a contest (as you shall see, Doissetep is big on contests of skill) among the petitioners, and the five winners are invited to join the covenant. The apprentices of the current members are given no special help or guidance in passing these tests, but since they have been raised in the highly competitive atmosphere of Doissetep, they are more prepared than most for this rigorous series of tests. If you fail these tests, you are allowed to try

again the next time, but few ever do. Many covenants feel betrayed when one of their members attempts to gain membership at Doissetep, so most magi come to the tests in secret. Sometimes it can be interesting whom you meet there. (If you want to roleplay at Doissetep, you can have your old covenant destroyed in some horrible way, and then have the magi apply at Doissetep for membership — with the companions coming as well if they succeed.)

## Ranks of Wizards

There are three ranks of magi at Doissetep, each having increasing power and prestige, and decreasing responsibility and demands upon their time. The youngest magi, called *Sacerdos* (Journeyman), do all the work and take all the risks — they live in complete service to the covenant. Though their duties are extremely arduous, they gain, in return, access to the finest library in Hermetic history and, as they get older, they will have an immense degree of freedom (both in terms of time, *vis*, and power) to pursue their own interests.

The next highest rank is called *Flamen*. At this stage, the magus must somehow prove themselves worthy of the covenant in some significant way by adding to the strength of the covenant. These magi will usually try to prove themselves by accomplishing some noteworthy deed for the covenant, such as creating a particularly useful spell, or gaining a new source of *vis* or other power for the covenant. The more creative they are, and the greater the service to the covenant, the faster they rise to the next rank, that of *Pontifex*. *Flamen* are not expected to attend to any normal or mundane duties, but are expected to find some area of need and fill it. Once magi have attained the rank of *Flamen*, they must find some new and creative way to strengthen the covenant if they hope to advance to the highest rank. They are required to accompany only the more important of the expeditions and attend to only the most important covenant affairs.

If a magus fails to accomplish any sort of vital task, or if these tasks are never considered significant enough, this magus will never become *Pontifex*. There are a few magi at Doissetep who have been *Flamen* for many years, and probably now will never have the chance to become a *Pontifex*. The ruthless and aggressive atmosphere found at Doissetep allows no leeway or sympathy for failure.

The voices of the *Flamen* are frequently the ones which give the covenant its drive to maintain Doissetep's status and power. The more successful a *Flamen* is at preserving the power and prestige of the covenant, the more prestige (and thus power) that magus will be given upon attaining the rank of *Pontifex*. Only at this third and highest rank can the magus have access to all the resources of the covenant (including the secret library) and vote in all covenant affairs.

Presently only seven of the twenty-three magi of Doissetep have attained are able to be called *Pontifex*. This coveted rank is bestowed only upon the most trusted of the *Flamen* after years of dedicated and extraordinary service to the covenant. You must be voted in by those who are already a *Pontifex*, a vote which is often full of political intrigue and squabbling. Only one magus can be made a *Pontifex* every time a vote is made (which occurs whenever the tests are held). If a *Flamen* makes too many enemies, however, they will never become a *Pontifex*. Interestingly, even in such cases, they rarely leave the covenant (in fact, a little known fact is that no wizard has ever left the covenant of Doissetep).

Typically, once magi become a *Pontifex*, they cease to work to promote or protect the covenant, leaving that work to younger wizards. Instead they spend their time on their idiosyncratic and arcane studies and schemes. They are not commonly seen very much, and involve themselves little in the political affairs of the covenant. Only when things become heated and intrigue becomes rife do they emerge to cast their vote in the covenant councils. These magi have given everything to the covenant, and now the covenant is returning something to them — they live out their remaining years in peace and security, and are therefore able to create masterpieces of enchantment or scholarship.

*Pontifex* as a group make up the inner-council of the covenant, called the *Concilium Maximus*, which has special powers over the long term affairs of the covenant — there is much of which only the *Pontifex* know. Some magi from other covenants spread rumors that the inner council is



secretly composed of diabolists, and that is the secret to the power of Doissetep. Others say they still worship the god Mercury and that the Pontifex still believe themselves to be his priests, and some evidence of this has been uncovered. Very few magi, however, believe such gods really exist or ever existed (which is in itself very interesting, for the Order of Hermes can be seen as a priesthood for Mercury's Greek incarnation: the god Hermes). Overall, the only thing that is really sure is that the Pontifex has some strange grip over the covenant, and they are accorded incredible respect by all its inhabitants.

## Councils

The covenant grand council meets only infrequently, usually only when the tests are held — mostly because the Pontifex cannot be bothered to attend more often. However, there are many sub-councils, called concilia (singular-concilium), which meet more frequently, sometimes as often as every month. These concilia oversee various functions of the covenant and have complete authority over it, at least until the next full council meeting. Sometimes a full council will be called because of complaints about the activities of one of the concilia.

Each concilium is made up of several Sacerdos and one Flamen to oversee its activities — rarely a Pontifex may be involved. The Sacerdos are expected to do all of the work, and the Flamen is expected to only lead and advise. Some of the concilia that might be formed by the council are Defense, Procurement, Diplomacy, or Secret Affairs. (If Doissetep is to be used as your own covenant, have all the players on one committee.)

The nominal leader of Doissetep is a magus called Oxioun of House Tytalus, a master of the art of Córporum — his title is Pontifex Maximus. His official power mostly centers on his position as chief speaker at the council meeting, but the respect most of the magi have for him gives him wider powers as well. Normally, however, his view is the view of the majority of the magi, or at least the majority of Pontifex. He is the only person who can call a full gathering of the council of Doissetep — when he calls a meeting, every magus must come.

## Quiet Talk

The wizards often communicate with their grogs through subtle eye and hand signals, a language which is known as "Quiet talk." Orders such as "guard this room," or "watch this visitor closely," are all communicated non-verbally. The younger magi who have not yet learned this signal system are not accorded nearly as much respect from the covenfolk as those magi who have mastered it. To have a basic ability to understand the signals of the magus, you must have a skill of at least level one in "eye talk", to give messages you must have a level two ability, and mastery is level five. Many of the grogs employ a variation of this system on expeditions, and their leaders sometimes use it to give commands which, in large part, makes them such a finely tuned fighting force.

## Consortis

One of the highest honors a non-wizard can receive at Doissetep is that of *consors*, which indicates that they are one of the chosen ones, trusted and respected by the magi. The *consortis* run the covenant and are given most of the power to officiate and oversee the covenfolk and grogs. While nearly all *consortis* have a group of covenfolk working beneath them, sometimes they are warriors, sometimes they are merely servants, depending on what their responsibilities are. This position is so useful that it has been adopted by several other covenants throughout Iberia and France, as a formal position to grant trusted companions.

One of the most important of the roles played by the *consortis* is that of the Autocrat. This title is reserved for the person who is in charge of all the mundane aspects of running the covenant, such as making sure the merchants are paid and that the kitchen cooks dinner on time. The wizards are a very demanding lot, and if their needs are not met quickly, they are known to promote another to Autocrat, and get rid of the old one in any expedient manner.

Each winter a new group of individuals is promoted to *consors*. There is a large covenant festival, in which even some of the magi become involved. This day of fun and frolic begins with a warm tub of water into which the candidates are unceremoniously dunked and cleansed of all their "ills and evils." When they emerge, they are given robes as well as their badges of office in a large ceremony attended by most of the covenant. At this time, each *consors candidate* selects seven people to form the nuclei of their respective bands, though they take only volunteers, for no one is ever forced to join a band. The highlight of the festival is a series of contests in which the new *consortis* lift weights, answer riddles, respond to abuse thrown from the crowd, and all in all try to act like the heroes that they are supposed to be (*consortis* are respected by the covenfolk).

Each candidate then leads their band through an obstacle course made up of children dressed as monsters. The object is to capture as many purses of "gold" as they can, retrieving them from the top of tall, quite heavy poles. These purses are full of "ignem sand," which is primitive gunpowder (the covenant obtained the secret of its manufacture from Cathay). The "monsters" get in the way and try to protect their poles. They carry sticks and can be quite ruthless in using them against the unarmed *consortis* and their bands who are forbidden to strike back. As they collect more and more purses (which are still fastened to the wooden poles), their burden becomes quite heavy. The *consortis* and their bands of friends form a parade as they carry their large stack of poles around the covenant. The parade ends at a huge bonfire into which each group tries to throw as many of their purses of "gold" as possible, while the monsters attempt to steal them back. When the purses begin to burn, there is usually a small explosion, often accompanied by gold colored flames.

The band that is able to throw the most purses into the fire is accorded much respect. The youth who is able to steal back the most purses is awarded a gold coin and is called "young *consors*" by the entire covenant for the next year (including the magi — that is if they remember) and all the other children treat him or her as their *consors*. The festival ends up with a night long celebration of drunken debauchery, where there is no rank, all is to be forgotten upon the morn, and during which the magi often cast spells to make the entire covenant as warm as a summers evening.

## The Turb

Doissetep, with approximately three hundred grogs, has a complex turb structure. There are four major divisions of the grogs, called guards, each with its own captain, who is also a *consors*. These guards began long ago as small bands, but have grown over the years. The Dark Guard is trained by its leader Bando to be stealthy in gathering information, while the Far Guard is trained to range through the woods and mountains around Doissetep as well as be able to scout ahead on missions. Mission Guard grogs are trained specifically to be powerful warriors and shield grogs for the magi while they are out on expeditions. The Wall Guard is trained largely to protect the covenant from infiltration (since it is hard to imagine a large scale assault) and to guard select locations within the covenant — they are known for their dedication and resoluteness. Some of the members of the guard belong to no band, but are under the direct orders of their sergeant. The rest of the covenfolk belong to the various bands of the servant *consortis*, and a great many are under the authority of the Autocrat and are part of his band.

The grogs are further divided into small groups called bands, as mentioned above. Every band has members who were trained in all of the different guards, but they are not part of that guard and do not have to obey the orders of its captain. These bands of 5 to 10 members are led by a *consors*, who may have been a grog or a covenfolk at one time. Commonly, a band will associate themselves closely with a particular wizard, or sometimes a particular group of wizards. Each Flamen and Pontifex is allowed to have their own personal band whose loyalty to them is complete, but the younger magi have to form in small groups (usually according to what council they are in) and share a band. Such an associated band will almost always accompany its particular wizard or group of wizards when they are on a mission outside of the covenant.

Each band is very cliquish and aggressive in seeking status. All of the bands are constantly involved in a contest to see which is best — which is the most capable. Often, they will make bets with one another on who can



perform some task the best or the quickest. Each season, the five best bands, selected by the Guard Captain, engage in a contest to find out who is the best. They may be sent on expeditions, compete in games, or even be asked riddles by the scholars — it's certainly the main social event of the covenant. The winning band of grogs is assigned to assist Gorodon to guard the lower gate for one season (a perfect opportunity for a band to explore the underworld). This is a very high honor, and is fanatically pursued by all the bands — the competition is very fierce. Once you have served with Gorodon, you are allowed to wear a star on your clothing or armor, and can add another one each time you serve with Gorodon. Presently, the Band of Remel wears seven stars and is seen as unbeatable. If you are using Doissetep as your own covenant, I suggest that you have all of your grogs and companions as part of the same band (or perhaps two) attached to the same magi. If they engage in this contest, have them do it once, but then simply decide what happens each season by a roll of the dice (unless you want to make it the center of the Saga).

Doissetep is a very disciplined covenant, even though it is not centrally organized. There is no one leader for the grogs, yet the system of "bands" allows for great flexibility and ferocity. Since almost all of the grogs were born and raised at the covenant with its atmosphere of passionate dedication, their loyalty is little doubted by the magi. This fierce loyalty may also explain, however, their distrust for strangers, even for a "stranger" who has been at the covenant for ten years and has become a *consors*. This discipline and the cunning created by the constant struggles codified in the traditions of the covenant also reveal why the covenant has survived at the pinnacle of Hermetic power for so long.

## Outside Relations

Doissetep concentrates most of its interest in the Order of Hermes and wants little to do with the mundane world. It is renowned within the Order and is rather feared as well because of its power and its hidden ambitions. It maintains an extensive spy network throughout the Order and is said to have a contact in every covenant and a spy at every council. Doissetep can reward magi who betray their covenant's secrets by giving them access to the Doissetep library. Therefore, any magus who even visits Doissetep is looked upon with suspicion. How their spies avoid detection by the spells cast by the magi at those covenants is unknown, but it is thought that Doissetep has access to a special *Perdo Imágonem* spell for use by its own magi alone.

Though Doissetep is relatively unknown in the mundane world, its library is sometimes made mention of among a select group of scholars. Generally, Doissetep stays out the way of the common mortals, and will do all it can to avoid dealings with them. Its remote location aids them greatly in this endeavor. However, remember that secrecy is one of Doissetep's strongest traits; some would say it is a paranoia. They attempt to limit their dealings with the outside world so that they gain all the advantages, and so that the outside world gains nothing in return. They treat all outsiders like enemies and avoid giving anyone any kind of advantage. If they can manage it, magi from Doissetep will deal with others from a position of total anonymity. They will try everything to keep their identities secret so as to protect Doissetep from suspicion. It is through this practice that Doissetep avoids being implicated in a variety of nefarious affairs and keeps itself above normal suspicion. Whatever it does and wherever it goes, it does so under a shroud of secrecy and rarely in its own name. The magi of Doissetep have even been known to claim that they come from some other covenant than their own.

## Magical Attributes

The arcane library at Doissetep is so extensive as to be almost impossible to use. As of yet, no good cataloguing system has been invented, so while Doissetep may have a desired tome, finding it is another thing. There are perhaps over 3000 books in this library, most of them huge volumes which can be scarcely carried by one person. The dozen scribes who work at the library are thus essential if one wishes to gain anything from it, yet they have peculiar quirks and one must be tolerant of them if one hopes to get anything done. The scribes have a tendency to mutter and let their minds wander off on various items of esoteric lore. They hate to be pushed and instead must be coaxed if anyone wishes to get any help from them. Together, they have a near perfect understanding of what books are

contained in the library, as well as what is in each book. The library is located in its own tower, a large fortification with expensive glass windows.

Outsiders may have heard of the secret library of Doissetep, yet as hard as they look they will never find it. Though it does exist, it is not hidden in the normal fashion. Since only the scribes know where everything is in the library, the "secret library" is actually contained on the same shelves as the normal library. They however are fully cognizant which tomes are off-limits to those who do not have permission from a Pontifex, and under no circumstances will they reveal that the covenant possesses them. However if a magus were to simply browse through the library who knows what they might find — after a week or so of looking.

The plethora of magical devices at this covenant staggers even the most complacent of visitors. Though there are too many to mention here (and many are secret to even those who live at the covenant), a selection of a few of the more renowned devices is an excellent example of the power which Doissetep possesses. Many of these devices were created specifically for Doissetep by a Pontifex or even one of the Flamen, and are actually an integral part of the covenant — they are "built in." Many other magical devices can only function in an area of a certain magical intensity and would be useless elsewhere.

One of the most important magical devices is the enormous Cauldron located in the kitchens. Large enough to boil an entire pig, it has the quality of doubling the amount of broth which it contains after it boils.

Around the covenant, there are a great many torches with magical flame. These torches burn all day and all night long, and though their flames shed light, they do not give off heat.

Situated in the center of the table, in all four of the concilium rooms, is a skull, which has the capacity to speak. When asked, it can recite anything which was spoken in its presence. This is used by the magi to verify the exact context and meaning of all that is said at a meeting. The skulls retain some of the characteristic personality of their previous owners, and thus each of the four concilium rooms has its own distinct "character" (literally).

## Mundane Resources

Doissetep is possibly the wealthiest covenant in the Order of Hermes, due simply to the riches it has collected during the Christian reconquest of Iberia, of which magi from Doissetep were a part. There are priceless Moslem treasures and Roman antiques scattered throughout the covenant; some can even be found in the grog barracks (such as a upside down Roman alter used as a wash trough).



The covenant is not overly dependant on the outside world due to some of the properties of its magical artifacts. While much food must still be freighted in, not much else is necessary. The wealth that Doissetep has is slowly being drained away, but at an almost imperceptible level. New sources of income are continually being found by the Flamen in their effort to achieve Pontifex status.

The mundane library at Doissetep is the most expansive library in all of Christendom, and some say in the world (ever since the library at Alexandria burned down). Most of the mundane books were retrieved during the wars against the Moors in Iberia, in which many of the wizards from Doissetep were involved. As previously noted, the mundane and the arcane books are intermixed and cared for by the same group of scribes.

The mundane resources of Doissetep extend beyond the essentials of wealth and information. All of the magi at Doissetep have their own living quarters which are often of immense size and great luxury. Whatever a magus wishes can usually be procured for them. Being located in such rough terrain, the covenant has no stables and no mounts of any sort. However, there is a very large hutch on one of the towers for its 100 well-trained hawks and falcons. These are just a few examples of the non-magical manifestations of the power of Doissetep.

## Obligations

Doissetep owes little to anyone else, however it does tend to make deals with outside organizations, and the minutiae of these deals can be seen as obligations. The most important of these deals are with other covenants, with which it often has an extensive correspondence. However, this usually consists of threats and demands, and rarely incorporates any degree of cooperation (because "cooperation breeds weakness"). Doissetep also has dealings with various higher faerie nobility (perhaps even ones from Faerieland itself) and has been known to send the occasional envoy to members of the human aristocracy, especially those in Iberia.

## Story Ideas

Doissetep has actually been the center of an *Ars Magica* saga, and has been the focus of numerous stories; characters from Doissetep ventured from it into the outside world. However, stories which are *about* Doissetep itself are a different matter. Fortunately, Doissetep seems to be well suited to be the locus of stories as well.

## The Greatest Game

Background) On one of your earlier stories, you should have the characters meet a wizard named Nysakean who comes from Doissetep, preferably during an expedition. When the characters are doing extremely well, and showing themselves to be highly capable and cunning warriors, have Nysakean show up and be dutifully impressed. He speaks with the characters, says a few words of praise, and then disappears as enigmatically as he appeared.

Scene One) Quite a bit later, the magi characters who were on that trip get a message from Nysakean, proposing a deal. He asks them to visit Doissetep over the coming winter and spring, offering to give them the rights to use the arcane library at Doissetep. All they have to do in return is bring the companions and grogs who were with them before, and "lend" them to Doissetep for those two seasons. The magi are assured that they will not be faced with any undue danger, and that indeed this whole affair is something in the nature of a game.

Scene Two) The trip to Doissetep is not easy, especially the climb over the mountains. The characters better have some sort of guide, preferably a redcap who has been there before. As they approach Doissetep and come over the mountain pass, they meet up with two groups of warriors, all wearing the symbol of Doissetep on their armor, engaged in a fight over a red flag. The members of one of the groups all have seven stars sewn on their armor, and they are sorely beating the other group. The characters may watch or they may intervene, but whatever they do, they meet the arrogant *consors*, Remel, and are likely to make an enemy of him.

Scene Three) The characters enter Doissetep — their first impressions are vital, so describe things well and use brief encounters to give it a little flavor (such as a deeply suspicious doorkeeper). After seeing the magi installed in their quarters, Nysakean has the grogs and companions brought

down to his chambers to inform them of his plans for them. He tells them of the bands, the games that they play, and of the winning of the stars. Then he tells them of the tradition of the *consors* — all without telling them what he is getting at. Finally, he speaks of his concern that the grogs and *consors* at Doissetep are becoming jaded, methodical, and unimaginative in their duties, and how he must give something to the covenant if he is to become a Pontifex. He then says, "I wish to give my covenant you, for through you it will grow strong. I will make you into a band, and you will challenge Remel for the winter star, and, failing that, the spring star. Now which of you will be in charge, who shall become the *consors*? Very well, if you win you shall be rewarded. I shall allow your masters to copy from our arcane books in our arcane library for one season, and I shall give each of you ten gold crowns (worth 100 pennies each)." If they do not agree to this, they are escorted immediately out of Doissetep. If they agree, the player-magi are informed of their new rights at Doissetep, and the other characters are shown to their separate quarters.

Scene Four) The character who was selected to become the *consors* goes through the whole ritual, described in the text above, with the other characters assisting as elements of the band. Here they meet with other young hopefuls, as well as Remel again. Begin to introduce them to some of the intrigue and gossip that goes on among the covenfolk. Make sure you have detailed a few interesting characters, like the overburdened schoolmaster, the cook to whom everyone goes for advice, and the pompous chief servant. All in all, the characters are treated with rough respect, but they are feared and avoided, and when they are spoken to, they are asked what they are really up to. The covenfolk do not understand Nysakean's motivations and think that they are being tested for some reason. Therefore the characters are constantly watched by at least three or four people (usually more) and are followed everywhere. If they try to enter an area forbidden to them, such as a wizard's laboratory, they will be told emphatically that they must leave. Some of the other Flamen, especially Nysakean's rivals, may question the party, but if the party knows what is good for them, they will not speak of what Nysakean has told them.

Scene Five) Turn now to focus on the magi, who have to deal with the overprotective librarians, as well as the constant gossip about what is happening with the other characters. (Much of it is unkind: "Did you see that big oaf fall on his face?") Basically, they are able to get a lot of great studying done, with all the fine tomes on the various arts that are available. Over the course of the rest of the story, the other characters may go to the magi for advice or even aid, but magical help is "against the rules," and for the most part they should not be involved.

Scene Six) The games begin. Officially the characters are the band of Nysakean and work for him. They become involved in all sorts of activities, ranging from the mundane (bring Nysakean breakfast) to the exotic (chasing a mountain goat around the mountain). They are likely to be given all kinds of challenges as the covenfolk attempt to prove their superiority. Be sure that the players have a broad range of decisions from which they can choose, and that they are not being shuttled around on a preprogrammed tour of Doissetep.

Scene Seven) If they do well enough in their duties, they will be asked to be a part of the contest for the winter star. You will have to decide how this tournament is being run, but be sure to make it interesting, and do not forget you can use any number of weird devices or rules to make things interesting. However, when it comes right down to it, Nysakean does not want them to win the contest — that could demoralize the covenfolk. He wants the characters to come close in order to scare Doissetep into renewed energy, but not to actually defeat Remel. He will use magic, threats, and ultimately rewards to prevent them from winning. Do the characters bow down to his will, or has the game become important to them and therefore they try to win anyway? This could be a glorious story of striving under the face of immense adversity, and could give the grogs and companions involved great depth as characters.

Conclusion) If the characters end up in the good favor of Doissetep, they will be welcome to visit in the future, though they will never have such free reign to explore again. This could become a long term basis for a Saga, as you only need excuses for the characters to be visiting Doissetep, for if the "band" does well in the "games," they are likely to always have friends at Doissetep.

# Val-negra



**Symbol:** *A wagon wheel with spokes made of swords.*

**Season:** *Winter*

**House Affiliation:** *House Flambeau (originally)*

**Aura:** 8

**Members:** 6 Magi; *Astella of House Jerbiton; Vancasitum of House Flambeau; Lumistus and Berenguer of House Criamon; Abaddon and Erat Caecus of House Tytalus.*

**Year Founded:** 774

**Characteristics —**

**Watch:** -2      **Defense:** -1      **Contacts:** -9      **Morale:** -2

**Number of Grogs:** 80

**Armaments:** *Poor*

**Library —** *In hideous shape; it's falling apart. The scores below were actually higher at one time, but many of the books are unreadable or lost now. Those books dealing with the specialties of the remaining magi are in great shape.*

Cr: 7	In: 4	Mu: 4	Pe: 3	Re: 9
An: 2	Aq: 3	Au: 1	Co: 18	He: 15
Ig: 23	Im: 23	Me: 2	Te: 8	Vi: 8

**Major Lores:** *The library at Val-negra used to be one of the largest in the world, but it has fallen into disrepair so we've given it an overall Library Score of +3. Use this as the modifier to your stress roll to see if you've found the answer to any question instead of the score for that particular knowledge.*

**Outside relations:** *All but forgotten*

This decaying covenant is the home of a handful of slightly mad wizards, as well as a host of deformed servants. Val-negra is the home of the soon-to-be departed, a covenant on the brink of destruction. In ruins, the physical structure of the covenant reflects the inner nature of the people who are left. It has seen better days, and is now a forlorn husk of what it once was — its inhabitants merely go through the motions of running things, but nothing real is actually getting done.

The wizards are all very old and strange, and are each given to their own eccentricities. The covenfolk are simply weird and are not quite human. Visiting Val-negra can be a deeply disturbing experience, for one can see the universal process of entropy and decay at work there, yet there are many wonders to be discovered as well.

Val-negra fell into winter almost 90 years ago, but because of its extremely long history and methodical accumulation of enduring resources, it has been able to hold on this long. It stopped relations with the rest of the Order of Hermes quite some time ago, and now few other magi realize that it still exists. Val-negra is a covenant of legend, and it is not common knowledge that it is in fact still inhabited and still functions as a covenant (so to speak).

## Location

Deep in the twisted gorge of the Tessier river, where the sun rarely shines, is the covenant of Val-negra. Atop a short cliff overlooking the river, the ruins of a once mighty covenant sits — yet it is not entirely uninhabited, people live there still. Val-negra is located on the southern slopes of the Pyrenees mountains, in what today is northern Iberia. No one really knows its precise location, for one cannot simply travel to Val-negra; there is really only one way to get there.

A very old magus by the name of Temtisius of House Ex Miscellanea, who lives alone in a cave in the Pyrenees, knows something of it. He says, "You must find the end of a certain gorge and once you find it, you must take a nights sleep, which, if my memory serves me, will give you very strange and hideous dreams of an underground world of terror and blight. The end of this gorge is marked with a moss covered pylon with the symbol of Val-negra engraved into it, though it has been largely worn away. Once you awaken, you must walk into the gorge, until such a time as it becomes a very treacherous walk, with nearly vertical cliffs on each side of the river. Then you will find a narrow path cut into the side of the west wall. By following this path, you reach Val-negra within 7 hours of entering the gorge. Finding the covenant when not in the gorge is impossible, and even the inhabitants of this covenant do not attempt to do so. It is some sort of enchantment, though I do not think it is based on a faerie glamour or the Shrouded Glen. It is somehow different." This gorge is the one route of access. Attempts to approach it in any other way will automatically fail. Additionally *all* of the travelers must sleep, otherwise none of them will find the path.

It is a warm and pleasant climate in this area, though the winter cold winds sometimes rush down from the mountains. This is a very rugged part of the country, one not given to much besides shepherding. The covenant discourages settlement, but there is a village of sorts not more than two hours from the end of the gorge. This village is used at a resting spot for those traveling forth from Val-negra (rare as that is). The covenant even maintains a house there for the convenience of its members. The villagers will not speak of Val-negra, regardless of the circumstances — they are very superstitious and frightened of the "watchers."

People who walk along the gorge will not be challenged by any guards, nor will any one take any notice as they walk across the bridge. Only when they get to the main gate will anyone become aware of them, and not even then if the guard is asleep. The guard is there purely out of tradition and ceremony, no one has left or visited the covenant in over thirty years.

## Fortress

This old and decrepit fortress, built in the Moorish style, is dug along the side of a rocky gorge. A long low covenant, it stretches out to cover a vast area in the rocky terrain overlooking the deepest part of the gorge, but is still in the river valley. Now mostly in ruins and in a state of ever increasing decay, the covenant has seen better days, yet somehow it still lives on. Amid the debris of a once grand and opulent covenant are the shattered remnants of its walls, towers, and marble halls. The ruins themselves reflect the demented nature of its inhabitants. Many of the ruins are covered with a vast garden, part of it composed of a jungle of plants, part of it entirely of rock (see below). There is the occasional building which still stands, and much of the enormous outer wall is still intact, yet most of the covenant is still in ruins. Dotted here and there among the gardens and the ruins are the pits. These large, deep holes in the rock lead down into a network of caves and passages in which some of the magi have their laboratories, and where many of the covenfolk live as well. While some of the pits have steps around the edge which allow you to walk down into them, others have only rope ladders or living vines from the garden reaching down into them. This style of covenant design might already be known to the characters if they have had a chance to explore the ruins of the covenant of Calebais, which was founded by magi who were apprenticed at Val-negra.



Leading from the covenant is a stone bridge which crosses the gorge and connects to the trail, the only feasible route to the covenant. (See the picture on this page.)

Most of Val-negra was built at the time of the founding of the Order of Hermes, and parts of it predate even that era. There are old stone buildings of unknown origin with a very strange architecture. Rounded and low, they have oval doorways and windows. This motif has been carried over to other parts of the covenant, and is something Val-negra was once noted for. Indeed, the covenant symbol is that of a wagon wheel with spokes made of swords. The use of the circle in many magical enchantments as the symbol for eternity certainly seems to suit this covenant which is such a relic from the past.

## Inhabitants

The wizards of Val-negra are extremely old and decayed. Many are insane, others have faced Wizard's Twilight and are only just barely hanging on to reality, and the rest are totally unconcerned with the state of the covenant, spending all their time on their own arcane pursuits. This is a dead and dying covenant, and its inhabitants reflect that. The only way to truly understand Val-negra is to know the wizards who inhabit it. It is their personalities which shape this strange place.

To understand the following magi it is important that you understand the concept of Wizard's Twilight (which will be fully explained in the *Order of Hermes™* supplement). As magi get older and achieve increasing mastery of magic, they start to lose a handle on reality. Their arts become the sole focus for their life and they slowly start to lose their humanity. Eventually, one final grand spell or dangerous botch knocks them over the edge and they lose touch with their faculties completely. Many times, these magi have to be hunted down by the Order before they do harm to other members of the Order, or even worse, cause trouble amongst the mortals.

## Lumistus of House Criamon

Lumistus is the most active of the senior magi, though his strange beliefs concerning the nature of reality can make his behavior unpredictable. He is often struck with vivid and eerie visions (which sometimes are even visible to observers because of the intensity of Val-negra's aura) and he often follows them to the exclusion of common sense. Lumistus left his clutch (as he calls his home covenant) long ago, following his visions to this place, when it was still one of the most powerful covenants in the Order. He still has a tendency to follow his visions wherever they take him, but for the last half a century they have not taken him outside the covenant walls, which is fortunate, for he is very frail and quite decrepit. If the covenant has a leader it is him, but only because he is the least senile and the most energetic. He certainly does not consider himself a leader, nor does he make any efforts to get the others to follow him. Lumistus would rather go along with a ludicrous plan than deliberate at length about a serious one. Debate is not his forte.

He has shifted in and out of his visions and dreams so much that he no longer sees distinctions between different levels of consciousness. Sometimes he is aware of his body (a state which most people would call "waking"). Sometimes he is only slightly aware of others, and sees them as shadows that are all about him. Lumistus scarcely notices the states of consciousness of another person and has been seen conversing with a sleeping person. When Lumistus faces his final twilight, he will probably drift away with one of his visions, leaving his comatose body behind.

## Abaddon the Necromancer of House Tyalus

While Abaddon is rarely seen in the flesh, his handiwork is everywhere. Throughout the covenant are skulls through which he can watch and hear the goings on of the covenant, as well as speak through them. Abaddon is known to have a keen eye, and will emerge in wrath from his

underground laboratory to confront those who have transgressed his strange code. This code of conduct is so contorted and full of exceptions that no one but he understands it. However, one peculiarity is his distaste for those who use too many or superfluous adjectives when they speak.

To make matters even more confusing, it is never really known when it is actually him you are talking to, or if it is his illusionary double. Because he is such a skilled magus in most of the arts, the double can pick up things and carry them around, just as the real Abaddon can (elaborations on the "Unseen Arm" spell). Some say Abaddon has used the double so much over the years that it is developing its own personality, and some claim they can tell who is who. One of the librarians claims that while she was speaking to a very courteous Abaddon about returning a book, another Abaddon came along and chastised her for wearing a ribbon on her robe. With wizards as old as these, anything is to be believed. Abaddon actually can have more than one double, and has perfected the ability to do more than one thing at a time with them (he has mastered a lot of spells). One double usually spends a lot of time in the chamber of illusions, another keeps watch over the covenant through the skulls, while the third is involved in arcane experimentation.

At all costs, Abaddon wants to keep the covenant shut off from the rest of the Order. He desires this out of what can almost be seen as noble intentions, to prevent a spread of the evil that he believes Val-negra has unleashed but keeps contained behind the iron door (see below). Since he is the only one who understands the evil's full extent and danger, upon his death, the reason for keeping isolated will be gone as well. Once he is gone, the danger, whether it be goblins or demons, will be free to infiltrate the rest of the Order of Hermes.

Abaddon has his laboratory far beneath the covenant, in a cavern that was long ago hollowed out by the action of the river, and is connected by tunnels to the pits. As part of his studies, he has gathered the remains of wizards for quite some time and stored them in silver urns. This allows him access to the ghosts of these wizards too. They are stored in a chamber near his laboratory, a room of powerful enchantment and deep illusions. Inside that room, the ghosts believe they are still alive, and they all belong to a covenant called Tagelyn, which has been infiltrated by demons. Abaddon watches their research and takes notes of all their different attempts to repel the demons and protect themselves. He uses these as a resource for his studies, as well as a means to test his ideas of what could happen to the Order if the iron door was opened someday.

## Vancasitum of House Flambeau

The oldest magi at Val-negra, and indeed in all of southern Europe, is Vancasitum. One of the magi who helped make Val-negra a power to be contended with, he has had the unfortunate responsibility of overseeing the decay of his once formidable covenant. He has held on for one hundred and thirty years, but most believe that death or Twilight will catch up to him before he sees one hundred and fifty. Some of the covenfolk have even placed bets on it. One cook's assistant in particular has bet one thousand buckets of water from the well that he will depart within three years.

Vancasitum is one of the saddest of all wizards, for he is a Flambeau too old to fight. His younger years were filled with raging battles, drinking and boasting with his house fellows, and a number far-flung explorations that are still spoken of today. Now he is able to do nothing that he truly cares for, and has ceased to even study the arts. Vancasitum spends his time wandering the covenant, muttering to himself and lost in thought. Occasionally he will absentmindedly destroy something that is in his way or is bothering him, whether it be living or dead. For that reason, he is best avoided.

Due to previous wandering in and out of Twilight, Vancasitum tends to be quite, slow, and reserved, despite his very active past. It is clear that many of his faculties are impaired, but for the most part he is given all the respect due a person of his age. Little is barred from him, and he is given all that he asks for.

Vancasitum's most striking feature is his left eye. While he uses his right one normally, his left eye seems to have a will and intelligence of its own, and it looks at the world quite independently of the right.

His familiar is an aged, tawny-feathered hawk named Taris, whose wings will no longer bear her and whose eyes are rheumy. She speaks with

a squawky voice and spends her time recounting the glorious battles that she fought with Vancasitum years ago. "You remind me of that Saracen we torched back in 37. He had this ring that..." Taris and Vancasitum no longer get along, and when they do bother to speak with one another, it a continuation of one of their old arguments, "There you go again you tawny feather duster."

According to the Peripheral Code of Hermes, since he is the oldest magi in the Provençal tribunal of wizards, the meetings should be held here at Val-negra under his auspices and direction. However, long ago, the wizards at Doissetep won that privilege away from him, and now he languishes here at the covenant in relative obscurity. If asked if he is the oldest, he will reply, "No, no, not the oldest, not the oldest, just the most experienced. And don't you forget it, I can still shove a Pilum of Fire up your nose!"

## Astella of House Jerbiton

Astella is a withered old woman with only wispy strands of grey hair on her head. She wears a gaudy medallion around her neck which not only has magical powers but is chock-full of *vis*. Her clothing is simple in cut and brown in color, and includes a large leather apron with ample pockets for gathering fruits, carrying seeds, and holding small tools. The bounty of her garden is almost always magical and usually contains *vis*. She does not mind if others pick from her garden, as long as they do so in moderation and do not use iron. She will instantly be aware if someone begins to methodically gather from her garden, and will quickly put a stop to it.

She can usually be found tending the expansive gardens that cover much of the covenant, using a bizarre implement of her own design: a mixture of a shovel and a hoe, arrayed with a variety of hooks and spikes. She welcomes people to her gardens as long as they respect and admire them, but anyone who touches a plant or the earth with iron will feel her wrath. Being close to Twilight, she prefers to menace the disrespectful with her shovel rather than a spell. If an apology is not forthcoming however, she will use her magical might to punish the offenders.

She lives in a few small chambers in the center of the garden, but they have decayed over the years (her laboratory equipment is in shambles, and the books are all mouldy) as she spends all of her waking time in the garden.

## The Servants

Over the years, the number of servants who serve the magi has neither grown nor shrunk; there have always been 300 members of the Aerie clan that serve the covenant. They have a grayish cast to their skin, and around others they tend to be as silent as the mountains beneath which they live. The halls of the covenant are usually filled with these ghost-like figures, walking noiselessly on their perpetual errands. To those who have lived at the covenant for any period of time, these servants are practically invisible. The magi notice them only when they need them.

Whether the magical aura has "touched" the clan, or whether they have always been this strange is not known. These covenfolk will say that they have "always lived here" and that they cannot imagine living anywhere else. These folk know very little of the outside world, and speak a very different dialect of Provençal than most people.

The grogs at Val-negra have developed their traditions into a cult of sorts. Each grog feels that they *are* one of the original grog heroes from the glory days of Val-negra. Whenever a grog dies, all the covenfolk gather around the ceremonial bier and wait for the soul of that grog to enter one of them. Thereafter, that grog takes on the identity, occupation, and name of the deceased. Thus, the grogs feel that they will never die, since death just passes on the identity of that grog to another (sort of a rebirth). The grogs have great loyalty and courage, since they do not fear death; but alas, they have nothing to prove their worth against, since the magi have quit sending or leading expeditions out of the covenant entirely. Therefore, the grog's actual skills have decayed like the rest of the covenant and a sturdy force could probably rout them. The number of grogs is on the decline, since recently, some of the deceased have failed to "come back," though the turb has not let that shake their faith. Some ludicrous combinations of grogs have occurred, such as when a grog of great fighting skill was

"reborn" in the body of a scullery maid. To say the least, she did not last very long. Whether these grogs are actually reborn or not is still being debated amongst the magi of Val-negra — that is on those few occasions when they actually get together.

The covenfolk are very proud of their station and are convinced that Val-negra is the most powerful covenant in the world. They do not seem to be aware of the decay around them. The thought of leaving the covenant fills them with fear, and they feel themselves fortunate that the magi rarely go on expeditions anymore. Their leaders are a pair of twins, who are designated as the Autocrat of the Interior (Romulus) and the Autocrat of the Exterior (Remus). These two excel at their duties and somehow manage to keep the covenant going, but they are intense rivals. Romulus, the more dominant of the two, actively fights any plans which involve the covenant with the outside world — he thinks the covenant has enough problems without bringing new ones in from the outside. Remus has dreams of returning Val-negra to its former glory, but is hindered at every turn by Romulus. If Remus can bring some new blood into the covenant, he feels that his plans have a chance to work. The clan members all desire to have twins, for when these children reach the age of 16, they will be the next Autocrats and will be given the names Romulus and Remus. And so it has been since the founding of the covenant. What happens to the old Autocrats is unknown.

## Outside relations

The rest of the world seems to have forgotten that Val-negra even exists. Though it was never all that famous in the mundane world, its reputation once was great in the Order of Hermes. Even though it is one of the oldest covenants, founded soon after the Order in the eight century, in the last century it has slipped into complete obscurity. At one time, it held great power and magi traveled from afar to study at its library. Today, few people visit, and most do not even know it still exists. As a legend, Val-negra still exists; many magi still speak of the mystical wonders said to have been found there at one time — the ancient books of the Order make that quite clear. Many wizards, having found tantalizing references to this covenant in one tome or another, have often felt the desire to visit this place, but the knowledge of how to get there has been lost for sometime. Ash of the Broken Branch is the only Redcap who does know of the existence of Val-negra, and visits occasionally to bring news to the magi there. According to their wishes, however, she does not speak of its existence to others.

## Mystical Attributes

Val-negra has a glorious past, and many of the artifacts from that age still survive, though in a somewhat deteriorated condition. None of its magical artifacts work in the way they were originally intended, but most of them still function somewhat. The powerful magical aura (8) of the covenant gives rise to many strange but natural magical occurrences and can add interesting or dangerous effects on already existing items. Even if a magus brings a personal magical item into Val-negra, even if only for a short while, it may develop interesting magical effects, which it will subsequently lose upon being taken out of the aura.

The most famous mystical attribute of Val-negra is the Garden of Creeping Rocks, which is still spoken of today. This is not a garden of plants; it is a garden of living rocks. Located in the northwest corner of the covenant, it now covers roughly two acres of what was once the main grog barracks for the covenant. They now are in total ruins and compose the base of this very strange garden.

Over one hundred years ago, the magus Mierella, a Terram wizard, tended this highly magical spot within the covenant walls. She gathered *vis* for the covenant by growing crystals of rock on the sides of the buildings located there. After her death, the covenant went "wild" and it remains in that state today. Now it is a mass of strange colored rocks that seem to grow on their own. The *vis* now comes in the form of gems and crystals that "bud" from the stoney "trees" and "vines" that grow up from the ruins. It is still possible to gather *vis*, but it is a disturbing task and is sometimes perilous as well, for the garden has come to life and is said to be sentient. The garden currently provides the covenant with nearly sixty pawns of



Terram *vis* each year. Anyone can take more from it, but they must return something to the garden or face its wrath.

There is another garden in the covenant, but this one contains real plants. Astella's Garden has slowly grown over the years to spread across all the ruined areas of the covenant not already in use. Covering over five acres, it is a vast jungle of flowers, bushes, and trees. Hidden in its depths are a great many exotic varieties of plants from all over the world, including many from different magical glades and faerie forests. Astella's garden provides all the food for the covenant with its trees full of fruit and vegetable covered vines. The varieties of food to be found in the garden is staggering and their magical composition probably augments the weirdness and otherworldliness of all Val-negra's inhabitants.

The Tulifor Stone is a large, carved rock which vaguely resembles the shape of a boat. Located by the river, nestled just underneath the bridge, it is indeed a boat and it can float. The Tulifor stone is capable of propelling itself up and down the river at a speed equal to a running dog. It has not been used in decades, and so it may have gained other powers or even consciousness about which the folk of Val-negra know nothing.

The Shroud is the very strange protective shield that prevents most people from travelling to the covenant. Though no one knows anymore whether it is a natural attribute of the covenant site or an enchantment made by a magus, it is known that it has allowed Val-negra to avoid contact with the outside world for forty years. More than simply a shield of course, the Shroud actually makes the covenant's location non-existent unless you take the correct procedure to get there. If careful calibrations of time were taken by a magus who spent time both inside and out of the covenant, they would discover that each year, Val-negra seems to "skip" a day. That is, time moves more slowly within the covenant than outside of it. Moreover, time is continuing to slow down within the covenant as it distances itself further and further from the outside world. This is not an unknown phenomenon — in portions of Durenmar, the center of the Order of Hermes located in the Black Forest, the same phenomenon occurs. In fact, some magi purposely spend much of their time there, so that they can extend the span of time that their lives cover and play a role in the future of the Order. Eventually, if Val-negra remains as removed from the rest of the world as it is now, only a day will pass in the covenant for each year that passes outside.

At the very bottom of the deepest of the pits beneath the covenant, there is a huge trap-door, constructed of iron, with all sorts of strange runes and symbols traced upon it. Each year, this door needs to be re-enchanted, with warding spells and special Aegis rituals, or the "things" which live in the world beneath the door will be able to break into the covenant. The covenfolk do not know what lives down there, in the "underworld," but they do know that it is too horrible to think about. The magi all know what lives underneath the door, but they refuse to speak of it, as if mentioning it could bring great peril upon the covenant. However, a common suspicion is that those tunnels behind the door eventually lead to Hell. References are made in certain old tomes of "the pits of Val-negra," and their link with "the dark land of boiled lead."

Of course, there are as well the skulls of Abaddon, as described above, that can be found dotted throughout the covenant, watching everyone and everything. They add quite a bit of interest to the covenant, for Abaddon can speak through them and yell at people who are doing something he dislikes — which can be practically anything, for he hates visitors.

The arcane library is overseen by Romulus, the Autocrat of the Interior, who pays little attention to it and seems to want to pretend it does not exist. Those who try to speak to him about it will be ignored. This immense library is strictly off limits to anyone but the older magi (those who have been here 50 years or more) and is constantly guarded by two grogs as well as one of Abaddon's skulls. It is run by the senile librarian, Telimius, who is very jealous of her library and is terrified that the books might be harmed if handled by the young or foolish. Younger magi (any player-characters) can earn entrance by doing favors for the librarian or the older wizards (who will use their authority to gain entrance for the younger wizards). The books themselves are in terrible shape, most are at least a little mouldy, and more than a few have missing pages (a wizard tore it out for reference while on an expedition). If some maintenance is not done soon, all that will be left of this vast library will be a few scattered piles of mush.

## Mundane Resources

The covenant has a great deal of mundane equipment, useful for all sorts of expeditions, though it has no pack animals or other living creatures. All of this equipment is in very bad shape, and is as likely to fall apart as it is to stay intact. It has been decades since Val-negra last purchased supplies, or had any competent crafters within the covenant's walls. Armor and weapons are all rusted, clothing is often moth eaten, leather packs have rips, and the boats all have holes. These things can be repaired of course, but at the present time no one has bothered. They have learned to do without some basic amenities, such as woven cloth, and have regressed into a more primitive society. Magic is so rife at Val-negra that the mundane crafts have been severely neglected and many have been forgotten. This covenant is a weird mixture of crude barbarity and a mystical sophistication more advanced and powerful than anything that can still be experienced on earth.

Val-negra also has a huge mundane library, which adjoins the arcane library. In days past, the wizards of Val-negra aided the Christian Knights in the Reconquista (their attempt to wrestle Iberia from the Moors) and were able to glean huge numbers of books from the magnificent Moorish libraries. This library surely used to be the largest in the Order of Hermes, with possibly over seven thousand books (an unheard of number), but the number of useable books is well below that. Many of them are in obscure languages, however, that are not likely to be known by many magi, and like the arcane library, many are in pitiful shape and will fall apart when first opened. Truly a tragedy.

## Obligations

Val-negra has a number of different obligations, accumulated during its years of Winter, but not as many as you might expect. Its isolation from the outside world has prevented it from building up any large debts. After its slide into Winter, most of its obligations were forgotten, as the covenant was thought to have been destroyed. It does have, however, one unavoidable obligation: the casting of the ritual spell each year on the Iron Door at the bottom of the pits. Requiring twenty pawns of *vis* each year, it is expensive to maintain, but vital for the survival of the covenant.

## Story ideas

Val-negra is a place for the weird, and thus stories centering around it should be as strange as the setting. Use Val-negra as a place to tell strange tales of all varieties — "Twilight Zone" type tales are especially suitable. It's easy to do, simply make everything seem eerie and always put in a touch of the strange when you are at a loss for things to do. If your covenant is to be Val-negra, then of course you cannot always have such stories, but they should still predominate. The efforts to bring the covenant back to Spring (if that is a motivation for your characters) should take up a great deal of time and energy, and set backs should be common place. An important part of the Saga could be the attempt to win back the tribunal to Val-negra and foil the nefarious plots of Doissetep once and for all.

## Turin's Dream

Background) Abaddon of Val-negra collects ghosts, especially the ghosts of magi. He keeps the remains of a large number of wizards (including their hearts, brains, and little bits of everything else) in little magical urns made of silver. Many of these wizards were once Abaddon's peers at Val-negra, but others are ones he has obtained through the excursions of his younger years. The ghosts of these wizards spend their time in a special room of illusions, which Abaddon has built around the urns, in which they believe they still live in a real world (in a covenant called "Tagelyn" located in Wales, of which they are all members). In that world, the urns appear, but are magical artifacts, and Abaddon appears as a crazed old Hedge-wizard who occasionally shows up to use the library. Abaddon uses these ghosts to solve problems for him. He simply introduces a dilemma into the world of Tagelyn and waits for them to find a solution. He usually has them face demons, and uses them as a means to store and gain great knowledge about demons. However, things have started to go awry.



One of the ghostly magi took over the mind of a grog (who had wandered into the room of urns and thus the ghostly world) and escaped Val-negra with his own urn. Yet he is not sure if he has really escaped, or if it is still just part of the illusions, and that Abaddon is simply playing with his mind yet again. He only has limited magical powers over the world, and the body of the grog gets tired twice as fast (from casting spells) as a normal body would.

**Scene One)** Somehow, the urn with the ghost of the magus who calls himself Old Knobbs, as well as the strange grog who carries it, gets in the hands of the characters. At first the characters might not believe that Val-negra still exists (it is assumed that it was destroyed long ago), and certainly the garbled and insane story of Old Knobbs confuses them. Old Knobbs is unsure if they are real or not and thinks he sees Abaddon everywhere (whom he now believes is the 'dark force' in his life).

**Scene Two)** The characters trace the urn back to Val-negra, assuring themselves it really comes from there. If Old Knobbs will not tell them how to get to the covenant, they will have to find an older magus who was alive when Val-negra still existed and persuade them to relinquish that information. Big question: do they return the urn or do they keep it?

**Scene Three)** If they keep the urn, the redcap, Ash of the Broken Branch (see *The Broken Covenant of Calebais*) brings an announcement made by Abaddon which describes the urn and talks about how dangerous it is. He asks for it to be returned to him, for a suitable reward of course, and threatens to kill anyone who possesses it but does not return it. The Order is buzzing with news of this announcement. Most of the magi believe it is a hoax of some sort. Certainly all are surprised to hear word of a covenant thought for so long to be gone. Ash of the Broken Branch at first will not lead them to Val-negra, saying only "leave them to what little peace they can find." Ash, as a fellow "magi," has the right to refuse to tell the player-magi how to get to Val-negra.

Yet, the magi must find a way to get there. Three are listed here, but there are probably many more that players could come up with. 1) Spend time doing research in the library of either their own or another covenant. This will take one season and requires an Int + Scribe Latin roll of 10+ to get enough clues for a rough idea. 2) Talk to a number of older magi, and try to get them to remember what they can about Val-negra's location. This will take an extended story. 3) Simply tell Ash that they have the urn and she will then grudgingly take them to Val-negra (but only after trying to persuade them to simply let her take the urn to Abaddon, "So that you don't get into any trouble; these aren't spring chickens you're dealing with here!").

**Scene Four)** The journey to Val-negra is likely to be a long one, depending on where the characters' home covenant is located. It can be filled with whatever encounters you like, but try to keep them short (unless the players are itching for a fight, in that case get them in a fight with a score of mountain bandits who do not who they are up against, and try steal the urn.)

During the entire journey, Old Knobbs tells them all sorts of things about Abaddon and Val-negra, things which should encourage the players not to turn the urn in immediately upon reaching Val-negra. Old Knobbs definitely makes them realize how knowledgeable and useful he is (perhaps in some area favored by the characters), yet how dangerous Abaddon can be as well. Old Knobbs, however, will not help them travel to Val-negra, and may even find ways to make it exceedingly difficult — remember he still has limited spell casting powers. He could confuse the guide and make the whole party walk the wrong way, give the magus misinformation, or even attract hostile creatures to their camp — all without the characters really knowing that he is screwing things up for them.

**Scene Five)** The characters reach the village of Perdut, and there they find that the villagers think they are the "watchers". These simple folk show them to this extremely old, but very well built mansion, and bring them food, for they think that they are magi from Val-negra who have returned to claim their house. The peasants are expecting something very good to occur from their charity, so if the characters return someday and nothing has happened, they may show their disappointment in violent ways. From directions they are given at the village, the characters find themselves at the pylon at the end of the gorge. If they know what they are doing, they will spend the night here, for only by doing so will they ever find Val-negra. They all have a very strange and vivid dream, the same one,

which should be prepared ahead of time. It should fit in with the rest of the story, in both theme, style, and flavor. Having experienced the dream they can complete their journey to Val-negra.

**Scene Six)** All of Val-negra is shocked at having visitors — many of the covenfolk run and hide. Val-negra has been isolated for far too long and it will be quite some time before it becomes adjusted to visitors. When the people from Val-negra speak, they should have a thick accent which is difficult for the players to understand because the Val-negra dialect has changed so much from the standard.

**Scene Seven)** Since the grogs and most of the companions have no magical powers (e.g. no "gift"), they are treated as "servants" by all the people at Val-negra, giving them the marvelous ability to wander wherever they want in the covenant without being noticed; even into a wizard's laboratory. The magi, on the other hand, as well as any companions with the "gift", are closely watched and can only wander about when accompanied by one of the Autocrats. The magi at Val-negra will only speak with the player-magi, but it's the other characters who will be able to obtain the most information. Allow the characters to explore the covenant, get into trouble, and find it impossible to uncover any really useful information or get anything done. Play Val-negra to the hilt — make the players feel in their bones how strange it is. If the players do not like that sort of thing, it is not a good idea to have a story based on this covenant in the first place.

**Scene Eight)** Somehow, the players get an excuse to start exploring the pits, something only the grogs and non-gifted companions can really do. They must discover the chamber of illusions, enter that world, and find out what is going on there. Then, they must confront Abaddon and either return the urn and Old Knobbs, or somehow find some other solution. You will have to create the plot, the characters, the action, and indeed the entire world of Tagelyn.

**Conclusion)** Of course, in the future, more trips can be made to Val-negra. Now that the characters know how to get there, future trips could be very productive affairs. They could even venture to this covenant to pledge for the sigils of the magi, so as to gain use of them for a tribunal — those extra few votes could make all the difference — and what a surprise they would be to the covenant's enemies. Of course, what could Val-negra possibly expect in return? What could the characters possibly do that would get those magi interested in the outside world again?

Abaddon may actually come to trust the characters enough that he will give them his notes about what types of spells and strategies his ghosts came up with to battle the demons.

Lastly the characters could eventually delve beyond the iron door, to find out what kind of danger actually is found there. One satisfying ending could be that there is nothing at all, that it was all a delusion. Another could be that the tunnels behind it actually do lead to Hell.

Since this is a subtle story of mystery and innuendo, you will have to gather together a list of clues which you can provide your players; make it a puzzle for them to try to piece together. There are many mysteries you will have to prepare; the first adventure will concern just getting to Val-negra in the first place. Slowly you can let it dawn on the players that they must find a gorge, that there is a pylon at its end, and that the covenant is on the south (warm, rough) side of Pyrenees. Once they have done that, you can complete the rest of the story design.

P.S.) In the end, the characters may discover that they and their covenant are not real, but that they are actually part of the illusion. Old Knobbs is a test put to them by Abaddon, for they are actually the spirits of magi who have long been dead whose remains are found in the urns. They could try to escape themselves, or they could continue to game in a world that is not quite real while occasionally delving into the "outer world."

(Note: Tagelyn and Val-negra were actually *Ars Magica* Sagas played by the Lion's Pride troupes, and provided us with many hours of excellent roleplaying. However, it is important to realize how extreme they are, and that most covenants, even winter covenants, are not nearly as strange. Feel free to make your covenants just as exotic, but remember that we had as much fun roleplaying at Mistrudge as we did at Val-negra — and it was a good deal less frustrating to boot.)



**Covenant Name:**

**Covenant Symbol:**

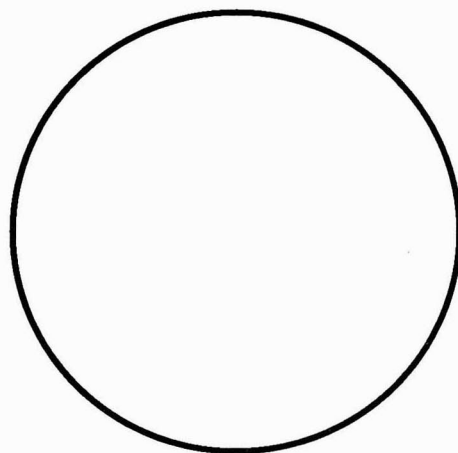
Founded in the Year:

Current Year:

House Affiliation (if any):

Covenant Reputation:

**Honorable Members:**



Watch \_\_\_\_

Defense \_\_\_\_

Contacts \_\_\_\_

Morale \_\_\_\_

**Location**

Where:

Aura:

Nearest City:

**Fortress**

Size:

Defensibility:

Integrity:

**Grogs**

Number of Grogs:

Grog Armaments:

Discipline:

Loyalty:

**Outside World**

Church Relations:

Nobility:

Hermetic Relations:

Enemies & Rivals:

Magical Resources

Arcane Library:	Cr	An	Ig	VIS:	Cr	An	Ig
	In	Aq	Im		In	Aq	Im
	Mu	Au	Me		Mu	Au	Me
	Pe	Co	Te		Pe	Co	Te
	Re	He	Vi		Re	He	Vi

Mundane Resources

Source of Income:  
Library:

Obligations

Covenant History



"

*As there are Four Seasons in a year, there are Four Seasons in the life of a covenant. A covenant begins in Spring, a time of rapid growth but great instability, and then moves on to Summer, during which it comes into its prime of vitality and ambition. Autumn marks the highpoint of the covenant's influence, as the magi harvest from what has already been grown, but the decline into Winter is certain, when the covenant is barely able to cling to the shadow of life. While each covenant takes its own course through time, whatever path it charts, it always witnesses the inevitable unfolding of the seasons.'*

Dionasius of House Bonisagus

This supplement is a guide to the complete covenant and contains all the information you will need to create your own, unique wizards' covenant. These simple rules, by having you choose from a multitude of different attributes, allow you to create any sort of covenant you desire. You have in your hands the key to transforming your *Ars Magica*™ Saga.

Make it as detailed and complete as your characters. The covenant will become the central character in your Saga, one which all the players share, and here at last it is given fair treatment — and more. For any fantasy roleplaying game, this makes an excellent guide to that most enigmatic of all institutions. Have a look inside — the mysterious home of the wizard implores you to enter!

## The Complete Covenant



Also included are four extraordinary examples of actual *Ars Magica* covenants:

- Lariander:** Located in the middle of a bizarre faerie forest, this Spring covenant is on the brink of total chaos. The grogs are slothful, the companions decadent, and the magi inexperienced.

- Bellaquin:** A Summer covenant, it actually rules an entire fiefdom and deals extensively with the medieval nobility. It is the home of minstrels, sages, and all too much intrigue.

- Doissetep:** This sinister covenant is infamous among magi, and only partly because it has the largest library in Christendom. An Autumn covenant, its enormous mountain fastness in the Pyrenees is nearly impenetrable.

- Val-negra:** This Winter covenant is a place so strange, that it is slowly drifting away from the normal flow of time. Most magi think it was destroyed long ago; it may have been better if it was.