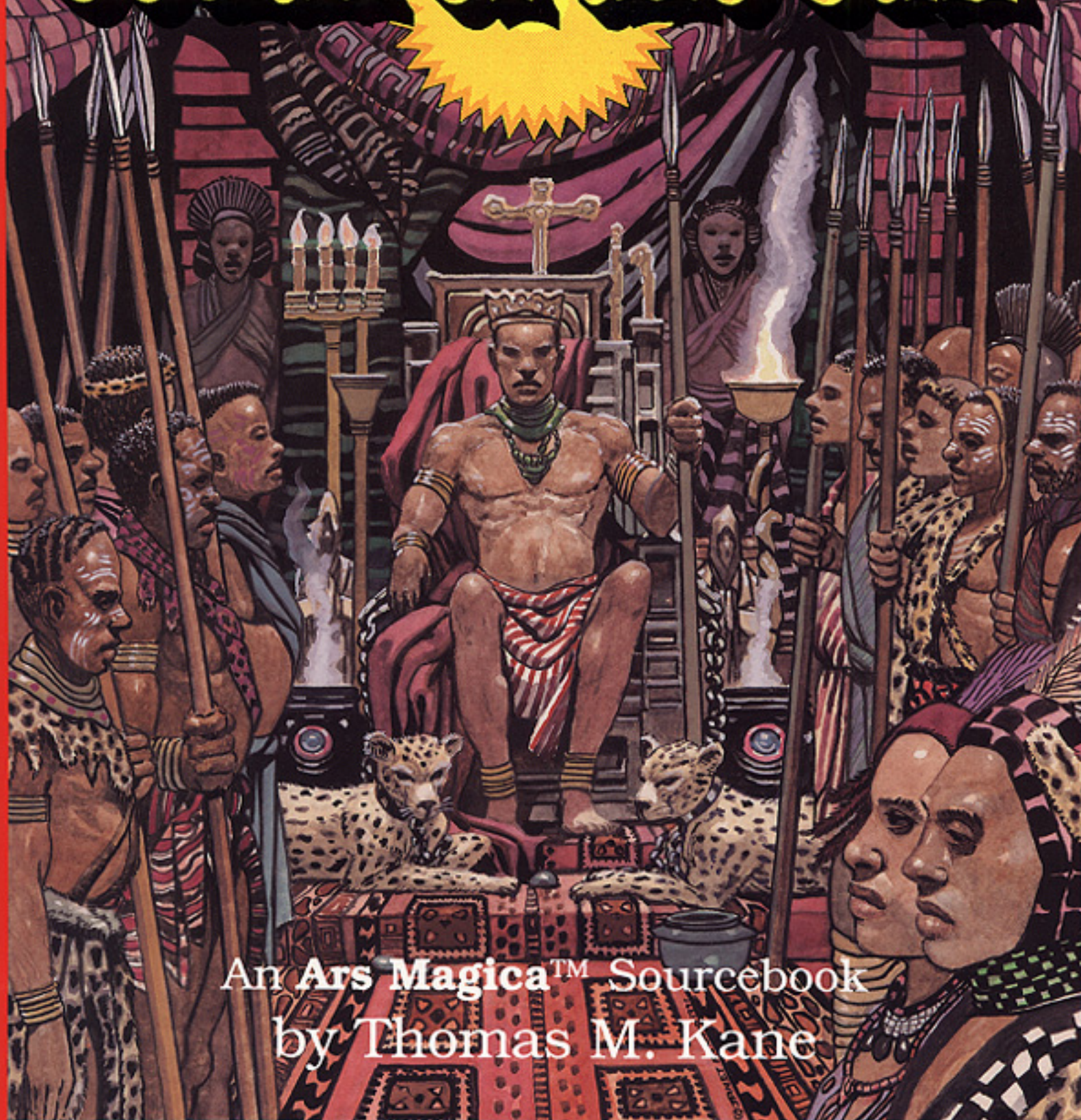


# South of the Sun



An **Ars Magica™** Sourcebook  
by Thomas M. Kane



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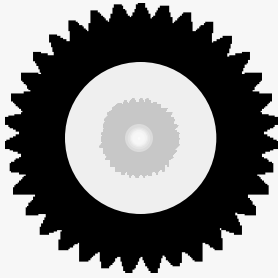
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## Chapter One

# Introduction

*I am the Emperor Prester John and I exceed in riches, virtue and power all creatures who dwell under heaven. Seventy-two kings pay tribute to me. I am a devout Christian and everywhere protect the Christians of the empire, nourishing them with alms... If you can count the stars of the sky and the sands of the sea, you will be able to judge thereby the vastness of our realm and our power.*

— Letter from the Good Prester John to the Emperor of Byzantium, late Twelfth Century A.D.

Early in the twelfth century, Europe received reports of a vast, Christian empire beyond the known world. In 1145, Bishop Hugh of Jabala (Syria) officially confirmed the stories in his report to the Pope. Bishop Hugh identified the ruler of this empire as one Prester John, a figure of such magnificence that he could afford a scepter of solid emerald. Following that, dozens of explorers and diplomats produced reports from the lands of Prester John.

Then the Emperor of Byzantium received an actual letter from the hand of Prester John. John expressed his interest in joining a Crusade. He also described his land in terms which soon became known throughout Europe. “My lands reach toward the rising place of the sun. Honey flows in my land and milk everywhere abounds. In one of our territories no poison can do harm and no noisy frog croaks, no scorpions are there and no serpents creep through the grass... In one of the heathen provinces flows a river called the Physon, which,

emerging from Paradise, winds and wanders through the entire province; and in it are found emeralds, sapphires, carbuncles, topazes, chrysolites, onyxes, sardonyxes and many other precious stones.”

Popes sent missionaries and kings sent ambassadors to the lands of this John. The explorer John of Plano Carpini, a Franciscan monk, traveled into the lands of the Mongols, and reported the existence of John’s empire. Friar Odoric of Pordenone actually visited the mysterious empire, although he reported that John had exaggerated the tales of his wealth. Roughly 150 years later, Marco Polo wrote that the empire of Prester John had fallen to Ghengis Khan.

The legend of Prester John is real. The Empire of Prester John was not. Nevertheless, John played a significant role in the tales and even the military strategy of the Middle Ages. In the game **Ars Magica™**, which is based on the premise that medieval mythology was actually correct, the empire of Good Prester John certainly existed. And it has much to offer for magi.

This sourcebook describes the Golden Empire South of the Sun for whatever sort of Saga you prefer. Storyguides could base an entire Saga in these lands. A Storyguide could also use these lands once, as an exotic setting for a single quest. Between those extremes, European magi could find many things to interest them in the lands South of the Sun. This book presents three cultures, each with its own political significance and traditions of magic. These new traditions may have lore to offer the followers of Hermes. Furthermore, according to precedent, the Order of Hermes must either absorb foreign magi or destroy them.

## Time and Location

This sourcebook takes place in the early thirteenth century, a period commonly used in **Ars Magica**™ sagas. If your saga involves another period, you should have little difficulty adapting it. The most up-to-date medieval maps placed Prester John's empire in a continent of its own south of Ethiopia. However, the geographical position of John's empire provoked considerable debate.

Bishop Hugh placed John "in the extreme Orient, beyond Persia and Armenia." The Bishop's statement may have had more to do with politics than geography. At the time, Bishop Hugh was promoting a new crusade. He hoped that news of an undiscovered Christian empire would encourage Europe's reluctant kings to drive east. Therefore, he placed John's empire in the position where it could offer the greatest advantage to Crusaders against the Saracen.

Explorers who visited the East had great difficulty finding Prester John. The scholars of Europe, who had begun to rediscover skepticism, soon doubted the Bishop's statements. In 1459, the Venetian monk Fra Mauro produced a modern map incorporating the latest discoveries of Marco Polo and others. It put Prester John in his proper place — Africa.

The new location for Prester John explained many things. It revealed why, despite John's ambition, he had never sent troops to a Crusade. It added credibility to John's claim that his empire abutted Paradise. It also showed why few explorers had actually visited John's land. Fra Mauro's map placed Prester John well south of the Equator, and therefore beyond the fiery band where the sea boils in the heat of the sun. Only the most intrepid traveller could pass this scalding zone.

This sourcebook accepts Fra Mauro's placement of the Empire but alters the circumstances. Prester John's Empire exists on a continent of its own, where the legends and folk-warnings about his land are all true. The "real-world" Africa may also exist.

If your troupe prefers to place Prester John in the Orient, there is no reason why you cannot. You may need to rotate the maps of John's land, putting North to the West, South to the East and so on. That way, the Ring of Fire still separates

Europeans from Prester John and other geographical relationships remain the same. John's empire could also appear on an island across the Atlantic, in the distant north, or on the Antipodes, the "upside-down" half of the world. Medieval maps located mythological lands in all of these places.

A note on terms: "The Golden Empire" refers to all lands south of the Ring of Fire. This is different from "Prester John's Empire" which encompasses only the coastal nation of Kerait. Although the Niobians and Colossi of Dis pledge loyalty to John, they manage their own affairs. Furthermore, no ruler truly governs the Mo-Mo wilderness.

## Game Atmosphere

The legends of the Golden Empire spring from traveller's tales and a longing for the innocent grandeur of antiquity. Stories of Prester John take inspiration from the Pashas and the Khans, the beasts of Africa and the golden temples of the Hindus. The ambience of these myths recalls that of Rome, or perhaps cities far older, built in Egypt and Mesopotamia when kings erected the first monuments to their newborn empires. To evoke this atmosphere in **Ars Magica**™, the Storyguide must give players a lavish dose of wonder. The Empire of Prester John offers a world more flamboyant than the baronies of feudal Europe.

John's Empire contains a wealth of magic and superstition. Unlike the Order of Hermes, the wizardly societies of the Golden Empire have not all gone underground. Furthermore, the prevalence of pagan religions makes common people far more tolerant about the Unknown. These facts, of course, inspire European magi to investigate the lands South of the Sun.

As Storyguide, you must give special care to the handling of magic in a Golden Empire tale. Exotic superstitions and the flagrant practice of sorcery help define the exotic flavor of stories South of the Sun. This need not compromise the realism of the **Ars Magica**™ game. Medieval folklore takes it for granted that bizarre things lurk beyond the known world and it seems inevitable that the Order of Hermes should encounter them.

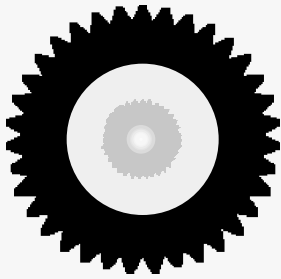
# South of the Sun

The following two principles should help Storyguides introduce new magic to the Saga. First, remember that superstition and magic are inexact sciences, and although the characters may hear of or even witness stupendous enchantments, they will seldom be able to duplicate it in more familiar settings. Second, introduce some realistic details on the way this sorcery affects the magi and their society. Can the magi cope with non-Hermetic sorceries? Might magi find the tolerance of sorcery a downright annoyance, as public sophistication about magic strips wizards of their mystique?

## Overview

South of the Sun consists of seven chapters on the culture and magic of John's Empire. Chapter Two covers the environments and peoples of this realm, from cultured, corrupt Dis to the Jungles of the Horn. Chapter Three covers the history of these lands. The fourth chapter provides game details on specific beasts. Chapter Five provides full game details on the new magical traditions practiced South of the Sun. Chapter Six suggests stories and scenarios. It presents the seeds for many tales. Finally, Chapter Seven features the complete story, Devil's March, in which magi pursue an army into the lands South of the Sun.





## Chapter Two

# The Lands South of the Sun

This chapter describes the places and peoples of Prester John's empire and the lands around. The first sections provide the racial and cultural information which affect life throughout the Empire. After that, sections cover specific provinces and their natives.

Throughout this chapter, we provide sample descriptions of people, creatures, and story possibilities. Storyguides may use this material as inspiration for creations of their own.

## Climate

A desert of unearthly heat runs along the northern borders of the Golden Empire. South of that, the temperature drops rapidly, until it reaches a more comfortable climate, similar to Greece or northern Africa. Temperatures seldom exceed 100 degrees F, although neither winter nor altitude tempers the continual warmth. Parched grasslands dominate the North, while thick forests exist in the cooler, wetter southern extremes.

The prevailing winds blow from the southeast in this continent of the Horse Latitudes. As moist sea air rises over the land, heavy rains fall, creating fertile cropland from the Rain Coast to the Gray Hills. Cyclones also blow in from the sea. Therefore, most natives build from light materials, easily destroyed and easily rebuilt. Monsoon rains fall in the summer, centered over the Kerassa River. However, these storms do not rival their cousins in India and elsewhere.

The mountains tend to squeeze moisture from the air, creating marshes on their windward sides and deserts to the west. When the conditions become appropriate in the Dis Hills, a chinook wind courses down into the Keu-Keu Veldt. This

Breath of Dis arrives like a blast from a furnace. Veldt tribesmen whisper that it can burn away one's soul.

## The Peoples

Three distinct cultures developed in the lands South of the Sun. They include the Colossi of Dis, the Golden Tribes of the eastern coast and the Mo-Mo Keu-Keu tribes of the wildernesses. A fourth people, the Niobians, now control part of the north, but they come from the ruined city of Carthage, and are not natives of these lands.

Giants inhabit the hills of Dis. These people, the Colossi, grow to an average height of seven feet. They have bronze skin, almond-shaped eyes, and a variety of hair colorations. Of all the cultures in the Golden Empire, the Colossi have the longest tradition of cities and civilization.

The Golden and Mo-Mo tribes have the same genetic origins. Both have black skin, curly dark hair and an average height of 5' 8". In early history, the two peoples shared a common culture as well, but the differences in their environment led them along separate paths. The Golden Tribes adopted farming and town-building along the fertile eastern coast. Mo-Mo tribesmen live in the interior jungles and savannah, where their primitive customs serve as well as they did ten thousand years ago.

## The Tribal Tradition

In primitive times, all peoples South of the Sun employed a similar tribal system. Although much of Kerait abandoned these customs, the

# South of the Sun

tribal way of life shapes society and politics throughout the Golden Empire. The Colossi of Dis believe they have left this system behind them. Prester John struggles to excise the pernicious customs of tribal life, while many of his people labor to retain the traditions they revere. The Mo-Mo Keu-Keu people still follow these traditions as they did millenia ago.

Traditional society divides people into tribes. Each tribe contains from several score to many thousand members. The people of every tribe have a recognized occupation, such as hunting, fishing, gathering or healing. Most also have a specialized territory in which to practice their occupation, although two tribes can share the same region, as long as they use it for different things. Some peoples wander, going wherever their profession takes them. The development of specialized craftsman professions has led to scattered tribes, such as the Smiths, who have a few members in every village but no country of their own.

A king rules the affairs of each tribe. However, each king follows philosophies and policies chosen by a Council of Elders. This Council makes its decisions in secret meetings, using an informal blend of consensus and majority rule. Nobody, least of all the king, dares to oppose the Council, for to contradict an elder is to invite disaster upon the tribe.

The king inherits his position by being the most direct descendant of a tribe's founding family. Seats on the Council of Elders go to the most accomplished followers of the tribe's chosen occupation. In a hunting tribe, for example, the elders would be those known for their spectacular kills. Among cloth-makers, the weavers who produce true masterpieces would sit in council. Kings are almost always male, but both men and women can win spots in the Council.

Tribes have a long tradition of settling disputes with raids. A slighted people may restore its honor with a foray, and the booty captured serves as ample restitution for real or imagined wrongs. When fought over mere matters of principle, battles usually stop short of killing. However, tribes also clash over more concrete issues. These struggles often lead to mass slaughter and prolonged conflicts. Powerful tribes maintain standing armies of hundreds. The kings of such peoples value experts on tactics, logistics and war.

All tribes recognize the legitimacy of slavery. Slaves come from people defeated in war, or from the rare families unlucky enough to lack any tribal affiliation. The engineers and farmers of the Golden Empire depend on armies of thralls for their projects. Mo-Mo tribes, however, usually find it impractical to keep slaves for any length of time. These primitive peoples sometimes buy or capture slaves for specific tasks, but then they set their captives free.

## The Family

In traditional society, a tribesman owes loyalty first to the tribe and second to the family. People form households of a husband and one or more wives, along with assorted grandparents or unmarried relatives. Parents propagate pride in the family heritage by serving as their offspring's teachers. Grandparents, however, traditionally teach communal virtues and care for all the children of the tribe indiscriminately.

## Religion

In antiquity, the Golden Empire knew few great conflicts of religion. This atmosphere of tolerance changed, not with the coming of Christianity, but with the coming of the Roman goddess Juno and her Carthaginian followers who founded Niobia. Juno represented the luck of the Niobians, the one thing which saved them from Rome. To offend her was to risk destroying that luck. Fortunately, the worshipers of Juno had no objection to the worship of other gods as well, and the people of the tribes saw no need to force their own ways upon Niobia. However, the introduction of Christianity and monotheism insured religious friction. When Prester John made Christianity a founding principal of his Empire, he made holy war almost certain.

The tribes traditionally followed a quasi-religion taught by shamans called the Dreamers, people who have the gift of acting consciously in the world of sleep. While dreaming, they discover gods suitable for their people. Dreamers then consult these gods about proper rituals of worship and invocation.



People respect and fear Dreamers, both because these shamans have powers of their own, and because they can talk to the spirits which inhabit every corner of the world. People do not consider them sacred or inviolable, but gifted with an eerie talent that gives them a special affinity for the supernatural.

Dreamers can use their power for either good or evil. Tribes do not hesitate to punish those who commit crimes by Dreaming. Of course, no fool-proof methods exist for determining whether a disease or natural disaster has its origins in magic. Therefore, Dreamers may suffer witch-hunts and persecution, just as in Europe.

The Colossi know no gods, or perhaps they believe that they themselves are the gods. Lords of Dis certainly portray themselves as divine to the more primitive peoples they encounter, offering their learning and innovations as “miracles” and asking for tribute in return. The deep respect tribes have for the Colossi resembled a religion in the ancient history of the empire. However, today’s Golden People have lost much of their credulity, and know quite well that the people of Dis are simply oversized mortals.

With Christianity, the Golden Empire discovered a heady new brand of religion. Christianity offers a God which transcends tribes and regions, which everyone can worship and which encompasses an entire philosophy of life. The universal nature of Christianity makes it a powerful social as well as religious force. Indeed, it is the intertribal appeal of the Faith that enabled Prester John to found his Empire.

Missionaries came to the Golden People early in the history of the Faith and none have since crossed the Ring of Fire. Therefore, the Golden People follow a primitive, pure vision of the Gospels. Their reactions to the festering hypocrisy of the European Church could lead to a passionate clash of moralities. If nothing else, it might serve to extinguish Rome’s interest in sponsoring voyages to the lands of Prester John.

## Language

The folk South of the Sun do not speak French, German, or any other Western tongue. Magi and companions from the typical *Ars Magica*

game may have trouble speaking with the people of these lands.

When explorers first arrive in John’s empire, their attempts at communication can lead to some interesting role-playing and story twists.

As Storyguide, you have some discretion over how difficult to make communication. Once magi establish enduring contacts with these people, they may find more efficient ways to speak. People from each culture may learn the language of the other. Latin, Greek and the Phoenician dialects of Carthage already exist in the Golden Empire, thanks to earlier contacts with the north.

The Colossi of Dis speak a language called Astha. It resembles the harsher Arabic and Canaanite tongues. Words contain many syllables and harsh vocalizations. Scholars among the Colossi learn Greek or Latin in order to read certain classical works which have come South of the Sun. Greek and Latin words have also spread into the Colossi lexicon, inspiring, among other things, the word “Colossi” itself.

Members of the Golden People speak a tongue called Khili. Khili also serves as a trade language for the entire region. This language, like Astha, uses many syllables and long words. However, Khili is a smoother, more musical language, given to “s,” and “r” sounds. Christians in the Golden Tribes often give their children Biblical names, which means that visitors from Europe will find at least some of the atmosphere familiar.

Each tribe of the Mo-Mo Keu-Keu has its own tongue. Therefore, all tribes have at least a few traders and wise men who speak Khili. Native tongues tend to use many short vocalizations, often including trills and grunts not recognizable as words. Legends say that some Mo-Mo tribes converse in the tongues of beasts. However, only the most devout of tribal sorcerers can actually communicate with creatures other than human-kind.

The Niobians still preserve their Phoenician tongue of ancient times. Greek also persists among them. However, most find Khili more useful for everyday transactions, even within their native city. The typical Niobian learns many languages and dialects, due to the people’s long interest in trade.

## Dress and Personal Appearance

The civilized people South of the Sun, both Colossi and Golden, wear similar clothing. The upper class dress in short kilts. Sometimes, dignataries wear nothing else; on other occasions they dress in robes or togas of many folds and sashes. Rich and poor alike make sandals out of heavy grass. Men who work for a living wear a simple costume of tunic and trousers. People wear short capes to indicate status or military rank. However, the climate makes heavy garments largely unnecessary.

Women of the Golden Empire wear tunics like those of men. However, instead of trousers, females cover their legs with one or more loose skirts that hang from beneath the tunic-hem, each slightly longer than the one above it. The series of overlapping skirts usually ends at knee-level, but nevertheless, these garments are hot and restrictive. Women of high status prize clothes of the thinnest linen, valuing the fine cloth as much for its comfort as its beauty. Silk is unknown, but the merchant who introduced it would make his fortune.

The Golden People do not hesitate to strip when indoors during intense heat, or when performing heavy labor. Nobody considers such nakedness particularly lewd. However, vanity, sun and insects ensure that most people remain clothed at most times. Only slaves and paupers routinely go about without any clothes at all.

The Mo-Mo Keu-Keu make clothes from grass, bark and skins. Both men and women wear loose vests and loincloths of these materials, often decorated with animal teeth or colorful stones. Kings wear the skins of lions, while tribal elders identify themselves with bright feathers. These people do have a taboo against nudity, grounded in the belief that a person who discards the trappings of humanity can forget his origins and become a beast.

As in many other parts of the world, women of the Golden Empire grow their hair long while men crop theirs' short. This applies among the Colossi, Golden and Mo-Mo people. The men of the Mo-Mo/Golden race have difficulty growing beards, except for short mustaches which some of them favor. Colossi men, on the other hand, grow abundant

facial hair, and take pride in it. The Lords of Dis sculpt their

beards into rectangular blocks with even sides, which often reach their chests.

The people of Niobia do not dress entirely differently from the Golden People. They too wear tunics, cloaks and trousers and their women have adopted the style of layered skirts. However, the clothing of Niobia still resembles the dress of Carthage in Roman times. Europeans who have seen frescoes and mosaics from antiquity may find Niobian costumes familiar.

## Diet

The settled folk of the Golden Empire raise wheat and grapes, millet, olives and fruits of many varieties. People use the grain to make a flat bread known as "heita." They use the grapes to make a cloudy wine. Mo-Mo tribes depend on what they can kill or gather. They know a wide variety of edible roots and desert plants, many of which provide water in addition to food.

## Calendar and Festivals

People throughout the Golden Empire use a Calendar invented by the Colossi. Even the Niobians acknowledge its superiority. The Colossi calendar resembles the modern one, with 365 days and a leap year. The Colossi subdivide this year into seven-day weeks, each of which carries the name of a star nearest the sun during the week in question. These stars, in turn, bear the names of Colossi heroes. The Colossi Calendar begins with 452 B.C.

Each tribe celebrates days in honor of its own craft or specialty. For farmers and hunters, this day usually has some significance such as harvest, first planting or full moon. Tribes whose livelihood has less connection to the seasons observe their holidays on the anniversary of great accomplishments in their art. Upon these holidays, people present friendly tribes with samples of their own peoples' specialty. (Hunters give meat, weavers cloth, etc.) The journey to the neighboring tribal lands and the gift-giving itself are occasions for great festivity. Kings take great pride in the quantity of presents their people can give.

Prester John instituted a great Grand Fete to commemorate his rise to power. The festival takes place on June the 15th by the Christian calendar, the anniversary of the day when the Colossi offered John tribute. People do no work that day, by Imperial decree. Prester John pardons convicts during the Fete. The Grand Fete features footraces and fencing-matches, archery contests, wrestling and riding.

Religious holidays tend to be secret and sporadic in the Golden Empire. The Colossi have no such days. Mo-Mo Shamans often have their own, private holidays to commemorate important dreams. They spend these days in the wilderness, fasting and seeking to recall and continue the dream. However, they do not share such personal occasions with the public. Indeed, many shamans use elaborate ruses to keep anyone from knowing when their days of meditation take place.

The most significant religious holidays come from outside. Christians celebrate Easter with all the passion shown in Europe. The Niobians worship Juno at full moon, offering strands of hair upon her altars. Priestesses of Juno use this occasion to supplicate the goddess for spells.

## Trade Goods and Gear

The bazaars of Ushan and the Cormoran contain everything one could desire. The Mo-Mo tribes consider even metal strange and priceless. With disparities like this, traders prosper in the lands South of the Sun. Even if visitors have little interest in commerce, the noisy, colorful marketplaces offer a chance to meet people and see sights, to mingle with the people and not be noticed.

Among themselves, the people trade nearly every commodity they consume. People buy and sell grain, linen, cattle, and worked iron. European businessmen would take special note of the markets in ivory, peppers, aloes, ginger, hides, Niobian steel, Mo-Mo honey and gems from the River Physon. Magi could find any number of exotic or unknown herbs and spices in their markets, many of which may have alchemical applications. Travellers who want gear can acquire most ordinary equipment.

No standard currency exists in the lands South of the Sun. The Mo-Mo, the Colossi and the simpler folk of Kerait depend on barter and reciprocal tribute. Niobia, however, issues a gold drachma in denominations based on weight. This coin bears an image of the Queen. Prester John wishes to introduce a similar coin in Kerait, with his own picture. However, trade in the Golden Empire usually takes place in polished stones, which represent bushels of grain.

Despite their other prosperity, the Golden People have few mounts. The people of Dis domesticate beasts of all types, but they have tamed no animal reliable and common enough for riding. Farmers plough their fields with water buffalo, and trained horses are as rare as trained elephants. Therefore, people look on riders with awe. Anyone who gets a horse through the Ring of Fire can sell it for a fortune. In some lands, camels might be more precious yet.

Silk cloth would also seem miraculous to the Golden People, if anyone imported it.

The warriors of the Golden Empire usually fight with long spears and slings. Swords appear only in areas with developed metal industries, such as Niobia and Dis. People use bows for hunting, but only a few far-sighted generals employ them extensively in war. Certain tribes use ceremonial wooden maces, with furious faces carved upon the heads.

No warrior of the Golden People would fight without a wicker shield. These shields are often enormous, and function like the kite or tower shields of the Ars Magica rules. People make armor of carved wood as well, padding it with leather and rhinoceros hide. The elite gild the ribs of such cuirasses. This has no effect on its value as protection.

### Carved Armor

<u>Type</u>	<u>Expense</u>	<u>Protection</u>	<u>Load</u>
Cuirass	Stan	3	1.5
Hauberk	Stan	6	2.5
Full	Expn	10	4.5

## The Ring of Fire

*The Mistress always talked to me as if I were a magus. She told me about spells and her theories, discoveries and secret books. And although I am a simple grog with not a trace of magic in me, I always found her worth listening to. Perhaps that is why she selected me alone to accompany her to the lands of Prester John.*

*Mistress warned me in advance that we would cross the Ring of Fire. She described the Ring as a veritable inferno. Her tales did not do justice to the truth. The sun in those lands can boil the sea. We walked along the coast, and saw the ocean white with bubbles. The burning sands blister one's skin like irons. Sweat dries in an instant, leaving the skin, not cooled, but parched.*

*One drinks like a camel in the Ring. I, perhaps, would have saved our water, but the Mistress knew no moderation in her drinking. "Carry your water within you," she said. To her credit, she made sure that I drank an equal share. But nevertheless, by the first night, we had no water left at all.*

*The night was as cold as ice. The next day was hotter than before. Rome's Inquisition burns witches alive. It seemed the Mistress had accepted that fate of her own choosing. The sun scorched our skin. I found myself howling with the pain. My*

*Mistress remained stoic and silent, although her burns looked crueller than my own.*

*By noon, both the Mistress and I went blind. I cannot say what curse took us. Our eyes simply failed. We could not navigate. We could not even see to find shade.*

*The Mistress and I walked hand in hand, to avoid losing one another. Her palm felt hot and dry as a coal. As the day passed, I felt her flesh dessicating against mine. At that point, I concluded that both of us would die.*

*I forced air through my swollen wind-pipe. Before I died, I told the Mistress that I admired her, that I even loved her.*

*The Mistress laughed. And no more ever came of that.*

*I think sheer luck led us out of the Ring. However, I cannot swear that it was not some enchantment of the Mistress. The Golden Tribes offered us water and shelter. They bandaged our eyes until our sight returned. A week later, we stood before the throne of Prester John.*

*John sent us home laden with books and treasures. The Mistress has spent five years studying them. I, too, have retired, and married the prettiest girl in Fontaine. Her name is Marie and she is as docile and obedient as a wife can be. Her hands are soft and smooth and delicate. But when I look at Marie, I think back to that other woman, twice my age, who laughed at me in the Ring of Fire. And I wonder.*

All folk know that the sun grows hotter in the south. At the edge of Prester John's empire, the temperatures exceed those at which mortals can normally survive. The sun hangs a fiery red in a cloudless sky. The sea seethes, and gives off steam. At this point, all but the most committed explorers turn back.

Few landmarks break this region. There is the sea. There is the blasted land. Rivers come to an abrupt end where they meet the desert, steaming away in parched deltas. Some areas feature rolling dunes, while others contain crags of stone. Both sand and stone are a glittering black, like the rocks cast up from hills of fire.

The Ring of Fire is a narrow geographical feature which experiences dramatic extremes of heat. It runs across hills, seas and blasted plains. According to the original mythology, the Ring of Fire ran along the equator. Storyguides who wish to set Prester John's empire in Africa should keep this original concept intact. Those who locate John elsewhere in the world must modify the Ring of Fire accordingly. Simply stretch the band across John's border wherever that happens to be. The medieval mindset of *Ars Magica* can easily accommodate such features as magic.

Common folk consider the Ring of Fire the work of Hell. The students of Hermes believe

otherwise, calling the Ring of Fire a natural feature of the southern climate. Nevertheless, this tortured land holds a natural fascination for diabolists, and perhaps for the devils they follow. Demons and their followers frequently appear in the Ring of Fire and its outskirts.

These lands do not have permanent encounters, or a fixed order of things. The fire-spirits who dwell in the Ring wander at will, travelling to the point which happens to be hottest, most enchanted, or otherwise best attuned to their elemental principles. Mortal creatures press through these realms as rapidly as possible. In short, there is no sure way either to find or avoid this realm's inhabitants. One must depend on luck in either case.

The Storyguide may wish to determine Ring of Fire encounters with a random table. Creatures may also take up temporary residence in a certain area. Diabolists may erect an altar in the chasm left by a dessicated river. The Storyguide may plot a specific route for a ship bearing important travellers. However, in all these cases, there is no guarantee that matters will remain the same a week, a month or a year from the specific episode.

## Travellers In the Ring

No mortal beings live in the Ring of Fire. The wayfarer may encounter other travellers here though, headed for a variety of locations. Since only the boldest explorers can actually cross the Ring, one tends to find such people on the northern or southern fringes of the region. The travellers one meets in the north generally come from Palestine, Egypt and other lands the characters know. In the south, one meets people from the lands of Prester John.

European explorers often enter the Ring searching for the Golden Empire. Ambassadors from Prester John to the north come far less frequently, but still appear. Followers of the occult also travel in the Ring. This land's cruel terrain ensures privacy for the followers of forbidden diabolisms. Indeed, the horrors of the Ring of Fire hold a symbolic delight for evil spirits, and many believe that demonic rites have heightened potency here. (If this rumor is true, it applies only in certain places or to specific, secret rituals).

The heathen tribes South of the Sun consider the Ring of Fire a border of the earth, which

divides the physical world from the realm of ghosts and nightmares. Dreamer shamans often

choose to initiate themselves with a journey into the Ring of Fire. Respected tribesmen may also journey into the Ring, seeking the solution to great questions of their tribes.

Prester John claims all lands south of the Ring. His degree of control over them varies widely, as will be seen.

## Survival

The Ring of Fire threatens travellers in two ways. Its extreme heat can scorch victims like fire. Furthermore, those who survive the temperature may still perish from thirst. Unprepared wanderers cannot survive the Ring. However, this area is not absolutely impassable.

In the Ring of Fire, direct sunlight can sear flesh. The sun causes +12 damage per combat turn to anyone who emerges into it with exposed skin. Those who cover everything except their hands take only +3 damage, but suffer a -3 penalty on all actions performed with the sunburnt hands until all damage heals. A person with an uncovered face (and nothing else) takes +6 damage and acquires a cherry-red complexion.

Sunlight also heats metal objects. Armor exposed to the sun inflicts Simple Die + Armor Protection damage on anyone wearing it. Other heated metal objects inflict +3 to +6 damage, depending on their size. Furthermore, prolonged exposure to the heat not only makes swords and armor hard to handle, it weakens the metal. The Storyguide should secretly roll a simple die each day that a metal object spends in sunlight. On a roll of one, two or three, the object becomes brittle and will snap the next time anyone puts it under strain.

Fortunately, one can ward off the sun's rays. A simple covering of white cloth prevents burns. Covered metal does not become hot.

Even those who escape scalding suffer from the heat. The high temperatures in the Ring of Fire cause long-term fatigue, and even a night's rest cannot restore this damage without plentiful water. Anyone in the Ring must pass Fatigue rolls with an Ease Factor of 15 to avoid heat exhaustion. Those who spend days resting in the shade must pass one roll per day. Those who travel under the sun must pass one roll per hour. Each failure causes one level of fatigue. Victims must

# South of the Sun

drink a quart of water beyond their usual requirements in order for rest to restore these fatigue levels. After a victim drinks, a night's rest restores all fatigue, as usual.

Warm garments add to the dangers of the heat. In addition to the Load value of armor (which always affects Fatigue rolls), armor causes a special penalty on rolls to avoid heat exhaustion. Cuirass armor causes a -2 penalty to rolls against heat exhaustion. Hauberk armor causes a -4 and full armor causes a -8. Anyone foolish enough to wear clothing other than light robes suffers a -2 or more to Heat Exhaustion rolls.

The sun of the Ring of Fire burns away its victims' eyes. Reflected light from sea, sand and stone make it impossible to open one's eyes without suffering the effects. Most insidious of all, one receives little warning of this damage until it is too late. Although the sun seems dazzling, it hardly looks bright enough to do lasting harm. Modern science would say that undetectable ultraviolet rays cause far more retinal damage than visible light. Magi and their companions know only that the Ring of Fire robs them of sight without warning.

When travellers enter the Ring of Fire, the Storyguide should merely inform them that the glare causes them a -2 on all rolls requiring vision. At this point, victims may believe that their normal sight will return as soon as they reach shade. Over the subsequent period, the vision penalty increases by -1 each hour to a maximum of -10. However, victims must pass Per + Alertness rolls with an Ease Factor of 9 to notice their gradually fading vision. A battle or other test of skills reveals the fact at once, as victims discover their penalties to be far higher than they remembered.

Victims of sun-blindness do not automatically recover their sight. The sun-blindness penalty decreases at a rate of one point per day spent outside the Ring of Fire. Victims who rest their eyes in total darkness may regain extra points by rolling a stress die + Stm, attempting to surpass an Ease Factor of 10. If this roll succeeds, the victim reduced the penalty by one point immediately and may attempt another roll within one hour. On a simple failure, the victim reduces the penalty by only one point that day. Victims who roll a Botch discover that they have the image of a red sun burned permanently onto their retinas. This image causes a -1 on rolls involving vision forever.

Those who do not think of using darkness to treat sun-blindness may come up with the idea by passing an Int + Medicine roll with an Ease Factor of 12.

Travellers should try to drink a quart of water every four hours of strenuous activity and every eight hours of rest. Anyone who drinks less must attempt a Stm roll each four or eight hour period. The Ease Factor equals 17 if the traveller has no water whatsoever. Those who drink some water but less than they need make rolls with an Ease Factor of 10. Travellers who fail these Stm rolls suffer one level of long-term fatigue per failure. One cannot regain this fatigue without drinking the missed amount of water.

Anyone who falls unconscious from the fatigue caused by thirst must receive water soon or die. Such victims live for a number of hours equal to simple die + Stm. The Storyguide may make this roll in secret and not inform the characters how much time remains.

All effects of the Ring of Fire apply as much to animals as people. The typical horse or donkey requires four times as much water as a human being. Camels can live for two weeks without food or water, and may be the only beasts of burden which one can feasibly use in the Ring. Even camels may lose their sight unless blindfolded and must make Fatigue checks to avoid heat prostration.

Sailors in the Ring of Fire suffer all the dangers of folk on land. Those who rest below decks during daylight need not fear blindness or burns, but do suffer a -1 penalty to rolls against heat exhaustion, due to the stuffy air inside a ship's belly. Note also that smaller medieval vessels did not have proper decks with enclosed holds. Wayfarers may still use a sailcloth tent to ward off the sun.

Anyone unlucky enough to fall into the boiling ocean suffers +12 damage per six-second combat turn. In addition, those in the water suffer a -5 penalty on all rolls to swim or float. Even somebody who can avoid damage from the heat suffers a -2 penalty in the boiling surf.

The boiling water causes vessels to bob and rock upon the bubbles. A ship's captain must attempt a Boating + Dex roll with an Ease Factor of 8 once per day to avoid capsizing. Particularly large ships with heavy ballast deserve bonuses on this roll. The Storyguide must decide when this condition applies.

The heated water of this area flows toward cooler seas, creating an ocean current that repels ships from the Ring of Fire. Those unaware of this current find their ships mysteriously turned away from the Ring of Fire, as if by the protection of Fate. A ship-captain who knows of the current may make headway into it at half a ship's normal speed, by passing a Boating + Dex roll with an Ease Factor of 12. Once a vessel reaches the middle of the ring, the current grabs the ship and propels it outward. This usually-welcome effect allows a ship to travel at double its ordinary speed when leaving the Ring of Fire.

## Characters of the Ring of Fire

### *Jacob Timaeus, Healer of the Ring*

Age 28 Cnf 3 Enc 1

#### Characteristics

Int +0 Str +2 Prs +1 Dex +0  
Per +2 Stm +3 Com +0 Qik +0

#### Combat

Attack/Broadsword: 1st +5 —Atk +7—Dam +11  
Attack/Self Bow: Rate +2 — Atk +4 — Dam +8  
Defense/Hide Shield: +7  
Soak Total: +3  
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.  
Fatigue Total: 0  
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

#### Talents

\*Healer (Disease) +5  
\*Magic Sensitivity (Spirit Magic) +2  
\*Second Sight (While Concentrating) +3

(\*) stands for Exceptional Talent throughout this text.

#### Skills

Broadsword (Melee) +3  
Chirurgy (Wounds) +5  
Self Bow (Moving Target) +2  
Shield +3  
Survival (Desert) +8

#### Knowledges

Area Lore (Golden Empire) +4  
Area Lore (Ring of Fire) +4  
Medicine (Physicianry) +3

Speak (Ashtar) +2  
Speak (Khili) +4  
Speak (Latin) +1  
Speak (Mo-Mo) +2

#### Personality Traits

Bitter +1  
Proud +3

#### Reputation

Mysterious (Ring) +2

**Description:** a wizened man of 28, with hair bleached white by the sun. He wears a loose robe, but does not shield face or shoulders from the sun. Jacob Timaeus is perhaps the only mortal to live permanently within the Ring of Fire itself. Only the travellers who visit the Ring have ever heard of him, but even those who recognize Jacob's name consider him mysterious, and possibly a worshipper of demons.

Jacob Timaeus does not behave like a diabolist. He has saved the lives of many travellers, healing wounds and guiding people out of the burning Ring. He knows a great deal both about the Ring and the Golden Empire to the South, and often gives useful advice. However, Jacob never explains his identity, or his motivations for dwelling in the Ring. Some have proposed that he is a religious hermit, but Jacob greets such propositions with laughter.

Jacob Timaeus is actually Prince Adan, a son of Prester John. This is not as rare as it might seem, since John's wives and concubines have born several score of sons. However, John had special hopes for Adan. When John saw that his promising son loved luxury, he sent the boy into exile, to toughen him and give him the maturity a prince requires. This lesson tore him from his brothers, his mother and Dio, the shy tribal princess whom he loved.

Perhaps John miscalculated. The prince understood exactly what his father intended, and the experience made him strong, but bitter as well. Adan escaped from the caretakers his father sent to watch over him and hid. To escape from his father, he eventually went into the Ring of Fire. There, he enjoys the thought of his father searching for him in vain.

Jacob might have died in the Ring of Fire. However, the elementals elected to protect him.

They considered Jacob a force for spreading flux within the empire of Prester John. The Elementals found Jacob a companion spirit, which provides him with water and sustenance.

The Prince did indeed learn to eschew comforts. He lives in spartan hiding, refusing to acknowledge his heritage. The tales of holy men inspired Jacob to lead a life of helping strangers and healing wounds. The life of a wandering healer allows Jacob to nurse his grudges without distraction. He takes a certain satisfaction in pushing the “lesson” of exile far beyond anything his father had in mind.

Jacob does not fool himself with the idea that he is a saint. He became a hermit for selfish reasons, and knows it. Furthermore, he has come to realize that few of the people he helps are innocent, needy and worthy of succor. Most travellers in the Ring of Fire have tainted motives. The best of them seek gold and excitement. Others have evil intentions toward Prester John or toward all humankind.

Jacob feels an enduring sympathy for the enemies and malcontents of the Golden Empire. Diabolists and bandits have won his aid by complaining of their persecution by John. Jacob has played a crucial role in several great crimes of recent years. However, he helps bandits and rebels only with advice, shelter and healing, the same things he offers to all travellers. Jacob will not take up arms against his father.

The Mo-Mo tribesmen view Jacob as a mighty shaman. Their Dreamers prove themselves by spending days or weeks in the Ring of Fire, but Jacob manages to live his life there. The Healer has also saved several of their most honored leaders, and the tribes thank him for that. If Jacob ever needed aid, the tribes would gladly help him.

**Role-playing Tips:** Jacob gives himself little introduction. He simply appears from the sun’s glare, and asks travellers if they need healing or a guide. In most cases, he then provides what they require and leaves. For rebels against Prester John, he offers water too. If rebels desire, he may offer to meet rebels at a particular time or place, to help them escape after committing some crime against the Empire. Jacob shows some interest in hearing his guests’ history, but tells no tales of his own.

## *Jacob’s Companion*

A tiny salamander flits about Jacob’s head and shoulders, protecting him from the worst of the heat and occasionally granting him powers. It coils its cool body around the exposed parts of its master and absorbs the sun which would otherwise burn Jacob. It protects him (and only him) from the effects of the heat.

Jacob can call on the salamander to open a bubbling spring from the sands. This requires him to pass a Stress roll with an Ease Factor equal to triple the number of gallons he requires. Even if Jacob could pass the roll, he could never call for more than 30 gallons. On a Botch, the water contains a tasteless salt which makes its victims more thirsty than ever. Anyone who drinks this substance must then consume an equal amount of fresh water simply to neutralize it before gaining any other benefits from drinking.

Soul Companions can demand some sort of payment for their services. Jacob’s spirit has never asked for a thing. Since Jacob knows nothing about magic, he does not realize the danger. However, should the elementals of the Ring ever have a use for him, he would have to do whatever they asked.

Jacob’s Soul Companion has the standard statistics for salamanders. (See Bestiary, Chapter Four.)

## **Chance Encounters**

- A salamander joins the travellers. It protects a selected member from heat — but then follows its new friends wherever they go, devouring fires and setting them.
- Boiled fish wash up against a ship or the shoreline. They prove quite edible if the characters care to eat them.
- The magi meet a party of Arab nomads, who ride camels. These Arabs rob the weak and trade with the strong. They do not attack strangers in the Ring of Fire, at least until they know who their targets are and what the victims carry. In most cases, the Arabs conclude that they have more to gain by befriending the magi and travelling with them. The Arabs have crossed the Ring of Fire before and can cope with its hazards.



## Dis

Travelers reach the Dis hills at the southern edge of the Ring of Fire. There, the breeze feels cool again. One has left the equatorial furnaces. One has entered Dis, the first marvel of the Golden Empire. White palaces nestle among the tan cliffs, all built on a vast scale, as if to trumpet the glory of the lands beyond.

In fact, the large buildings are products not of vanity, but of practical need. Giants inhabit Dis. They call themselves the Colossi, and the average member of their race stands seven feet high. Noblemen are often much taller. This race produced nearly all the cultural and technological sophistication of the Golden Empire. The people South of the Sun revere them as inventors and lords.

The people of Dis have contrived to rid their land of poison. Snakes, spiders and scorpions die upon crossing into this land. All forms of toxins lose their potency. A poison victim suffers no ill effects while within Dis, and may usually excrete all traces of venom after one week. Those who leave earlier must again contend with the poison. Certain special poisons may remain in the system indefinitely, at the Storyguide's option.

European visitors find the Golden Empire they dreamed of here. Gemstones and precious metals glitter everywhere. The Colossi welcome outsiders, entertaining them with feasts and performances of the shrill, disturbing music of their land. Diplomats express an interest in ties with the North. Prester John claims the King of Dis as a tributary, but after a look at this country, visitors may wonder if the relationship might actually be reversed.

Earlier travelers received a more telling picture of Dis. The Viking Snurri Skorson raided Dis centuries ago. He had no eye for Dis' wonders. Therefore, he managed to notice things which others miss. Those who investigate Scandinavian legends about the lands South of the Sun find a sense of moral outrage not common in the fatalistic Norse literature. Apparently, Skorson encountered some horror beyond Viking experience. More will be said on him later.

The people of Dis traffic with demons. The lords of this city hold in thrall Loshandar, a queen of the nether realms. Devils guard this land from poison, drive off marauders and temper even the

heat of the sun. In return, the lords of Dis cull out victims for Loshandar. The Colossi face the fate of tame animals, sheltered and protected for the slaughter.

Coming from a heathen heritage, the Colossi see no evil in their use of Loshandar. When the Lords of Dis must kill a man, they choose a criminal, or one whom they can easily frame for some crime. Few Colossi connect the spirits of their Lords with the Christian accounts of Hell, and most citizens of Dis would hotly deny diabolism. Visitors must probe deep to learn the evil secret of Dis.

Colossi diabolists do not worship their diabolic associates. They consider the devils slaves, and themselves the masters. This belief involves more than mere self-delusion. The Lords of Dis themselves command the killings and atrocities of their city, for reasons which seem fully sound. As for Loshandar, their ancestors brought her to Dis in prison. The evil in Dis lies in what the Colossi have done to themselves. Which is exactly what Loshandar desires.

## Dis Society

The culture of Dis resembles an idealized city-state in classic Greece, Rome or Alexandria. Medieval scholars, who look back to ancient civilizations in awe, should find Dis especially fascinating. Colossi husbandmen own vineyards and olive groves on the outskirts of the land. However, nearly all of Dis' people live in a sprawling city which runs along the cliffsides of the Kerassa river.

The Colossi seem to prosper with remarkably little productive enterprise. They have few farms for a medieval society and no major system of trade. Most of their goods seem to come as tribute from the Mo-Mo tribes of the Great Veldt. The tribal chieftains send hides, meat, ivory, slaves and gems from the river Physon, all without visible coercion from the Colossi. If anyone inquires about this custom, the people of Dis shrug and say that the tribes must be grateful for the cultural innovations of the Colossi. No better explanation seems readily available.

The Colossi carved an entire mountain into an obelisk, marking the center of their realm. A great table-top rock at the base of this edifice serves as a

marketplace for what trade goes on. The people of Dis call it the Cormoron, in honor of the Lord who first took tribute from the Veldt. Tribes bring offerings to the Cormoron. Traders sell exotic beasts, furs and spices from across the Golden Empire, and other lands as well. Visitors from abroad may well come here to find guides and make friends.

Dis' society uses slave labor for most mundane tasks. The slaves appear reasonably happy and well-treated. Most come from the tribes of the Veldt, and enjoy an easier life as thralls than they could have expected free. Nevertheless, they have no rights whatsoever. Contrary to the custom in many lands, a slave-owner can subject his slaves to any treatment which happens to amuse him. Colossi with strong ties to Loshandar use slaves as material for their most brutal and twisted rituals. The main restriction on this activity is not the moral one, but the fact that slaves come too cheaply to properly satisfy the more potent rituals.

Visitors to Dis may be shocked by the absence of armed forces. There is no military. Retainers of noble families perform police work along with their other duties, but they do not carry weapons. On the rare occasions when they encounter resistance, they employ gangs of tribal slaves with improvised weapons as fighters.

Loshandar, of course, provides the real armed might of Dis. She and her Spawn watch the city, traveling invisibly and using Intellego magic. Devils find common criminals and either destroy them, or pervert their petty misdemeanors into sins of more sweeping magnitude. Powerful sorcery and merciless spirits keep the Mo-Mo tribes in awe and foreign enemies at bay. These intimidations take place subtly. Most Colossi never guess the methods used to protect them.

Crime seems almost non-existent in Dis. Nevertheless, the constabulary makes arrests fairly frequently, no doubt discouraging any criminals they fail to detect. Suspects await trial in public cages. The Lords of Dis discuss their cases and decide their fate, hearing the prisoners only when they wish to ask questions. The Colossi sentence all criminals to death. Executions take place in secret, beneath the Palace of Lords in Dis City. Nobody knows the methods used, or what becomes of the corpses. Grisly rumors abound, but no Colossus questions the justice of this system.

## Intellectual Affairs

An atmosphere of enlightened tolerance prevails in Dis. People greet strangers and strange ideas with curiosity, but great politeness. The more educated Colossi enjoy philosophy, but only as a diversion, and nobody wishes to ruffle tempers over matters of principle. The heathen gods receive ceremonial tribute, but little more, except from members of a few discreet cults.

Even Christians live in Dis. Most of them come from the more southerly parts of the Golden Empire, and are not Colossi. The people of the city consider them troublemakers, because they harangue unbelievers on the streets. Occasionally, Christians openly attack shrines of gods they consider evil. When they create a public uproar, the authorities relish the opportunity to deal with them harshly. However, the Colossi have no official policy of persecuting Christians for their beliefs alone.

The Colossi pursue art and science with the verve of the Alexandrians or the Greeks. They have a vast Temple of the Page, which includes libraries, forums, scriptoria and gardens for thinkers to muse in. The Temple consists of an enormous domed building, surrounded by twenty-foot high walls of brass. An elite school of thinkers known as the Acolytes maintain it.

Strangers who wish to visit the Temple must obtain an invitation from an Acolyte. The difficulty of getting this invitation depends entirely on the individual. Generous-spirited Acolytes may allow strangers in simply on the strength of their scientific acumen. More conservative Acolytes devise tests of an applicant's worthiness. Only a few demand simple bribes, but those few do exist.

The Temple has tomes with a value of five or six in most reasonable mundane arts. Past librarians have collected material on religions, history, chirurgy, the lore of beasts, the lore of the dead, the languages of distant realms and far more. Colossi have never heard of Hermetic magic, but their occult treatises may well interest magi. Other, buried treatises discuss the capture of Loshandar and her introduction into the city. None of the writers understood the wicked nature of Loshandar, or what her capture would lead to. Nevertheless, their works provide one way that visitors might receive their first clues about the secrets of Dis.

A magus who peruses this library in search of information on the Colossi must attempt a roll of Per + Speak Astha. The Ease Factor equals fifteen. Success gives the magus some insight into the magical traditions of Dis. The Storyguide may choose exact details to fit the storyline, and the subject which interests the magus at the time.

Colossi sorcerers excel at beast-magic. They have little affection for animals, but know many ways to use and control them. Some of their techniques have diabolic origins, but others come from a tradition founded before Dis met the Serpent. Hermetic magi may find some Colossi techniques useful for the Animál field of sorcery. However, they must take care not to adopt corrupt ways. See *Magical Traditions* for details on the beast-spells of Dis.

Beast-magic creates a thriving market for exotic beasts in Dis. Furthermore, scholars devote an entire mountain gorge to their Garden of Beasts, where they keep exotic creatures in various degrees of captivity. Due to Dis' proximity to the Veldt, this zoo contains lions, elephants, zebra, giraffes, hyenas and most other African types of animals. The Colossi also keep enchanted beasts such as gryphons and amphisbaenae. Trained Keepers watch over the beasts of the Garden and exercise surprising control over their charges.

## The Lords of Dis

The Council of Lords governs Dis. Most Colossi revere these rulers as philosopher-kings, who govern in the best traditions of a benevolent autocracy. No hereditary nobility exists and no political struggles break the city's harmony. The Council simply decides on state policies in private and then explains it to the people. This system of government remains extremely popular, in large part because Dis enjoys enough prosperity to make taxes and harsh decrees unnecessary.

When Dis receives tribute, the lords take what they consider necessary for state affairs. They divide the surplus among the families of their people. They pay attention both to need and to worthiness, taking care that nobody slips into poverty while rewarding those who perform services for the state. Custom also plays a roll, and certain families traditionally receive extra portions of wealth.



The Council of Lords chooses promising Colossi to join its ranks. It selects thinkers and scientists who have rendered services to the city. A novice lord studies science, sorcery, oratory and the philosophy of law. These pursuits supposedly equip new lords to rule the city.

The Council traces its existence back to the heroic inventors of mythical times, who supposedly earned the right to rule by bringing fire, agriculture, the wheel and other useful things to their people. In truth, the Council owes more to the thinkers who discovered diabolism. The Council chooses its membership from those best suited to control the malevolent beings who dominate so much of Dis.

After new lords spend a time as city administrators, the elder members of the Council give them a second initiation. The novices discover the arts of controlling and exploiting Loshandar and her kind. By comparison, governing mortal beings is an easy task. Unlike other diabolists, the lords do not cozen demons by doing favors for them. Instead, their laws and their honor compel them to control devils by force, seeking the sorcery and the personal influence needed to enslave demonic entities.

Due to the relationship between the lords and their devils, the Colossi must fear rogue diabolists. An individual lord could always come to a private accommodation with some devil in return for personal gain. The lords keep a constant vigil for such traitors. Indeed, the Colossi have developed a hysteria akin to the Inquisition, although their witch-hunts take place only within the elite Council.

Lords watch their colleagues. They constantly pay one another visits and engage in personal conversations, making a pretense of amicable concern, but actually monitoring each other for signs of treason. Powerful lords supplement their nosy customs with sorcery and hired spies. The fact that lords must deal with demons on a regular basis makes it all the more difficult to pinpoint the real turncoats, and therefore makes the paranoia more intense.

When lords determine that one of their own has given in to demons, they face a knotty problem. Collaborators often receive frightful powers in return for their treason. Furthermore, the lords cannot let such crimes become public knowledge.

Those who discover a traitor attempt to arrange his secret assassination, with no formal proceedings.

## Cities and Landmarks

### *Hill Settlements*

Each of these hills belongs to a noteworthy family of the Colossi. Parts of the region remain barren and overgrown, while others feature slave-tended terrace orchards and vineyards. In addition to slaves, each family keeps two or three households of Colossi as retainers and servants. Roughly 10,000 Colossi dwell in the hill settlements.

### *The Cormoron*

A Colossi city of 1,000 climbs the walls of this mesa. The Cormoron serves as a center for tribute and trade.

### *Dispolis*

The Colossi carved their capital into the long, yellow-streaked cliffs along this gorge. Three thousand people live within. This settlement contains the Temple of the Page, the Jeweled Palace of the Lords and the cliff-dwellings of the Colossi elite. Vaults deep below the Palace contain the fist-sized diamond which holds Loshandar. A great Avenue of Steles runs from the Jeweled Palace to the Temple of the Page, lined with square blocks, upon which scholars write the history of Dis.

### *Carbunaria*

Only about 500 Colossi still dwell in this settlement, although the vacant buildings have room for many more. Carbunaria stands over a tributary to the river Physon. Once, this stream contained an abundance of gemstones. However, the Colossi stripped away all the easily-found treasures, leaving the stream useless. The remaining inhabitants seem not to suffer much from their lack of employment. However, few desire to live this far from the social and political attractions of the Capital.

## Characters of Dis

### *Don Luiz Cristobal*

Cnf 2 Age 43 Enc 2.5

#### Characteristics

Int +2 Str +2 Prs +1 Dex +0  
Prs +2 Stm +3 Com +1 Qik +0

#### Combat

Attack/Greatsword: 1st +6 — Atk +6 — Dam +16  
Defense/Greatsword: +7  
Soak Total (Chain Cuirass): +11  
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap  
Fatigue Total: +1  
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

#### Talents

Athletics (Jumping) +1  
Charisma (War) +2

#### Skills

Brawl (Punching) +4  
Diplomacy (Negotiations) +1  
Greatsword Attack (Melee) +3  
Greatsword Parry (Melee) +2  
Leadership (Giving Orders) +2  
Ride (In Battle) +1  
Survival (Desert) +2

#### Knowledges

Speak (Ashtha) +2  
Speak (French) +1  
Speak (Spanish) +5

#### Personality Traits

Adventurous +2  
Devoted to Dis +2  
Stubborn +1

#### Reputation

Fascinating(Colossi) +2

**Description:** Cristobal is a burly man with swarthy skin, whose treasury includes the Keys of the Vatican and some devices of Baron Rodriguez of Spain. Don Luiz is one of many European explorers seeking Prester John. He swore to return with rich gifts for his lord, and to sanctify his mission by seeking Crusaders for the Pope. Upon arriving in Dis, he concluded that the Colossi, not Prester John, offered him the most lucrative means for fulfilling his quest.

Don Luiz Cristobal now lives at a luxurious apartment in the Dis capital. The Colossi find him fascinating as a source of information on the North. He, in turn, hopes that this interest covers a willingness to become allies of his Baron, and patrons of his explorations. Meanwhile, Don Luiz gathers riches and influence. He continually puts off his visits to other parts of the empire and his return home, preferring to continue his efforts here.

The Colossi and their works fill Cristobal with awe. He admits to no flaw in their culture, and never ceases trying to win their friendship. Cristobal manages to convince himself that the people of Dis really are Christians after their fashion, or would be if the childlike “Christians” of the Golden Empire would only use some other name. Don Luiz does not tolerate deeds against Dis, nor would he listen to any tale of Colossi diabolism.

Cristobal appointed himself a sort of universal embassy for European visitors. If new visitors from the north arrive, he expects them to follow his lead. At the same time, he attempts to aid and protect other travelers, filing genteel protests against any ill-treatment they might receive. The Colossi completely accept Cristobal’s claims to represent all visitors from Europe, although magi might disagree.

A band of eight landless warriors followed Cristobal to Dis. They now dwell within his household. Three of the soldiers (Maritus, Ramon, and Don Perez) feel quite content in Dis. Having never known luxury before, they want to milk the Colossi for all they can get. The other five (Don Jose, Don Colombo, Robert, Ramirez, and Alfonse) have grown weary of Dispolis. They hunger for more glory and more profit. If magi bring them travelers’ tales, they may press for further explorations into Kerait. However, magi may regret inspiring them. These rapacious warriors hope only to pillage in the name of God and their leige lord. They may become the magi’s rivals, or worse, they may incite native peoples against all visitors from the North.

**Role-Playing Tips:** Cristobal knows the requirements of courtly behavior, and uses them when in the presence of Colossi. However, he also led a company of soldiers-of-fortune across the Ring of Fire, and he knows how to conduct himself with rough companions. If Cristobal perceives the

characters as disreputable, he can swear and brawl well enough to impress them.

Gesture with your fist in rough company.  
Fold your hands behind your back when making shows of politeness.

## Niobia

Fugitives from Rome's sack of Carthage built Niobia on the model of the trading-city they left behind. Today, the three-walled city of Niobia dominates the northeast portion of the Golden Empire. Niobia furnishes the Empire a model of up-to-date society and government, combined with military power second only to that of Prester John. This enclave of the classical Mediterranean might even relish an empire of its own.

## Niobian Society

Conditions in the Golden Empire did not favor the Carthaginian's mode of society. Their ancestors were seafarers and traders. However, there are no great ports South of the Sun. Furthermore, marketplaces in the Cormoran and the city of Ushan introduced competition for Carthaginian merchants. The emphasis of the Niobian economy shifted by necessity. Many Niobian merchants still broker caravan trade, but most of them switched their emphasis to craftsmanship or war.

The people of Niobia have no peasantry and only a sparse upper class. This city consists of iron-merchants and wood-crafters, caravan speculators, tanners, charcoalers, weavers and dealers in slaves. Poorer merchants own great plantations outside the city, worked by slaves or tenants. Note that many medieval people (such as magi and their friends) consider trade and craftsmanship somewhat dishonorable. To them, Niobia may appear as a city of corruption.

The Niobians, for their part, take a fierce pride in their culture. They came from Carthage with nothing and found little more when they arrived. Nevertheless, they had the pride and intelligence to build a city and built a society as advanced as any South of the Sun. If these people seem stern, one can attribute it to the harshness of necessity.

## The Queen

When Granita established Niobia, she made herself its ruler. She passed the title to her eldest daughter, establishing a hereditary monarchy of Queens. The Queen of Niobia also serves as High Priestess of Juno and receives the training of that sorcerous cult. Not all heirs of Granita have the Gift of magic, but the Niobians refuse to admit that any Queen lacks the powers of the goddess. The Niobians love their Queen and consider her a icon of all they hold dear. Queens have almost no limits to their rule.

## The Queen's People

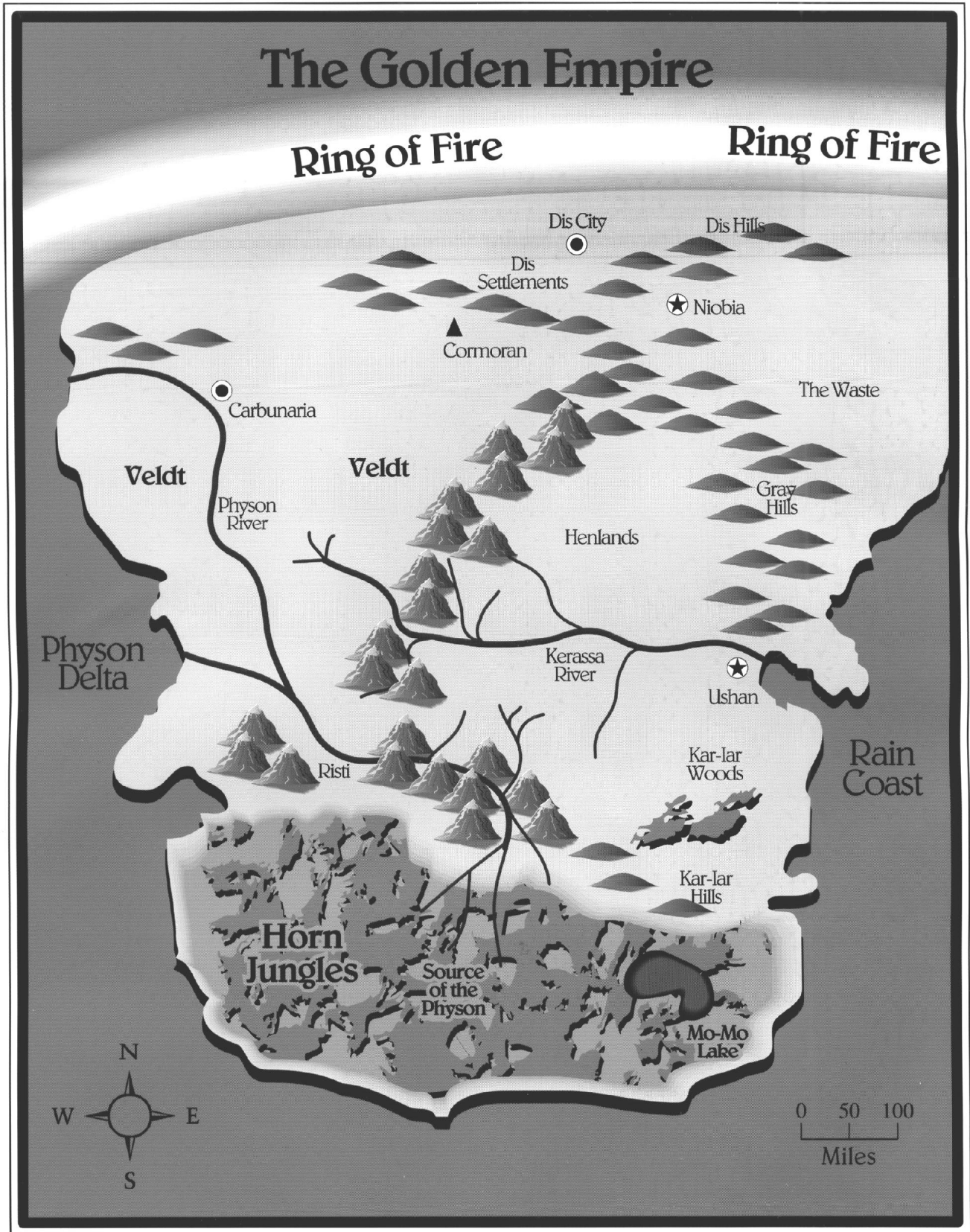
Niobia contains perhaps 4,000 of the Queen's People, or citizens of unmixed Carthaginian blood. These pure-born Niobians share a common fear of racial annihilation. They remember what Rome did to their ancestors. They know that their city is but an enclave in an Empire of other peoples. Therefore, they remain jealous of their position, rabidly patriotic about their institutions and ready to riot at the slightest threat to their privileges.

The Niobians have 4,000 slaves from the Golden Tribes among them. About 3,000 free tribesmen also live in the city as laborers and craftsmen. These outsiders enjoy neither rights nor protection under Niobian law, and they may not own property. The Niobians consider natives of the Golden Empire a threat, and many would like to expel all tribesmen from the city.

Under the laws of Prester John, Niobia must treat Christians as citizens. Niobia's Queen does not dare defy John, but even if she agreed with this law, she would have no hope of enforcing it. People despise the Christians to begin with. They certainly resent any decree which allows followers of that religion to compromise the ethnic purity of Niobia. Christians who demand their rights may survive as long as they attract enough attention to make the Niobian government afraid of them. However, even the Queen cannot protect such people from the hatred of the mob.

## Mercenaries

Niobia's armed forces are mercenaries twice over. The city fills the ranks of its army with hirelings from the tribes. At the same time, native



# South of the Sun

Niobian warriors sell their services as commanders to whatever chiefs wish to hire them. Niobia serves as a general marketplace of war.

Niobia's military industry supports professionals of many sorts. The soldiers-of-fortune patronize a good number of wayhouses and less savory places of entertainment. Smiths, fletchers and armorers crowd the streets of Niobia. The forested hills of the west provide fuel for the smelting of excellent metals. Warriors throughout the Empire know Niobian weapons for their excellence, and warlike tribes value Niobian steel as highly as silver.

Niobian generals practice war by annihilation. They have a reputation for great cunning, but they keep this imagination within the grim laws of the campaign. One can achieve a great deal by a clever trick, but one can lose much more if such tricks go awry. One wins wars with battles, and one wins battles by grinding away the enemy force. Therefore, the Niobians favor bloody, direct battles. The fact that their soldiers generally come from foreign tribes only encourages their prodigious expenditure of life.

The sons of Carthage have a heady appetite for heroism. However, the Niobians' grim view of strategy hardly encourages them to enter the lower ranks. Those of Carthaginian blood serve as officers, never as troops. When confronted with desperate odds, some may die honorable deaths, but more than a few swallow their shame and desert their men.

Despite the moral failings of Niobian commanders, Carthage's strategies win wars. All tribes acknowledge the value of Niobian tacticians. Therefore, Niobia has no difficulty exporting its mercenary commanders, especially when the troops can bring Niobian blades and armor with them.

Many chiefs institute a double command structure, in which Niobian mercenaries direct strategy and training, but stolid, charismatic natives actually lead the troops in battle. This gives them the benefit of Niobian advice. It also reduces the danger of mercenary commanders running away or heedlessly wasting native lives. Niobian mercenaries consider this system somewhat insulting, but generally agree to cooperate if offered incentives in pay.

Niobia also has no shortage of foreign foot-soldiers for its own armed forces. With the tradi-

tional tribal system defunct, great numbers of young Golden

People find their fantasies of mercenary life appealing. Tribal warriors come to Niobia for all the usual reasons. Some have a taste for bloodshed. More wish to escape some shadow in their past. The great majority, however, simply know little of war, and wish to prove their manhood in the ultimate test.

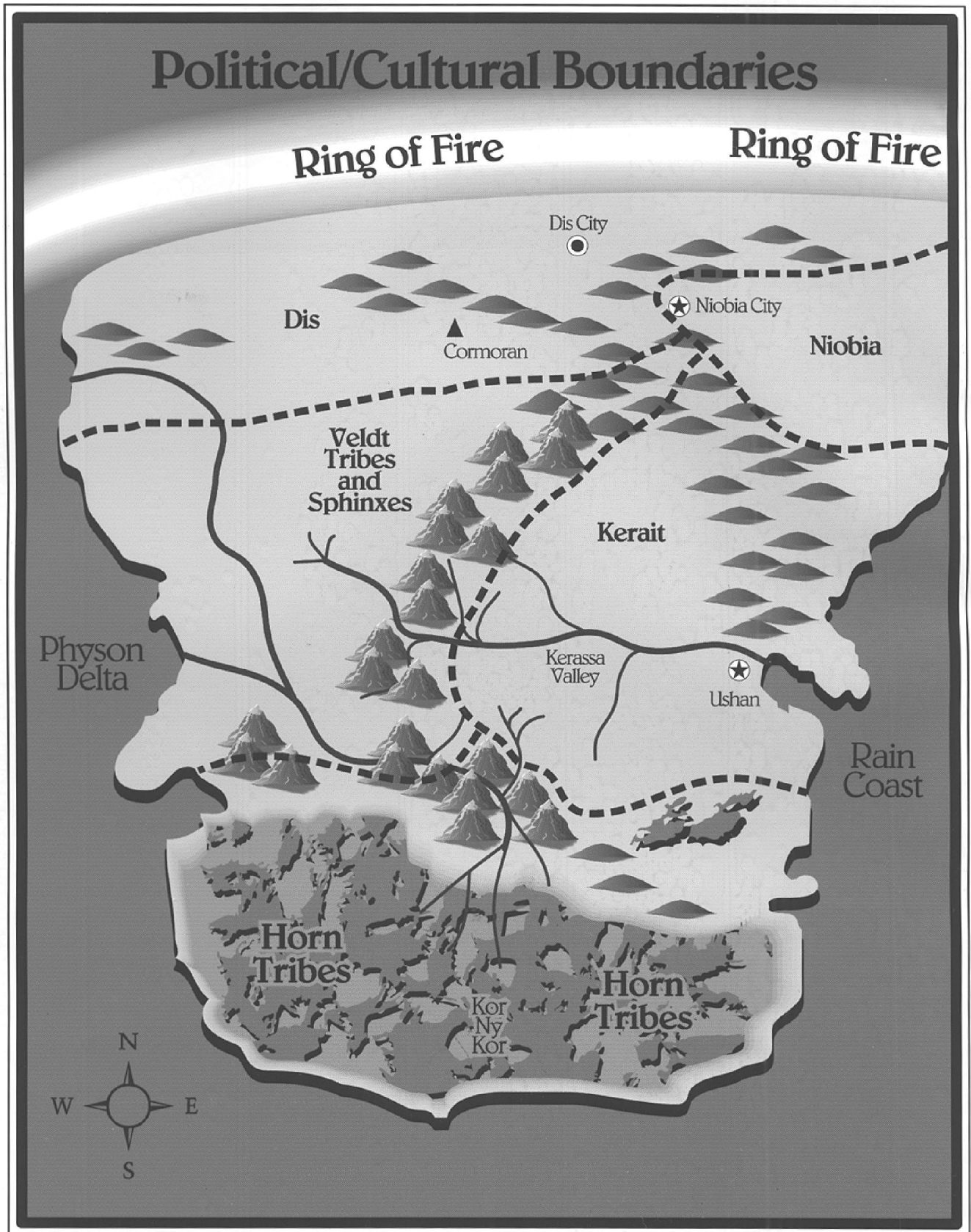
The lot of a tribal soldier is harsh. Niobian commanders have no illusions about the effects of their philosophies upon morale. Therefore, they control recruits with the lash and the noose, the gauntlet and constant, exhausting training. Niobian garrisons have moats, walls and hidden pits, as much to keep soldiers in as to keep enemies out.

Niobia also controls its troops by holding them in poverty. A soldier's family receives a bounty of grain when the mercenary enters service in Niobia. After that, mercenaries receive their pay in army scrip, a tin currency useful only for buying wine and more questionable amusements within Niobia. Only licensed pimps, tavern-keepers and similar merchants can convert scrip to usable currency. Therefore, a mercenary who wishes to flee has no resources on which to survive.

The Niobian system of pay discourages desertion. It also has the unintended effect of turning soldiers into criminals. In war, Niobia's mercenaries pillage with a rapacity shocking even by the standards of the Middle Ages, when loot formed a routine part of a soldier's pay. During peace, an active black market exists, which trades coinage for scrip at vastly deflated rates. Like most illegal institutions, this underground moneychanging network does not hesitate to protect its prerogatives with murder. Meanwhile, the soldiers who do desert become desperadoes of the worst sort, who kill and maim without compunction.

Despite its harshness, Niobia does not hesitate to reward the troops which serve it well. A mercenary who musters out honorably after ten years service receives a handsome purse of gold, along with gifts in grain, cloth and whatever other goods the tribes currently desire. Commanders give similar gifts to notably heroic men. Recipients of such gifts return to their tribes rich, and their example inevitably inspires other tribesmen to take up Niobia's arms.





## The Sacred Corps

Niobia has one native-born military force. A militia of pure-blood Carthaginians called the Sacred Corps defends the city. This part-time force consists of craftsmen, merchants and unemployed mercenaries, who meet once per month to train. The Sacred Corps allots itself the best weapons Niobia can provide. It stores them in an armory in the Queen's Citadel. Despite its part-time nature, the Sacred Corps considers itself the cream of the army.

When Niobia goes to war, the Corps provides scouts, logistical officers, elite couriers, and the bodyguards of generals. Messengers of the Sacred Corps have a secondary function as overseers of the mercenary non-commissioned officers. If Niobia's hired soldiers tried to revolt, the Sacred Corps would oppose them. In extremis, the Sacred Corps would provide a final defense of the city.

The Sacred Corps holds Niobia's army together. Although other peoples might scorn the duties of messengers, depot officers and picket-guards, the Niobians recognize these quite rightly as the glue which holds an army together. Furthermore, the Corps also provides scouts and troops who protect leaders. These tasks command respect in every army.

The Sacred Corps does not expect to slog into anonymous, murderous melees. Therefore, members feel an incentive to be heroes. Members of the Corps perform feats not usually expected of Niobian troops, such as daring raids and forays to engage enemy leaders in single combat. The Sacred Corps seldom has the experience of mercenary units, but it more than makes up for that with enthusiasm, loyalty and daring.

## Juno

As a people on the edge of genocide, the Niobians look readily to their gods. Their miraculous escape from Rome drove piety to yet new heights. Most Niobians worship the gods of the pagan Romans, particularly Juno, patron deity of Carthage. The Temple of Juno controls many of the city's affairs.

Juno, goddess of wives, manages the divine household. In the same fashion, the Priestesses of Juno control internal affairs of the city. They police the streets and plan the buildings, raise

taxes and spend money. Priestesses serve as magistrates in both criminal and civil cases. They are not known for their leniency. Adultery, for instance, is generally a capital crime, and contrary to the practice in many lands, philandering husbands face penalties at least as severe as those for unfaithful wives. Due to the holy nature of the priestesses, few people argue with municipal decisions, and Niobia escapes the political infighting of many city bureaucracies.

The Priestesses of Juno do far more than rule. A pagan goddess has many mysteries. Juno's worshipers practice divine sorcery, like the rituals performed by followers of Hermes before the discoveries of Bonisagus. Their spells awe the people and assist in the temple's civic duties. They give the religion legitimacy and bring a spiritual harmony to Niobia. In a direct contest of magic, individual priestesses might not wield as much power as individual magi, but they have their Temple behind them, and their magic has a moral energy which purely scientific sorcery lacks. Details appear in Chapter Five.

## The Older Gods

In addition to the church of Juno, Niobia has an older, darker religion. This cult takes its traditions from Carthage which, in turn, took its traditions from the Phoenicians of Tyre. There, the ancient priests worshiped Baal Hammon of the Brazier, wicked Ashtaroth his wife and Tairth, consumer of men. Chief of these gods was Molech, whose iron idol glowed red in the furnace where worshipers burnt children alive.

The priestesses of Juno view human sacrifice with horror. Nevertheless, the cults of Molech, Baal, Ashtaroth and Tairth continue, especially among conservatives, who revere ancient times. Although the Queen forbids human sacrifice, these cults are not illegal. Niobia's failure to take revenge on Rome has already led to discontent among the descendants of Carthage. The insults of Christianity discredit Juno still further. If Juno should lose her appeal, Molech and Baal would recover their old glory.

The diabolists of Dis know Molech well. They understand his worship and control many of the demons involved with the Phoenician cults. If Molech's worship ever enjoys a resurgence, the Colossi will gain much more power over their rival,

Niobia. Furthermore, should it become necessary, the Colossi can call on Molech-worshippers in the name of the devil gods. Should Dis and Niobia come to blows, the followers of the old religion might rise up to support the Colossi.

## Landmarks

### *Niobia*

Life in the Niobian lands revolves around the capital, the three-walled city of Niobia. Niobia is not a lovely city. The shops and villas of merchants line every street, with stinking tenements set between them. Most people build with wood and adobe. Few parks or public monuments adorn the streets, except for broad, carven columns commemorating the founding of Carthage, the victories of Hannibal and the founding of Niobia itself. Successful merchants often have statues and paintings around their villas, but the effect is more gaudy than graceful.

Prester John insisted that the Niobians erect pillars commemorating the birth of Christ and the formation of the Golden Empire. The Queen of Niobia complied. However, the Niobian regularly deface these monuments with manure or inscribed graffiti. These pillars also serve as the focal point for riots.

Three buildings dominate Niobia, and only these three exhibit real grace or beauty. They are the Temple of Juno, the Palace of the Queen and the Market Pavilion. The Temple features a towering, cathedral-like building, supported by massive columns and featuring a statue of the goddess. The Queen's Palace consists of many two-story stone structures enclosed by their own wall and focussing on a clear pool.

The Pavilion has an auction block, as its name implies, but also serves as a fortress and garrison. Sloped walls and square towers support the Pavilion. The marketplace-courtyard within could function as a last redoubt for Niobia's Carthaginian people in time of attack. One goes to the Pavilion to hire Carthaginian mercenaries. Tribesmen also enter Niobia's service here.

### *Tributary Lands*

Outside Niobia, one finds only mines, plantations and lumber-camps. The Niobian owners of these businesses spend as much time as they can

within the city, while slaves and native-born hirelings oversee work. Scattered shops support these farms but most businesses remain within the city.

Niobia supports an extensive mining industry along its border with Dis. It produces iron, lead and silver, along with smaller quantities of copper and tin. Niobia's mines are not especially rich, but the hillsides provide timber, and fuel is more vital to the mining industry than ore. The Niobians also work their resources more assiduously than the Colossi, and reap the fruits of that effort.

## Characters of Niobia

### *Queen Sophia*

Age 51 Cnf 1 Enc 0

#### Characteristics:

Int +2 Str +0 Prs +1 Dex +0  
Prs +2 Stm +0 Com +1 Qik +0

#### Combat

Noncombatant  
Soak Total: +0  
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.  
Fatigue Total: +0  
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

#### Talents

Charisma (Demagoguery) +3

#### Skills

Acting (Improvisations) +1  
Diplomacy (Politics) +2  
Intrigue (Alliances) +1  
Leadership (Engendering Loyalty) +1

#### Knowledges

Lore (Juno) +3  
Scribe (Greek) +2  
Scribe (Khili) +2  
Speak (Astha) +2  
Speak (Greek) +4  
Speak (Khili) +3  
Speak (Latin) +2

#### Personality Traits

Yielding +1

#### Reputation

Austere (Niobia) +3

# South of the Sun

**Description:** An austere woman, her long gray hair in a tight braid, Queen Sophia wears a worried expression, yet her face remains largely unlined. The Queen dresses in her priestesses' robes and wears a golden circlet for a crown.

This Queen of Niobia does not have the Gift of Supplication. That does not matter. Other priestesses of Juno perform miracles, and the people do not discriminate between wonders of the Temple and those performed individually by the Queen. Sophia made up for her lack of magical skill with hard work on the arts of leadership. She learned to make efficient use of the adoration Niobians have for their ruler.

Sophia took the throne as a young teenager. She might have made an excellent Queen. However, at that time, Prester John proclaimed his Empire, and demanded that Niobia join with him. Sophia felt acutely aware of the precarious state of her people, a minority in their own city, defended by an army of disgruntled mercenaries. Therefore, Sophia agreed to pay tribute to Prester John.

Sophia pledged loyalty to Prester John out of political necessity, to avoid a war Niobia could not win. She went on to promulgate John's decrees as the most expedient way of promoting her own people. Yet how long can one preach a doctrine without coming, at least partially, to believe it? Sophia herself does not realize it, but she has not only compromised her political power, she has transformed herself into an actual supporter of the Kerait Empire.

**Role-Playing Tips:** Refer to yourself with the royal we. If somebody raises a particularly troublesome issue, turn away, pause, and change the subject. Use an excess of formality instead of actual power.

## Lord General Janos B'Sai

Age 35 Enc 4 Cnf 3

### Characteristics:

Int +1 Str +3 Prs +0 Dex +1  
Per +1 Stm +4 Com +0 Qik +1

### Combat

Attack/Broadsword: 1st +5 — Atk +10 — Dam +14  
Defense/Tower Shield: +9  
Soak Total: (Chain Hauberk) +16  
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: 0

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

### Skills

Brawl (punching): +3  
Broadsword (Formation): +5  
Drinking (Guzzle): +2  
Shield Parry: +3

### Knowledges

Lore (Niobian History): +1  
Speak (Latin): +3  
Speak (Khili): +4

### Personality Traits

Patriotic +2  
Stubborn +2

**Description:** A child of the tribes, Janos joined the Niobian army as a mercenary. Unlike many, he flourished in the Niobians' command. Janos shrugged off the harsh discipline and brutal assignments. He developed a contempt for his whining, weakling comrades. When other mercenaries in Janos' unit developed a plot to murder their tyrannical Niobian commander, Janos reported them. Then he single-handedly slew the leaders of the mutiny. For this feat, Janos received honorary citizenship as a Niobian, and the right to command in the Niobian armed forces.

Janos absorbed his new culture, becoming a fanatical devotee of all things Niobian. He knows the history of Carthage by heart. He feels an emotional, personal (but platonic) love for the Queen. Few pure-blooded Niobians have the patriotism of this tribesman.

Janos has never married. The joys and duties of command occupy all his attention.

Janos is physically enormous. He shaves his head in keeping with a tribal custom but wears the dress of Niobia. Janos' thick beard contributes to the menace of his perpetual scowl.

**Role-Playing Tips:** Speak in deep, booming tones. However, when speaking of duty, honor, Juno or the Queen, you should allow your voice to crack with emotion. Resist the temptation to play Janos as a bumbling oaf. He is a competent general and has used his recent years to acquire an extensive classical education. His fanaticism and military bearing do not make him a bufoon.

## Cicera

Age 45 Cnf 2 Enc 0

### Characteristics

Int +1 Str +0 Prs +0 Dex +1  
Per +3 Stm +0 Com +0 Qik +2

### Combat

Attack/Shortsword: 1st +7 — Atk +8 — Dam +7  
Defense/Shortsword: +7  
Soak Total: +0  
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.  
Fatigue Total: 0  
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

### Talents

\*Entrancement (with the curious): +4  
Guile (To Authorities): +4  
\*Visions (Commodity prices): +3

### Skills

Diplomacy (Politics): +2  
Evaluate (Trade Goods): +3  
Intrigue (Plotting): +3  
Shortsword Attack(Melee): +3  
Shortsword Parry: +5  
Stealth (towns): +4

### Knowledges

Speak (Astha): +3  
Speak (Greek): +2  
Speak (Latin): +3  
Speak (Khili): +3

### Personality Traits

Cruel +2  
Sneaky +1

### Reputation

Shrewd(merchants) +3  
Influential(Niobia) +2

**Description:** Trade dominated the affairs of old Carthage. Cicera continues the Punic mercantile tradition with a profitable business in salt and slaves. He wields considerable power in city politics due to both his wealth and his control over important markets. He uses his frequent business journeys to serve as an ambassador for the Queen. Queen Sophia considers Cicera among her most valuable agents.

Despite his exemplary reputation, Cicera lives a reclusive life. He lives in a stone fortress, and

does not welcome guests. Those who know him call him distant, alien to human sentiments.

Unbeknownst to even his closest contacts, Cicera owes his success to a pact with Mammon, one of the sinister Old Gods of the Punic peoples. He repays his debt each day.

Cicera currently serves as a spy for the diabolists of Dis. His services to the Niobian Queen put him in a perfect position to gather information. He also performs demonic rituals of his own, burning the children of slaves. Cicera receives supernatural Talents in return for these atrocities. He also satisfies his own hatred for mundane people and their concerns.

Cicera has a tiny frame and undeveloped muscles. Ringlets of black hair frame his head. His hands appear small and delicate.

**Role-Playing Tips:** You neither understand nor like ordinary people. Everyday problems irritate you. Drives such as humor, love and even appetite for food strike you as foolish or insincere. Therefore, you keep a sour expression and avoid people when you can. You never hesitate to commit an act of cruelty.

## Chance Encounters

- Although Niobia supposedly forms its army from mercenary volunteers, an over-zealous commander tries to impress some of the grogs. Perhaps he even manages to get them drunk and cajole them into coming to his barracks. The magi must rescue their warriors. However, any protest foreigners make may enrage the xenophobic Niobian mob.

- A group of Christian missionaries infuriate the Niobian mob by refusing to celebrate the festival of Juno. When enraged Niobians attack them, the Christians seek refuge with visiting magi. They know that Europeans follow the true faith, and trust that no other believer will turn them away.

- A stranger meets the magi on the street and instructs them to appear at a certain address that evening. The address turns out to be the stronghold of a secret society dedicated to the Queen's Honor and Niobian Purity. There, members of the society accuse the magi of plotting to overthrow the Queen.



The magi might fight their way free. However, if they choose not to, the secret society members prove reasonable and intelligent. The members do not want to lynch the magi, they want to learn the truth. If the magi acknowledge the glory of Niobia, they may actually make friends here.

This secret society may include the General Janos B'Sai and any other interesting people from this book or the Storyguide's imagination.

## Kerait

European explorers such as Friar William of Rubruck viewed Kerait with undisguised disappointment. This land has neither golden cities nor magic beasts. Kerait is a land of grass huts and cattle, fields and towns. Prester John, however, recognizes this country as the heartland of the continent. Here, one encounters the ordinary folk, the traders, craftsmen, and above all, farmers who make up the bones of any Golden Empire.

Students of Kerait's politics and economy discover a baroque tribal system in a tempestuous stage of decay. However, those who actually visit the Rain Coast see a far more comforting scene. Farmers sow fields, porters lug enormous clay vessels, white-haired grandmothers cradle infants while struggling to manage crowds of shrieking grandchildren. Throughout the world, whatever the society and its government, the lives of simple people remain much the same.

The Colossi of Dis taught the Golden People the secrets of crop rotation and fertilization. Therefore, folk seldom go hungry, and the farmers can support a large village society of craftsmen and traders. This prosperity also allows people to pay heavy tribute both to Dis and to Prester John. Since both John and the Cormoran contribute immeasurably to the success of Kerait's trade, such tribute is not entirely wasted.

The pastoral realm of Kerait contains few great cities or natural wonders. Farms and sprawling villages dominate the landscape. Most people live in grass hovels, although powerful merchants and tribal kings sometimes erect wooden stockades. Wooden buildings appear especially often in the interior, where people need solid pens for their cattle and see no reason not to enjoy the same protection themselves.

The people of Kerait fish along the coast. Fishing villages spring up around coves and beaches which offer convenient places to launch boats. Most fishermen use rafts, although those who can acquire them prefer boats with enough of a keel to roll with waves. Only the people of Ushan build crafts able to survive on the open sea.

Kerait has no system of feudal landholding or large-scale private property. Therefore, travelers encounter surprisingly few territorial boundaries. Villages form where fertile land or trade routes create a need for them, and often have no names.

## Prester John's Empire

For centuries, the seventy tribes of Kerait have shared a common language, a common culture, a common trade, and for all practical purposes, a common nation. Today, the Emperor Prester John declares these lands one Empire in name as well as practice, with Christianity as a unifying principle.

And the birth of an empire is glorious. Prester John stages every spectacle known to pharaohs, sultans, emperors and kings. He gives gifts, builds monuments, honors heroes, and decrees festivals. John visits his towns disguised as a beggar, only to reveal himself and shower honors upon citizens who took him in. He tracks down local skinflints and villains with the aim of bringing them to public justice. He erects walls around towns and builds hospitals for the poor. He raises statues of himself, some twenty feet tall.

Kerait has no tradition of public art. Compared to the works of Rome, Egypt or Athens, John's monuments seem simply gaudy. Ultimately, his sprawling wooden palaces and painted effigies do not represent any impressive feats of engineering. John dreams of more enduring works, but has no artisans capable of creating them. Therefore, he must make his monuments noteworthy for their sheer volume.

Prester John does not dare relent. He aims to forge a true empire, a land where the people of many tribes recognize a single king. He must ingrain his people with a conscious vision of the empire, combined with an instinctive respect for its traditions. Furthermore, he must build an empire strong enough to survive his own death. Every day, Prester John wrestles with posterity.

## Tribes and Headmen

The people of Kerait have all the civilization of any medieval people. However, they never forsook the traditional tribal system of their land. Once, the tribal system determined who owned the fish, and who had the right to live by grazing cattle in the grassland. Today, tribes control who may sell pottery and who may forge steel. Tribes resemble trade guilds, each possessing a monopoly on some craft.

Unlike European trade guilds, tribes still appoint sovereign kings. Although government by kings worked well in a primitive economy, this system has become anachronistic at best. A tribe of cattle-herdsmen, for example, could easily live together, graze on the same land, and, in general, function as a social unit. However, the economy of a village requires a great variety of professions. A township needs representatives from tribes of Smiths, tribes of Potters, tribes of Wayhouse Keepers, tribes of Housebuilders and dozens more. This has forced all but the agricultural tribes to disperse their membership across the Empire.

Even in a village, each tribe would like to claim its independence. Therefore, every town contains dozens of independent peoples who consider themselves answerable to no central government. If a baker commits a crime, he will insist that only the Baker King may punish him. Tribal feuds and rivalries create glorious chaos in such settings.

To avoid constant turmoil, the Golden People have compromised their own traditions. Within villages, local personages known collectively as headmen usurp the power of the kings and councils to serve as intertribal traders and judges. Some base their power on moral authority. Others are thugs, who operate a sort of protection racket. On the larger scale, merchants of Dis and Ushan have always served as arbitrators, using their wealth to reinforce settlements.

Prester John aims to end the tribal confusion permanently. His Empire offers a government which stands above the tribes. However, John has not deposed either the kings or the headmen, and both still attempt to exercise their powers. This results in a complex dance between unified farming tribes, diffuse professional tribes, semi-criminal headmen and imperial forces.

John always suspects kings of trying to undermine his authority. They continually suspect Prester John of intending to side with their enemies or snatch away their customary prerogatives. This mutual suspicion engenders widespread espionage and intrigue. In consequence, kings have grown ruthless, assassination has become common, and sudden violence is increasingly more important as a tool. However, the more cosmopolitan Golden People welcome this state of affairs, considering it the ideal way to rid themselves of the outdated tribal system.

As well as creating a political headache, the tribal-professional system causes countless personal tragedies. Artisan tribes simply do not need all their members. Kerait needs, for example, only a limited number of silversmiths, yet the Silversmith tribe continues to reproduce. According to custom, a business goes to the eldest sons in a family. The Fhazal, or children without inheritance, can sometimes live from their relatives' charity, but more often they must beg, steal or become fodder for the slave market. One proverb goes, "A rich man's sons are a prince and a cut-throat."

Farming tribes, of course, need all the extra labor they can produce. Although farming tribes never become rich, they seldom become terribly poor. This contributes to a general nostalgia for pastoral life.

The Fhazal have two new sources of hope, Christianity and Prester John. Christianity, as a church of the poor, holds great appeal for the outcast younger offspring. The Empire, meanwhile, offers them employment and honor, as laborers on imperial projects, but most of all, as soldiers. The Fhazal provide John with a ready pool of personnel and with his most enthusiastic supporters.

## The Territorial Kings

Prester John faces a knotty dilemma in administering his empire. The seventy tribal kings of Kerait are both the justification for his rule and his most dangerous rivals. Therefore, Prester John has left them in power, but changed the nature of their authority. He awards kings rulership over specific parcels of land. In other

words, he makes them territorial rulers, like the kings in every other part of the world.

By accepting a fiefdom, a king receives the protection of John's army and the additional authority of Imperial Governor. However, to rule his land, a king must contend with the babel of tribes which make imperial government difficult. Young, aggressive kings employ the obvious solution of imposing one law on all people within their borders and defying the tribes to enforce their customary rights. In this way, John has maneuvered the kings into breaking up their own convoluted system.

Certain tribes, however, resist territorialism. The king of a tribe specializing in highly skilled craftsmanship enjoys more power with his people spread throughout the Empire than he would by ruling any single fiefdom. Therefore, skilled tribes such as the Scribes, Boatwrights and Smiths of all types (black, white and copper) have refused to accept land. They defend themselves from territorial kings using sabotage, public pressure and punitive surcharges.

## Prester John's Army

Every would-be warlord in Kerait faces the same problem. With many tribes scattered through the lands, even a powerful king cannot raise an army quickly in one place. Even if he had time to gather his entire tribe, he would have no central location of support and supply. The military powers of this empire are those who can mobilize a geographical region, not just a tribe. No leader has managed this more efficiently than Prester John.

John's father's tribe always concentrated its settlements along the croplands of the Kerassa River Valley. Therefore, John has a natural source of recruits and base of operations. Since becoming Emperor, John has widened his District of the Imperial Muster to include the great city of Ushan. John draws from every tribe, recruiting the younger sons who have no place in their tribe's business. When called to arms, his army includes over 15,000 men. John keeps several thousand warriors even in times of peace, an unusual practice for medieval times.

Other kings make their own attempts at territorial armies. Prester John does not discour-



age them — they only serve to hasten the collapse of tribalism.

However, each king who raises an army must provide an auxiliary contingent for John's forces. Picked members of these forces, each garbed in colorful native costumes, guard the gates of Ushan, a living symbol of John's intertribal Empire.

Prester John's Imperial Army has a peaceful arm as well. The Imperial Muster raises a corps of Kerta, or Prefects, to administer the Empire. Just as imperial officers counter a military threat by dispatching troops, Kerta address political and regulatory disorders by deploying an army of bureaucrats. They serve as magistrates, tax collectors, propagandists and commissioners of public works.

Kerta have the authority to act as judges and police. They protect the Christians, enforce Imperial decrees and act as a general constabulary. When kings leave notorious criminals unpunished, the Kerta insure that justice is done. They employ a secret branch for the investigation of the most mysterious cases, and to plant informers wherever possible.

The Kerta enforce their law with a harsh menu of punishments. Prester John holds that since individual Christians must forgive, the impersonal state must assume the full duty of revenge. Murder and treason carry a penalty of death. Kerta execute criminals by passing a spear through the victim's heart. The Golden People punish lesser crimes with servile labor or blows from a cudgel. Prester John has also introduced a system known as Abhorrence. The Kerta may declare chronic troublemakers Outcasts, and order the community to shun them. Outcasts may eat at the tribal campfire and perform labor, but those who speak or fraternize with an outcast become liable for Abhorrence themselves. Abhorrence may last for specific periods, or for life.

Kerta usually impose Abhorrence on particularly incorrigible youths. However, on several occasions, John's forces have commanded tribes to shun rebellious kings or elders. If the tribe obeys, the Kerta have effectively destroyed the leader's authority. Of course, the tribe may simply refuse to Abhor its ruler, in which case civil war becomes next to inevitable.

## Religion

In ancient times, each tribe of the Golden People worshiped an individual god or pantheon, depending on the visions of its priests. Dreamer shamans selected gods appropriate to their tribe, even as they do among the Mo-Mo Keu-Keu people today. Most old gods lost their following as hunter-gatherer tribes turned to more sophisticated ways of subsistence. However, a few peoples still worship patrons of their trade. Kho-Lo, God of Smiths has a large following. Fishermen report close encounters with Pel-Lu, the gigantic blue fish who can swallow a raft or spit whole schools of food-fish from his maw.

The Colossi of Dis never actually called themselves gods, but they encouraged people to think of them as such. Most Golden Tribes once considered paying tribute to Dis the most sacred duty. Today, few sense anything particularly holy about the tradition. However, Kerait's people seldom abandon such customs, and everyone notes that tribes which consistently neglect Dis usually suffer mysterious disasters. Deaths, madness and hauntings occur with such frequency that a cult of the Colossi is almost ready to re-emerge.

Christianity spread rapidly in Kerait. Fortunately enough, the missionaries who came South of the Sun taught a simple, kindly version of this religion, and their ideals appealed to Kerait's people. Prester John's triumph created a fresh explosion of converts. Some joined the Church out of political expediency, others simply became caught up in the excitement.

Although John protects their lives, many Christians deplore the use of their religion as a tool of Empire. Believers South of the Sun divide themselves into two factions, the Stephenists and the Paulists. Stephenists emulate the Apostle Stephen, who delivered himself to be stoned for the faith. Paulists prefer the example of Paul, who, when arrested, demanded his rights as a Roman.

The split between Stephenists and Paulists may eventually lead to a crisis of the southern faith. Should such a question cause Christians to desert Prester John, the Empire itself could lapse into civil war. Travelers may play a large role in such affairs by bringing news of the European Church. Accounts of the glory of Rome would strengthen the Paulists. Magi, however, may have no desire to glorify the Vatican.

## Christian Societies

As enthusiastic followers of a new philosophy, Christians naturally seek each other's company. Most large villages harbor a Society, an organization of Christians who gather to discuss their faith, celebrate the Lord's Supper, and socialize with one another. When spurred by great fervor, Societies attempt to heal and cast out demons with their faith. Therefore, folk look to the Societies for miracles.

Societies limit their membership to Christians. They meet in private, often in hidden caverns set aside for that purpose. The Christians themselves would say that they value privacy, and that the persecutions of Rome and Niobia make caution natural. However, many pagans suspect the Societies of harboring some great conspiracy.

At least a few Societies do indeed have political aims. Prester John uses them as agents of the Empire. John, after all, protects them from destruction. Although the Golden Tribes have few religious convictions against christianity, any organization which attempts to cross tribal boundaries inevitably finds itself caught in a clan vendetta and torn apart by both sides. The diabolists of Dis claim no enmity with Christ, but it takes little faith to sense the horror in that land. Furthermore, the Niobians actually wish to exterminate christianity. The Golden Empire offers Christians their best chance for suppressing these enemies.

## Landmarks

### *Ushan*

The Arcaeus tribe built Ushan to replace the Cormoran as the marketplace of Kerait. With its harbor, river, and central location, Ushan offers a paradise for trade. The streets swarm with merchants and vendors. Every tribe has its people here. Thousands of the Fhazal dwell in Ushan too, serving as ready supporters for Prester John.

Prester John makes his capital in Ushan. His whitewashed statues and stone edifices tower over the city. Although Ushan's old inhabitants lived mostly in two-story buildings of wood, John erected great stone mansions throughout the city. His white-domed Imperial Palace, surrounded by a

ring of towers, each topped with gold, dominates the skyline.

### *The Kerassa Valley*

The Kerassa River washes the most fertile farmland in the country. One tribe, the Kerassa Ploughmen, dominates this region. The Kerassa people enjoy as much cultural sophistication as any tribe in Kerait. Since this tribe concentrates in one area, the Kerassa Valley constitutes both a political and territorial power. Prester John bases his rule on the Kerassa Valley.

### *The Rain Coast*

This country of farms and villages lines the coast, reaching as far inland as the rains. In addition to food crops, people raise a variety of peppers, gingers and precious aromatics.

### *The Gray Hills*

Farm country comes to an end here. The fractious kings in these hills occasionally defy Prester John.

### *The Herdlands*

Husbandmen tribes herd livestock on the plains of the interior. Here, life remains much as it was for the primitive tribes of Kerait. Members of Herdsmen tribes live together as nomadic bands, who move from pasture to pasture. They have little learning and interest in politics.

### *The Waste*

This rocky land lies between Kerait proper and the tributaries of Niobia. It takes its name not merely from its rocky deserts but from the constant threat presented by Niobian slavers.

## Chance Encounters

- Prester John meets European strangers incognito. He may appear as a beggar, tradesman, shopkeeper or even a criminal. Depending on the magi's behavior, this encounter could cause their

fortunes to take a rapid turn for the better — or worse.

- Prester John declares a day of festivals throughout the Empire. Villages hold spear-throwing contests, races and public barbecues. Tribal kings and other officials appear among the people in elaborate paint and finery. Visitors may use the occasion to contact the Kerait establishment.

- Visiting magi find a close friend among the servants of Prester John. Owing to this man's lordly master, he has a villa and mansion, which he puts at the magi's disposal. John then condemns the servant for embezzlement. Perhaps he committed the offense or perhaps his rivals framed him. In either event, the magi must either clear their friend's name or swiftly break their ties to him.

## Good King Prester John

Age 41 Cnf 4 Enc 2

### Characteristics

Int +1 Str +2 Prs +4 Dex +0  
Per +1 Stm +1 Com +4 Qik -1

### Combat

Attack/Short Spear: 1st +8 — Atk +8 — Dam +11  
Defense/Wicker Kite Shield: +8  
Soak Total (Full Hard Leather): +7  
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.  
Fatigue Total: -1  
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

### Talents

Charisma (Demagoguery): +6  
Subterfuge (Arguments): +2

### Skills

Intrigue (Alliances): +3  
Kite Shield Defense: +3  
Leadership (Giving Orders): +6  
Short Spear Attack (Wild Melee): +6

### Knowledges

Speak (Astha): +2  
Speak (Khili): +3  
Speak (Latin): +1

### Personality Traits

Brave +2

Imperially Dignified +3  
Political Visionary +1

### Reputation

Fair(his Empire) +4

**Description:** Prester John stands six feet tall, an awe-inspiring height for the medieval period. His stern face and obsidian eyes can intimidate even the most independent king. The luxuries of rule give John a sizable pot-belly, but his abdomen remains hard as steel. At court, Prester John wears a crown of ivory and a sort of kilt, leaving his muscular torso bare.

Prester John loves his people as an Emperor must. To insure their tranquility, prosperity and glory, he would sacrifice the last drop of his blood — and theirs'. John built this Empire. In doing that, he accepted the awesome duty a ruler incurs.

One can never feel safe within the court of Prester John. John has dismissed servants for yawning. He has branded wives for insufficient affection. Officials with the slightest taint of corruption can lose their heads. Most frightening of all, Prester John does not have a particularly bad temper. Moreover, he never forgets that he represents the Empire and that the law of the Empire must be severe.

If John can be cruel, he can be twice as generous. Few leave his court without gifts of gold, spices and ivory. Those who seek his aid for a Christian cause can expect to receive it. Indeed, Prester John tends to bury supplicants with his aid, taking over their problems entirely and making the entire affair simply another feat of the Golden Empire.

Nothing infuriates John more than an attempt at flattery. Furthermore, he listens to criticism, as long as his detractors remain within the bounds of court decorum. In fact, he bestows rewards upon those who courageously give him unwanted advice. Prester John has a powerful conscience, and makes amends for any wrong that he does, often weeping silent tears of repentance.

Note that John's conscience does not affect his heavy-handed punishments. If he considers an offender guilty, no pleas for mercy can move him. He may say prayers for his victim's soul, he may say prayers to absolve himself for the sin of judgment, but the Empire cannot show mercy.

# South of the Sun

Prester John often visits his lands incognito. John takes a childish delight in such masquerades. At times, the Emperor pretends to be a simple tradesman. John may also disguise himself as a beggar (to test peoples' kindness) or as a dishonest Kerta (to see who tolerates corruption). Whatever his disguise, the Emperor does not engage in this sport without large numbers of disguised soldiers at his call.

Many believe that John enjoys traveling incognito as an excuse to relax from the unflagging solemnity of rule. However, John finds his authority hard to put off for long, and no matter how humble a personality he decides to affect, he cannot help but revert to his accustomed manner. In fact, John is a terrible actor. However, to please him, most people pretend to be fooled.

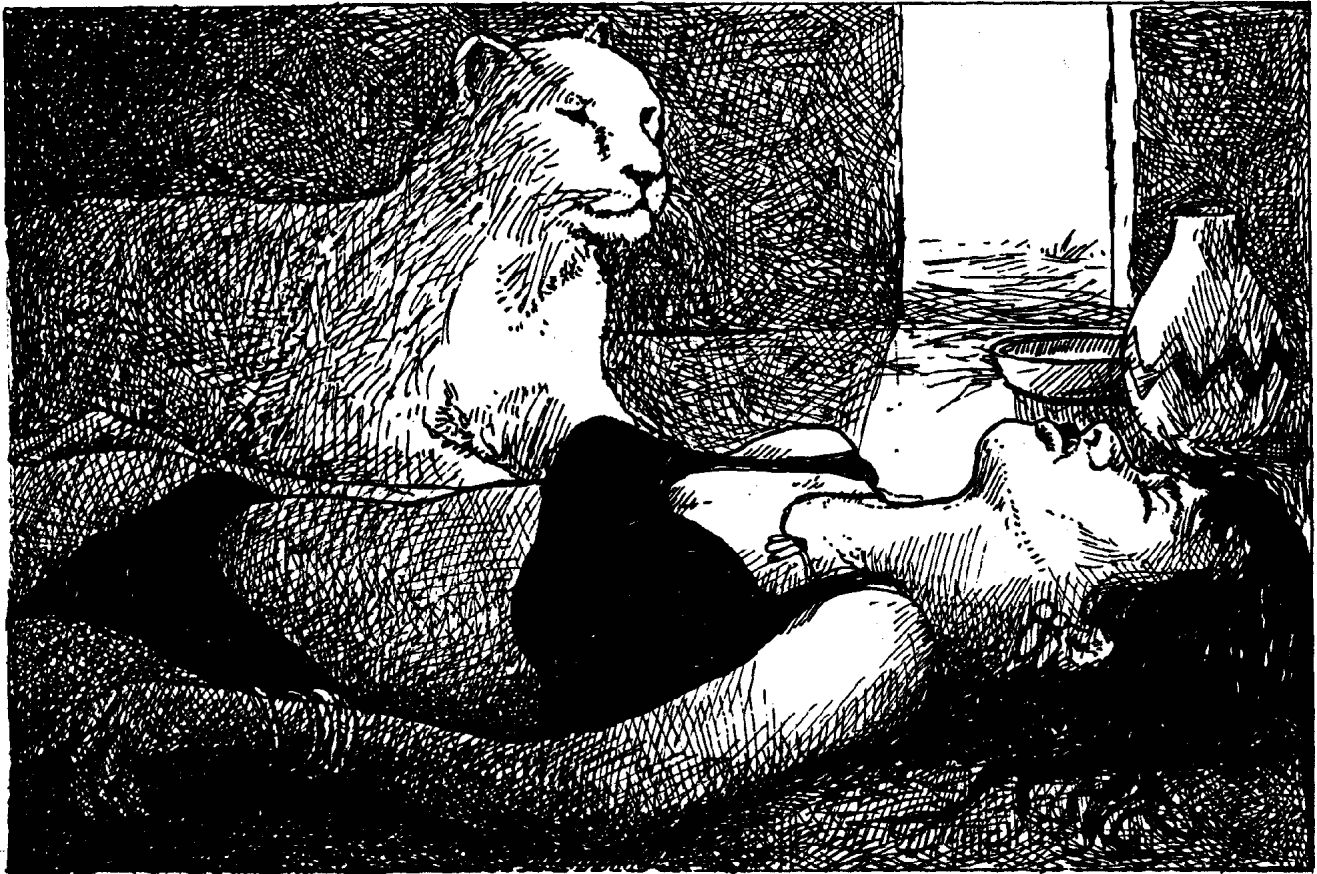
John needs an heir. He has six wives and eight sons, yet he needs an heir. Although his offspring excel at hunting, learning and war, no son could ever attain the perfection which John believes his Empire will require. John fears that

without a true hero, indeed without a man more worthy than himself, his glorious works will dissolve. He subjects his sons to hardships and long training and bitter rebuke hoping to forge at least one lion-like future Emperor.

**Role-Playing Tips:** Remember always, you are Prester John, Emperor of the most magnificent land in the world. You may give guests and advisors your solemn attention. You may speak decrees, wise sayings and formal courtesies in your gravest voice. However, it does not behoove you to banter with inferiors. This is not a matter of personal arrogance, it is the dignity of the Empire.

## The Imperial Clique

Prester John does not rule Kerait alone. A circle of like-minded authorities give him the base he needs to found an Empire. Lord General Timothy Rhee commands the Imperial armies. A



prominent theologian named Luke-Paul manages the Empire's spiritual foundations. A tireless engineer known only as Abraham personally designs Prester John's public works. In its present, embryonic state, the Empire has no titles for such key authorities. However, all have palaces and retinues within the city. All of them can mobilize large portions of the Empire if need be. Each member of the Imperial Clique hopes to found a permanent institution around his function with established privileges and funds.

Lord General Timothy Rhee, a man who has always kept both past and present a mystery, has recently disappeared. Some speculate that his past has caught up to him, but no one knows for sure. The military hierarchy is in slight disorder at this time.

## ***Luke-Paul, Elder In The Faith***

Age 53 Faith 3 Enc 0

### **Characteristics**

Int +3 Str +1 Prs +3 Dex +0  
Per+2 Stm +2 Com +3 Qik +0

### **Combat**

Noncombatant  
Soak Total : +2  
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.  
Fatigue Total: +2  
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

### **Talents**

Charisma (Religion): +3

### **Skills**

Leadership (Religion): +3

### **Knowledges**

Church Knowledge (Theology): +6  
Scribe (Khili): +1  
Scribe (Latin): +1  
Speak (Astha): +2  
Speak (Khili): +3  
Speak (Latin): +1

### **Personality Traits**

Leader +1  
Monastic +2

### **Reputation**

Kind(Kerait) +3

**Description:** Tall, striking and physically strong, Luke-Paul has the appearance of a conquerer. His puissance suits his lofty station of Elder in the Faith, spiritual leader of Christians in Kerait. Luke-Paul serves as personal theologian to the Emperor. The Emperor dreams of extending Luke's power further yet, making him the equivalent of a southern Pope.

Luke-Paul grew up the second son of a rich man in the Far-Eyes tribe. His parents intended him to be either a farmer or a warrior. Neither occupation satisfied Luke-Paul's intellect. He drifted between the households of his parents and their friends, experimenting with the philosophical principles of Christianity. In the process, he met the son of Chief Mandus, the young John. Luke-Paul, who is twelve years older, became a sort of elder brother to the future Emperor. Paul converted John to Christianity and performed John's baptism.

Before the public, Luke-Paul maintains his imperious bearing. However, Luke-Paul is an extremely private man, whose interests turn toward philosophy. Luke-Paul loves the poetic grandeur of the Bible and struggles to follow the teachings of the faith. He has little interest in organizing the bureaucracy of a church and pursues religious politics only to please his master Prester John.

Luke-Paul's reclusive mindset resembles that of many magi. Followers of Hermes with an interest in religion may find a kindred spirit in him.

The disappearance of Lord Timothy has increased Luke-Paul's influence with Prester John. Some of Abraham's followers are laying vicious rumors about the Holy Man's "involvement" with Lord Timothy.

**Role-Playing Tips:** Offer opinions when called on, using a deep, impatient voice. Leave matters to others when possible. You devote yourself to questions such as the Nature of Sin and the intellectual necessity of Heaven and Hell. When mundane matters demand it, you can think clearly and decisively.

## Abraham

Age 31 Cnf 3 Enc 0

### Characteristics

Int +3 Str +3 Prs +0 Dex +2  
Per +2 Stm +3 Com +0 Qik +1

### Combat

Attack/Long Spear: 1st +12 — Atk +7 — Dam +12  
Defense/Spear Parry: +5  
Soak Total (Hard Leather Hauberk) +8  
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.  
Fatigue Total: +3  
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

### Skills

Architecture (Palaces) +4  
Engineering (Bridges) +6  
Leadership (Workmen): +1  
Long Spear Attack (Wild Melee): +3  
Long Spear Parry: +2

### Knowledges

Speak (Astha): +2  
Speak (Khili): +3  
Speak (Latin): +1

### Personality Traits

Energetic +3  
Naive +1

### Reputation

Threatening (Kerait's kings) +3

**Description:** People throughout the Empire know Abraham's lanky form. This engineer travels the land with compass and charts, planning public works on an ever grander scale. Abraham loves bridges and palaces the way a general loves victories or a poet loves words. As the King of the Draughtsman tribe, his passion serves him well.

Prester John sees Abraham as a tireless servant of the Empire who plans new works to glorify Kerait. The kings of Kerait's tribes see him as a dangerous rival who has obtained John's favor and exploits it shamelessly. They pay the taxes to support his projects. Their people serve as laborers on his edifices. Abraham's Draughtsman tribe grows continually more influential, while John oppresses other tribes and whittles away at their

power. Inevitably, some tribe will attempt to dispose of

Abraham. The disappearance of Lord Timothy, which has decreased the engineer's influence with the Emperor, may be part of a greater plot to strip the Draughtman tribe of its imperial power.

Abraham's devotion to engineering leaves him little time for other concerns. He made a casual conversion to Christianity for the sake of Prester John. His sporadic eating habits have left him skinny. He wears his hair very short. Although Abraham knows that he is not popular, he has no idea how deeply his rivals hate him. Nevertheless, he can defend himself and would not hesitate to do so.

**Role-Playing Tips:** Rhapsodize about architecture, Man's enduring triumph over the crude elements. Speak rapidly, and keep the conversation on topics of engineering and John's Empire. React to threats with inordinate hostility.

## Ushan Galleys

Storms and the Ring of Fire prevent the Golden Empire from developing much long-range navigation. However, the shipwrights of Ushan build seaworthy galleys, mainly for transporting cargo along the coast. These ships can employ up to one hundred oarsmen and carry seventy tons of cargo. A series of small, triangular sails assists the oarsmen. Ushan Galleys have a maximum speed of seven miles per hour. They usually travel at closer to five mph. Since these ships cannot survive severe weather, sailors usually beach them during storms. Shipwrights design even the largest craft to come ashore. Ushan shipwrights decorate their galleys with carved fish and a rigging of colorful pennants.

## Mo-Mo Keu-Keu Land

Mo-Mo Keu-Keu land encompasses the true wilderness South of the Sun. This wasteland includes barren desert, impenetrable jungle and a transition area which combines the worst of both. Although Prester John claims these lands, even he has made no attempts to explore or settle them. The Mo-Mo Keu-Keu land belongs to the rulers of the wild, be they tribes, wild beasts, or creatures out of legend.

Primitive ways serve best in the Mo-Mo wilderness. Folk live by the communal tribal law of their ancestors, with none of the troubles experienced by the more sophisticated people of Kerait. Tribes hunt, gather roots or herd cattle, seldom encountering even other tribesmen. These people live from the country. They have no farms and no metal, and consider even the smallest knife a rarity of exotic lands.

## Dreamers and Gods

Every tribe has its shamans. Although few people would do without the Dreamers and their supernatural advice, fewer still trust them. Most Dreamers pursue the profession of the tribe, exercising their skills only at need. Those with truly overwhelming powers abandon ordinary life, driven by the demands of their spirits. Many leave the tribe entirely, and live alone in the wilderness. Some go mad under the strain.

Outlaw Dreamers haunt the Mo-Mo wildernesses. The tribes universally loathe shamans who use their powers to kill or harm, and anyone suspected of such crimes does well to flee. Once expelled from their tribes, these shamans must generally live by banditry. Many Outlaw Dreamers have small followings of devoted people. These disciples either trail after them in the wilderness or propagate secret cults inside the tribes.

Most Mo-Mo tribes revere the Colossi. Although these people adopted relatively few of Dis' inventions, they still venerate the giant Lords as half-divine. Numerous Dreamer shamans draw their power from "Dis-Spirits," who propagate the cult of the Colossi. These petty-gods frequently demand human sacrifice and direct their priests to scourge tribes who resist them. The Dis-Spirits are, of course, devils. Loshandar creates or summons them to keep the Mo-Mo under her sway.

The Christians of Kerait send numerous missionaries into the Mo-Mo Keu-Keu lands. Dreamers do not actively oppose them. A few of the more enlightened Christians do not universally condemn Dream-shamanism either, although they resist any suggestion that the Dreamers have found genuine gods. Tribes generally view missionaries as a new kind of Dreamer and accord them the same respect mixed with mistrust.

## The Veldt Tribes

The northern half of Mo-Mo Keu-Keu land begins as a rocky desert on the edge of the Ring of Fire. As one goes farther south, grass sprouts up, until it turns into a vast savannah, dotted by lone trees and waterholes. The land is flat and the air is dry. Elephants, lions, wildebeest and jackals flourish here.

The tribes of the Veldt raise cattle. They move with their herds and steal what they need along the way. All the tribes claim grazing rights to the best land, and when two happen to want the same region, they fight for possession. Battles not only settle questions of ownership, they provide the victors with new cows for their herd. Therefore, these people revere their warriors.

Veldt tribes consider themselves a lionlike people, threatened on all sides. They spurn the tame civilization of Kerait. At the same time, Veldt tribes fear and despise the primitive customs and mysterious enchantments of the jungle. A warrior resists both superstition and stagnation. He conquers the savage and the settler alike until he grows weak and they overcome him.

The Veldt tribes have adopted numerous military inventions of the Colossi. Many use bows in battle. Chiefs and heroes bear swords of iron. These people tend to know a fair amount about the politics and events of outside lands and some have served in the armies of Niobia or Prester John. Dreamers, however, seem relatively scarce among the Veldt tribes. Their robust life seems to discourage the emergence of shamans.

Only brave or desperate tribesmen attack organized territories such as Kerait or Niobia. However, Veldt tribes wreak havoc upon the gentle people of the jungle. Only the dangers of the forest itself keeps them from enslaving these people. Furthermore, although warriors of the same tribe fight together efficiently, no leader has yet tried to unite many tribes for a concerted campaign.

## The Sphinxes of the Veldt

Mo-Mo Keu-Keu land remains sufficiently primitive to have rulers who are not human. A trio of winged Sphinxes soar over the Veldt, terrorizing it as they choose. These beings seldom

interfere with the daily life of the tribes. However, they do not hesitate to use people as servants or as food. These sphinxes call themselves rulers of the Veldt and none of the tribes wish to contest that title.

The Sphinxes of Mo-Mo Keu-Keu appear as winged lions with human heads. These beasts possess near-legendary strength, and on the open plain, no enemy can escape them. Furthermore, all three sphinxes have a genius surpassed only by their ferocity. All the tribes agree that the sphinxes should be avoided.

The two female sphinxes call themselves Lysha and Seleena. The male, Fornos, consorts with whichever suits his fancy. This leads to bitter, irreconcilable feuding among all three. As if this permanent romantic triangle did not present bitterness enough, these creatures share the infinite arrogance observed in Greek gods and child prodigies. They do not hesitate to spend human life in their jealousies and machinations.

## The Gentle Tribes

Dense jungles cover the southwest, stretching to the unexplored Horn of the continent. Apes and colorful birds hoot from the leafy canopies overhead. Here, humanity becomes rare indeed. The Veldt tribes raid the outskirts of this country but in the interior, most tribes have never even seen other Mo-Mo people, much less strangers from outside. They are called the Horn or Gentle tribes.

Even the tribes' own legal systems become unnecessary in the jungles. People have no need to enumerate territories and rights, because tribes have no rivals to divide the land with. People hunt, gather fruit and build villages together. Jungle life promotes an informal communitarianism, presided over by benevolent kings, who take their turn in the tribes' work as well. Unlike the Veldt tribes, the Horn people have no tradition of raiding. Only those on the edge of the forest have experience with warfare, and they find fighting horrifying and bizarre.

When confronted with violence, some Gentle tribes submit slavishly or flee. Others fight back with primal savagery. The latter may not understand the motives of warlike folk, but they understand the results, and they destroy attacking people as they might destroy poisonous snakes.

Even these tribes have few experienced warriors, but they defend themselves with other methods. They employ pitfalls and vine snares, deadfalls and poisoned springs. Their warriors kill silently, with poisoned darts. Their Dreamers drive intruders mad.

Naturally, tribespeople have disputes among each other. However, pride and vengeance run strictly against tribal standards of behavior. When a dispute becomes angry enough for the tribe to notice, the Elders can exile them from the village until they resolve their conflict. Ideally, the shock of isolation brings the contenders to a settlement. They may fight to the death instead.

When one kills another, the victor returns to the tribe with a customary excuse. "When my foe and I met, we found nothing between us and swore the peace of brothers. But even as we danced for joy, the Lioness fell upon us and demanded one or the other for her supper. My foe, who was brave, gave his life so that I might return in peace. Honor upon his memory."

The tribespeople, of course, recognize this ritual lie for what it is. Although tribal custom permits duels, people treat the victors as murderers. They may resume their normal life, but are wise never to mention the conflict again.

While the disputers are in exile, people leave food for them at designated places. According to tradition, nobody may have any other dealings with the combatants. Nevertheless, a few tales tell of wives, brothers or close comrades who voluntarily went into exile to support a friend in a feud. Tribespeople consider such loyalty romantic but tragic, the result of kinship no decent person would yield to, but everyone might secretly admire.

Most Horn tribes welcome strangers with childlike friendliness. Nearly all Gentle people have a tradition of gifts and hospitality. However, experienced travelers warn that one cannot always accept tribal offerings as what they appear. Tribal Dreamers deal in enchantment. They may drug or bewitch guests out of curiosity, prudence, mysticism or barbaric devotion to a cruel god. Certain slave-traders report drinking a milky beverage which compelled them to blurt out all their plans for betraying and kidnaping their guests. A Christian convert named Nanna claims that she spent thirty days discussing theology with a venomous snake, never once recognizing the



absurdity of her behavior. She adds that the snake eventually transformed itself into the tribal Dreamer and bid all his people to follow the Faith.

## Faeries South of the Sun

The continent South of the Sun is a magical land, and the most powerful *vis* within it seems to have concentrated in the Horn jungle. Beasts of the most fantastic sorts lurk in the shadows of the trees. Tribal healers know all manner of potent and enchanted herbs. The Dreamers of this land wield unheard of power.

Some magi speculate that the Horn jungles belong to the land of faerie. Certainly, these forests have much in common with that ephemeral realm. Both belong to an infinitely diverse class of spirits with motives too esoteric for mortals to fully comprehend. However, where the faeries of Europe embody frivolity, the spirits of Mo-Mo Keu-Keu land represent the primal power of the jungle. They evoke the ferocity of the leopard, the glee of the monkey, the riotous color of the tropical bird and the embracing splendour of the forest.

The Horn tribes dwell in harmony with their enchanted surroundings. Guided by the Dreamers and their own innocence, they live as their spirits teach them, with each tribe developing its own customs and lifestyle. They live in treetop villages linked by vine ropes, or in stilt-houses upon the jungle lakes.

## The River Physon

What marvel in the world can match the allure of Physon, River of Gems? Diamonds glitter in the sands of its banks and rubies flash in the foam. *Vis*, the stuff of magic, accumulates around such a wonder of nature, making this site as lucrative for magi as for treasure-hunters. Naturally enough, the River Physon attracts all the perils of the continent as well. Those who journey it must run a murderous gauntlet of rival prospectors and things far worse.

The River Physon runs from south to north, through the wildernesses of the continent. Branches of the Lower Physon flow out of the Mo-Mo lands into Kerait. These streams serve as a magnet for the greedy and violent of this continent

and beyond. Along the Lower Physon, one can encounter outlaw gangs from Kerait, professional killers from Niobia and diabolists from Dis all in the same place at the same time. The explorers of the Lower Physon routinely murder anyone they encounter, in order to claim a larger share of the gems. They also kill or enslave the natives, which has encouraged the local tribes to declare a universal war on all outsiders, creating yet another enemy for travelers to fear. All of this killing grows less and less profitable. Explorers picked this river clean of jewels long ago, and the most one can hope for is an occasional flawed gemstone washed down from the jungles beyond.

Those who journey south along the Physon river eventually leave the other prospectors behind. Here, other, more dangerous enemies threaten the seeker of treasure. For most of its length, the river flows through the Risti, a maze of black ravines which plunge hundreds of feet beneath the green canopy of trees. Rockslides, hidden drop-offs and flash floods can kill even the most wary. All manner of man-eating beasts have learned to hunt here.

Explorers universally agree that the Risti is under some curse. These canyons consume more lives than even this treacherous land can account for. All who die in these pits remain as ghosts, to do in other travelers as best they can. Other spirits linger with them, things which never were human, things with the alien malevolence of nightmares.

The curse of the Risti causes bad luck, forcing all explorers to roll double the usual number of Botch rolls. Every variety of ghost and demon lives there as well.

The Risti extend for over twenty miles on either side of the river. Those who attempt to skirt them inevitably become lost and either veer back into the canyons or leave the Physon region altogether. Travelers suffer a -3 penalty on rolls for Direction Sense and Survival here.

Legends say that the shamans of all the Horn tribes created the Risti in one potent collective dream, to keep treasure-hunters from despoiling their lands.

At the Springs of the Physon, one finally finds the legendary trove of gemstones. This area also harbors one final guardian. The dragon Kor Ny

Kor rules the Physon river. If he notices gem-hunters, they have little hope to see the next day. Fortunately, Kor Ny Kor spends much of his time asleep, and seldom notices the theft of a few gemstones. The Mo-Mo Dream-sorcerers warn that a sleeping dragon is not necessarily harmless.

One finds the gems of the Physon either just above or below the river's countless waterfalls. To gather them, one must swim through the powerful current and pick the stones from the river's floor. This requires a (stress die + Swimming + Str ) feat. If swimmers fail, the current sweeps them over the falls or into bubbling whirlpools lined with stones.

The value of the gems, difficulty of swimming and danger of the waterfalls varies with location. In general, one finds jagged, low-quality gems amid the pebbles of the lower river. Here, swimming rolls have an Ease Factor of 12 and waterfall damage ranges from +4 to +8. In the Risti, the gems are markedly greater in value, but the Ease Factor increases to a minimum of 18. Damage from swimming becomes +15 or higher. By the Springs of the Physon, the gems become more valuable yet and the difficulty of swimming actually declines. The Ease Factor is usually around 13 and damage becomes +8.

Gems from the Physon contain from one to six pawns of Terram *vis*, depending on value.

## Landmarks

### *Kar-Iar Hills*

These dark ridges divide the Veldt from the Horn Jungles, and both from Kerait. Although the Kar-Iar boasts few lordly mountains, the ridges reach elevations at which the air grows thin. Few travel in the parched, jagged Kar-Iar.

### *Kar-Iar Wood*

Trees grow in the northern arms of the Kar-Iar Hills, foreshadowing the rain forests of the Horn. However, the Kar-Iar Wood lies on the lee side of the hills, where little moisture falls. This country features spiny underbrush interspersed with wizened trees. The sandy soil blows and drifts in the wind, coating everything with a layer of silt.

### *Mo-Mo Lake*

This lake shimmers in the midst of the Horn Jungles. Dozens of tribes gather water from its shores and some even build stilt-villages upon it. The Mo-Mo consider this lake sacred.

## Chance Encounters

- One night, without warning, the magi and companions have an adventure in Dreamland. To begin this story, the Storyguide informs the players where their characters find themselves and begins the tale, without further explanation. Neither players nor characters can be sure whether they are dreaming or whether some spell has summoned them to another place. Nor can they be sure whether maimings and deaths in the new realm are real.

Since this story takes place in Dreamland, the plot can feature anything the Storyguide can imagine. Ideally, it should have some connection to the rest of the Saga. If the characters have a Dreamer for an enemy or a friend, this episode presents a chance to develop that relationship.

- The sphinx Lysha swoops down upon travelers in the Veldt. She does not attack, but purrs, and interrogates strangers in great detail. If the magi strike her as impolite, boring or potential rivals, she may snatch one for lunch and fly away. Otherwise, Lysha gives the strangers a message for Fornos, whom she describes as her mate. The message begins as a love-note and continues to reminisce about a recent meeting and propose another one soon. Although the subject is clearly personal, the language seems reasonably chaste. However, Fornos currently happens to live with Seleena. If the magi deliver the message, Seleena attacks them, and Fornos, in embarrassment, may join in.

- One of the Horn Tribes gives the magi an effusive reception. The King holds a feast, dancers perform, children sing and tribesmen boast, all for the guests' benefit. Not long thereafter, mysterious accidents begin to occur. The tribal Dreamer follows a serpent totem who demands the strangers' lives as a sacrifice. He has several secret followers among the people. If the magi wrongly blame the entire tribe, the encounter could end in disaster. Otherwise, the travelers may try to isolate and neutralize their real enemies while

building a greater friendship with the King.

## Characters of the Wilderness

### *Kor Ny Kor, Dragon of the Physon*

Magic Might 55    Size +7

#### Characteristics

Int +3    Per -2

#### Combat

Bite: 1st +12 — Atk +20 — Dam +40  
 Claw: 1st +16 — Atk +20 — Dam +20  
 Sting: 1st +30 — Atk +28 — Dam +10\*  
 Defense: +10  
 Soak Total: +50  
 Body Levels: OK/0/0/0/-1/-1/-1/-3/-3/-3/-5/-5/Incap.  
 Fatigue Total: 0  
 Fatigue Levels: OK/0/0/0/-1/-1/-1/-3/-3/-3/-5/-5/Unc.

\* Plus poison: The victim must pass a Stm roll of 9+ or drop four Body Levels.

#### Powers

*Choking Breath*, PeAu 30, 3 Magic Points.  
 Blasts the life from the air, causing +30 damage to each person within a cone ten paces across and thirty paces wide.

*Dream Vortex*, ReMe, 5 Magic Points. Kor Ny Kor can draw his opponents into his own dreams, to fight them there in a world of his creation. Anyone who views Kor Ny Kor asleep must pass a Stm roll of 8+ or fall asleep immediately and enter Kor's dream. This roll is repeated every Combat Round that one looks upon the sleeping dragon.

Anyone who casts a spell on Kor must pass a Stm roll with an Ease Factor of half the spell's level or collapse in slumber. Furthermore, magi must exceed the Ease Factor by at least two points for the spell to actually take effect.

Kor cannot simultaneously dream and fight waking opponents. When magi challenge him and fall asleep, he disposes of their associates, then goes to sleep himself and deals with the magi.

Victims of the Dream Vortex cannot voluntarily wake up until either Kor Ny Kor releases them or they defeat him in the dreamworld. However,

their companions may rouse them with shaking, water etc..

Such stimulation allows sleepers to attempt one new Stm check per Combat Round, with the same Ease Factor of the original roll.

*Dream Magic*, ReMe varies. Kor Ny Kor can use all Dream Magic special Abilities at a Level of +5. See New Magical Traditions for details.

#### Personality Traits

Indolent +2  
 Miserly +2

**Description:** Dangerous awake or asleep, Kor Ny Kor rules without question on the River Physon. This creature appears as an enormous, four-legged serpent, with oversized haunches and skin of sickly gray. The dragon has leathery wings and can fly. Kor's bloodshot, ivory eyes give him the look of putrescence. Even when Kor sleeps, his pale wrinkled eyelids add to his loathsome appearance.

Like many dragons, Kor loves wealth insatiably. The Physon provides him with all he could require, but nevertheless, he wishes to hoard it, keeping every pebble as his own. However, Kor Ny Kor does not really want thieves to stop coming, since he takes as much pride in the defense of his treasure as in its possession. He may occasionally overlook a theft in order to encourage others.

Visitors who do not steal jewels attract Kor Ny Kor's curiosity. He gladly talks with such enigmatic strangers and sometimes even allows them to leave unmolested. Kor Ny Kor possesses an enormous quantity of lore about Dream-Magic and the Physon. He knows little about the world beyond.

Millennia of dreaming and growing fat have made Kor Ny Kor indolent. He spends ever more time asleep, and less flying. Therefore, those who infiltrate Kor's territory and escape without pausing to sleep stand an ever-greater chance of successfully robbing him. However, anyone who sleeps in Kor's domain inevitably encounters the dragon's dream-form. Furthermore those who discover him asleep risk collapsing into slumber themselves.

Kor's liver is worth 30 pawns of Mentem *vis*.

# South of the Sun

## Sphinxes

Magic Might 40 Size +4

### Characteristics

Int +5 Prs +2 Com +2

### Combat

Claw: 1st +8 — Atk +10 — Dam +35\*

Hind Claw: 1st +1 — Atk +6 — Dam +40\*\*

Defense: +10

Soak Total: +30

Body Levels: OK/0/0/-1/-1/-3/-3/-5/-5/Incap

Fatigue Total: 0

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/0/-1/-1/-3/-3/-5/-5/Unc

\*A sphinx gains a +3 to Atk and Dam rolls when diving upon landbound victims.

\*\*This attack only affects creatures behind or beneath the sphinx. A sphinx can make one claw and one hind claw attack per Combat Round.

### Powers

**Roar**, ReAu 30, 4 Magic Points. Anyone within earshot (300 paces) of a roaring sphinx must pass a Stm roll with an Ease Factor of 8 or fall prostrate from the blast. Those who fall cannot regain their feet or take action for one Round per point of failure. In addition, anyone who fails the Stm roll suffers deafness (-5 to hearing perception rolls) for one hour.

The Roar of a sphinx automatically knocks all ordinary missiles from their course. Assume that a Roar takes place in the Missiles phase and protects the sphinx from all ranged attacks in that round.

**Test of Wits**, ReMe 40, 2 Magic Points. A sphinx may engage opponents in any sort of intellectual duel. The victor may impose any one non-suicidal command, which the loser must obey. A sphinx may force a Test of Wits upon any creature which engages her in conversation, whether or not the subject agrees to the Test.

The sphinx of Greek myth asked victims a riddle. However, the Test of Wits may involve any mental contest the Storyguide desires. The sphinxes of the Veldt have asked riddles, posed mathematical problems and invented elaborate forms of chess for purposes of this contest.

### Personality Traits

Arrogant +3

Jealous +3

Petty +2

Three exceptionally powerful sphinxes rule the Veldt.

These creatures have the bodies of golden lions, and human heads, with skin the color of cinnamon. They occasionally wear gold jewelry which the tribes give them as offerings. All are well-muscled and comely and know it.

Tribal legend makes these beasts even more powerful than they are in fact, and the sphinxes have come to believe these stories themselves. Nobody has dared oppose the Sphinxes for centuries. Therefore, they do not hesitate to bully mere mortals. If confronted with a genuine threat, these beasts would flee or negotiate. They would also band together against their rival, and could coerce several Veldt tribes into assisting them.

The sphinx Lysha has the most even temper of the sphinxes, but her fine features and mischievous smile conceal a diabolic mind. She devotes much of her time to inventing ways of tormenting her rivals. However, Lysha does not actually hate Seleena or Fornos. She simply likes to remind them of her cleverness.

Unlike the other Sphinxes, Lysha treats her human helpers fairly. She rewards people who serve her well and even makes friends among the Tribes. Therefore, Lysha enjoys a wide network of informers and friends, who help her in her schemes.

Seleena is the most beautiful of the sphinxes. She is also the most vain and the most petty. The smallest slight can send her into a rage. Mortal lives mean nothing to her in such moods, and she regularly sacrifices humans in her schemes or kills them herself out of simple bad humor.

Fornos, as the only male sphinx in the trio, enjoys an enviable position. He drifts from Seleena to Lysha and back again, setting off tempests of rivalry with each switch. None of the excitement means much to him. As long as Fornos has food and drink and flattery, he feels content.

Fornos does feel the urge to prove his virility. He demonstrates his courage by bullying mortals. The male sphinx demands tribute from all who cross his path, and maims on the slightest pretext. He seldom kills his victims, because he wants them to spread stories of his prowess. On one or two occasions, Fornos' machismo has led him to attack powerful sorcerers or others with the ability to strike back. Lysha has always gotten him out of trouble.



Each of the sphinxes' bodies hold 20 pawns of Auram *vis*.

## ***Yo-Lin, Princess of the Veldt***

Age 27 Cnf 4 Enc 2

### **Characteristics**

Int +1 Str +2 Prs +3 Dex +2  
Per +0 Stm +3 Com +2 Qik +2

### **Combat**

Attack/Short Spear: 1st +11 — Atk +10 — Dam +11  
Defense/Wicker Kite Shield: +8  
Soak Total (Full Hard Leather): +9  
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.  
Fatigue Total: +1  
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

### **Dreaming**

Dream: +3  
Dreambuilding: +2  
Dreamsparking: +2  
Dreamwaking: +3  
Nightfancy: +2

### **Talents**

Charisma (Tribal): +5

### **Skills**

Kite Shield Parry: +3  
Leadership (Giving Orders): +5  
Short Spear Attack (Wild Melee): +6

### **Knowledges**

Speak (Astha): +1  
Speak (Khili): +3

### **Personality Traits**

Honorable +1  
Iconoclastic +1  
Passionate +1

### **Reputation**

Survivor(Veldt tribes) +2

**Description:** Yo-Lin's ebony skin and flashing eyes mark her as a leader. Indeed, in her 27 years, she has ruled not one tribe but two. Yo-Lin's career began as a newborn, when the Zai people discovered her abandoned in a lion's den. When the Zai saw that the lions had not harmed

Yo-Lin, they immediately revered her as their future queen.

Yo-Lin grew up in full knowledge of her auspicious birth. She became fiery, passionate and full of confidence. Tribal customs meant nothing to her. She refused the ritual impalement by which Zai girls came of age, and declared herself Queen at the scandalously young age of 18.

Yo-Lin defied Dis as readily as she defied her tribe. When the Lord Phillius requested a tribute of slave-women, Yo-Lin sent back his messengers without their hands. Shortly thereafter, a mysterious "Gray Man" appeared among the Zai people, haunting them at night. The Gray Man brought a pox which decimated them.

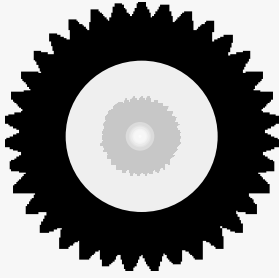
The disease did not kill Yo-Lin. She escaped into the Veldt alone, only to be captured by the Cho peoples, a warlike band which had grown bold enough to raid the caravans of Niobia. The aggressive Cho's admired Yo-Lin's courage and spirit. Within five years, Yo-Lin led the Cho.

Under Yo-Lin, the Cho do not raid the Niobians. Instead, Yo-Lin uses them against the Colossi. She blames Dis for the destruction of her people, and dreams of laying Dispolis in ruins.

Throughout her career, Yo-Lin has kept a great secret. She is more than a warrior. She knows the arts of a Dreamer. In war, Yo-Lin can spy on her foes in their dreams. In peace, she uses her magic to influence her tribe.

Yo-Lin has a terror of fighting other Dreamers. She does not want her secret magic revealed. Furthermore, she knows what it can do. Therefore, Yo-Lin refuses any raid which would take her into the Jungles of the Horn. In fact, she cultivates allies among the Gentle tribes, making her perhaps the only tribal leader whose influence spans both the veldt and jungle.

**Role-Playing Tips:** Speak in a firm, resonant voice. Act on impulse — but well-founded impulse, never hesitating but seldom behaving foolishly either. Despite Yo-Lin's warlike nature, she does not harm those who have not earned her wrath. With the innocent, she behaves extremely honorable and kind. However, anyone who tries to humiliate her can expect no mercy. Yo-Lin is a passionate woman with a powerful personal integrity.



## Chapter Three

# The Chronicles

The Colossi of Dis recorded the history of the early Empire, beginning with the rise of their own people. For the other tribes, only scattered creation-myths remain. Around 5000 B.C., the legend goes, a heroic Colossi named A-Shan discovered the use of flint to kindle fire. He set the stage for a number of inventor-kings, who appeared roughly 4,000 years later and built the first settlements in the hills of Dis.

The people of the tribes revered fire and those who could make it. When El-Von tamed elephants and Re-Nar devised a written script, Dis only increased its reputation. The tribes viewed the Colossi as near-gods. Naturally, the people of Dis extracted all the profit they could from their status. Around 1000 BC, the latest Colossi inventor, Tamil-O contrived to shear away the peak of Mount Dis, creating a mountain-sized obelisk to serve as a beacon for tribes bringing offerings.

Tamil-O did more than build monuments. He devised a regular schedule for tribute, to ensure that Dis always had what it needed in the amounts it required. In compiling his tax rolls, Tamil-O produced the first comprehensive survey of the Golden Empire's tribes, their territory, their customs and their wealth. Where two peoples shared the same land, he divided the territory along arbitrary lines. Often, the tribes themselves had not realized what they "owned." Nevertheless, most readily accepted any possessions which the Colossi demi-gods accorded them.

Tamil-O's record-keeping prepared the ground for a centrally-governed empire. He encouraged reciprocal "tribute" or, more appropriately, trade between the tribes as well as from the tribes to Dis. He advised chieftains on building their own cities. He adjudicated the disputes his new emphasis on tribal property fostered. He also spread

the Colossi inventions throughout the lands, spurring the growing sophistication of the tribes.

A developed culture spread across the eastern coast of the continent. Under Colossi tutelage, the Golden Tribes developed a town-based society, with an economy dependent on trade, metallurgy, agriculture and slaves. Nevertheless, they built no great cities, and remained divided into their original clans. Dis served as the center for trade, and the forum for disputes not settled by war. The Colossi city became, in effect, an imperial capital of the Golden Empire.

By 1000 BC, the Golden Empire consisted of several hundred tiny communities and one great power in Dis. With a military leader of even modest proportions, Dis might have struck the final blows and won itself an empire. The Colossi, however, had no tradition of warfare. They pursued knowledge, not dominion. Magi might well understand their motivations.

## Loshandar

The Colossi calender begins with the Roman year 452 BC. That year, the Lords of Dis uncovered the secrets of a powerful new class of spirits, which they set about to enslave. The "new spirits", what christians call devils, proved themselves a worthy rival for the Colossi. A secret war spread across the Empire, pitting Lords of Dis against the servants of an infernal power who called herself Loshandar. The struggle consisted not of military campaigns, but of cabalistic studies, the corruption of magicians, and duels of wizard against devil.

After three years of struggle, the Lords of Dis prevailed. They captured Loshandar and impris-

oned her within a vast stone.

The Lords of Dis became accomplished diabolists, and Loshandar, imprisoned, found herself obliged to serve them.

Like most great victories, this triumph redefined the nation. In many ways, the Colossi profited from their victory. Loshandar's powers became their own, and Dis gained a supernatural immunity to poison and harm. Colossi sorcery could never be the same. With the spread of malevolent and intelligent spirits, the Lords of Dis had to guard their secrets. The Lords of Dis allow only a few into their circle now, and they encourage the simple folk to think of magic as unworkable superstition.

Outside Dis, folk knew little of the duel with Loshandar. The Golden People knew only that the Colossi turned away from their peoples and abandoned the markets and forums of the city. They knew only that as the bounty of the Colossi shrank, Dis demanded more tribute than ever before. The tribes grew restless. Dis no longer seemed as wonderful, or as sacred.

To outside eyes, the Colossi seemed to be neglecting their role as administrators of the continent. In 220 BC, the Golden Tribes founded a new city of their own. A chieftain named Arcaeus built Ushan, a new "capital" at the Physon Delta. Its central location and access to the waterways made it far more convenient than Dis.

Like the cities of Dis, Ushan served primarily as an economic and cultural focus for the continent, not the capital of a conqueror. However, Arcaeus understood the power his new city gave him. Naturally, he exploited it. The Arcians slowly became the richest traders and most influential arbitrators in the Empire.

The Colossi raised no official objection to the founding of Ushan. However, Arcaeus' action still bore the taint of rebellion, and since the Colossi had the status of gods, rebellion smacked of blasphemy. Ushan's founding coincided with the appearance of demons in the Empire. Naturally, many blamed Arcaeus. The Golden People split into tribes which supported the new capital, and those which considered its very existence arrogant, dangerous and obscene.

War was inevitable in the Golden Empire. The growth of slavery and territorial lordship insured that tribes would have plenty to fight over. A religious dispute gave the people yet another

thing to divide them. Furthermore, the traditions of the

Golden People, unlike the Colossi, exalted warriors. Every clan pursued vendettas and duels of honor. Battles bubbled up across the land, as chieftain fought chieftain and traders turned bandits to raid one another's wares.

## Niobia

In 146 BC, the Romans drove a plow from one end of Carthage to the other. They buried its streets and salted its fields and added the province of Africa to Rome. In the wake of the sack, a Carthaginian priestess, Granita, gathered five hundred refugees and led them out of the doomed city. Inflamed by a dream from the goddess Juno, Granita led her people into the Ring of Fire, and beyond the reach of Rome.

Granita held her band together in the burning wastes of the Ring. Half their number died, but the survivors emerged east of the Dis Hills, where they found a settled countryside. There, they encountered a tribal village of the Golden People. Although the Golden People spoke a strange language, Granita managed to acquire food and rest for her band.

Granita selected an envoy to treat with the current kings of the land. However, the errand went terribly wrong, and the envoy ended up killing a Colossi Lord who happened to be present in the village. The local chief seized this excuse to exterminate the strangers.

Of the Carthaginian survivors, seventy-five men remained fit to fight. The tribes sent two hundred warriors against them. Granita served as an inspiration for her followers, wielding the power of a sorceress. Furthermore, the Carthaginian warriors had experience against the legions of Rome. The Carthaginians defeated the local tribes with ease.

The night after the victory, Granita had a dream in which Juno smote the land with her spear. Dust rose from the impact, and where it settled, ants built a great warren of their mound-like homes. Granita considered the meaning obvious. Her goddess intended the Carthaginians to settle in the bountiful land they found, and raise a new Carthage there.

One must remember that the "Golden Empire" was not any sort of unified state. No tribe



cared to defend the integrity of the lands South of the Sun. Granita completed her new city without further strife. The Carthaginians named the city Niobia, and set about expanding their power.

Once the Niobians had sufficient strength, they busied themselves with skirmishes across the continent. Carthaginian mercenaries sold their services as war leaders to whatever chieftains would hire them. The spirit of Hannibal lived among them, and they proved cunning, ruthless commanders. In return for their services, they took prisoners of war as captives back to Niobia. The combination of grand aspirations and a tiny Carthaginian population gave that city an insatiable appetite for slaves.

Loshandar, the enslaved devil of Dis, warned her masters that Granita's city could eventually become a threat to their lands. At her suggestion, the Lords of Dis invited several potent devils to the world and instructed them to take up residence in the new city. A latent diabolic cult among the Niobians gives these entities influence beyond their own formidable sorcery. The Lords compelled their diabolic agents to remain dormant in Niobia until given orders to the contrary. Dis now has a permanent weapon against the Carthaginians. Only the Colossi disdain for politics has prevented them from exploiting it.

## Christianity

The next great event in the history of the Golden Empire also came from outside. Christian missionaries arrived in the year 98 AD. These Christians crossed the Ring of Fire on the strength of their faith, and performed miracles of every variety upon their arrival. They preached the joyous gospel of their times and won converts throughout the Empire.

The new religion enjoyed a remarkably smooth reception. Dreamer shamans did not consider their superstitions a religion per se, and therefore they felt no direct competition with the Christians. A few tribal chieftains murdered missionaries, but more out of natural barbarism than religious conviction. The diabolists of Dis simply did not consider Christianity powerful enough to present a threat.

Only Niobia reacted violently against the missionaries. The Carthaginians felt no hostility to a new god, but riots erupted when Christians tried to overturn a statue of Juno. Juno, after all, had saved them from the Romans. The citizens of Niobia still lived in fear of extermination, and did not wish to antagonize their goddess. The Queen of Niobia finally banned Christianity. Carthaginian mercenaries serving abroad took to committing atrocities against Christians, and encouraging their followers to do the same.

Yet more visitors from the North, the Vikings, arrived in 900 AD. Only two longships in the entire era managed to penetrate the Ring of Fire, but they found the coast an easy target for their raids. There, they discovered the lands of Dis. It did not take them long to realize that the Colossi were rich, soft and almost completely unarmed.

Naturally enough, the Vikings banded together and struck inland toward the Cormoran and the chief cities of the Colossi. They soon discovered their mistake. On the day when the Vikings entered Dis, a black smoke rose from the earth, blanketing the city. For three days none entered nor left the Dis Hills. At the fourth dawn the smoke dispersed, and a few surviving Vikings fled to the sea, abandoning arms and possessions in their terror. Neither the Norsemen nor the Colossi tell tales of that smoke. However, this incident gave the outside world its only glimpse of the power of Loshandar.

The Christians recognized Dis' smokes for the devilry that they were. Although none could mourn the rout of the Vikings, the pious do not doubt that evil shall eventually come of it. They soon began to preach against the Lords of Dis. This harmed only the Christians, since people throughout the Empire knew that the Colossi brought civilization to mankind.

## Empire

Tribal fighting grew steadily more universal and savage. The Vikings, despite their fate, opened the eyes of chieftains to the potential of robbery. Niobia's freelance generals did even more to increase the tempo of fighting, by introducing the philosophy and tactics of total war. Once, a feud between tribes usually ended with a few

# South of the Sun



wounds and the exchange of some honorary tribute. The

Carthaginians, remembering their death-struggle with Rome, taught a strategy of war to the end, to the point where the enemy has lost the means to fight.

Once, the Lords of Dis paid no attention to the raids and skirmishes of the tribes. Around the eleventh century A.D., Loshandar began warning the Colossi that they could no longer afford such apathy. The old battles never changed much, since chieftains had no permanent ambitions beyond the thrill of a victory. Niobia, however, took a longer view of strategy, and it had taught its allies to do the same. Therefore, the Carthaginians and their friends grew inexorably richer, while the other tribes stewed and feuded.

The changing pattern of war was a general social trend, with many causes. No chieftain, even in Niobia, had consciously planned to alter the Empire's society. In most cases, one could not even tell when the changes were taking place except in hindsight. Therefore, although the Lords of Dis heeded their diabolic advisor, they saw no immediate way to counter the threat.

In 1233 A.D., a wealthy merchant of Ushan kidnaped the daughter of a Far-Eyes tribesman. The Far-Eyes tribe immediately sought revenge. This conflict quickly embroiled much of the continent, as dozens of tribes rallied to defend their center of trade — or to loot it. Although the tribes of Ushan purchased extensive aid from Niobia, the Far-Eyes tribe possessed numbers, enthusiasm and wily leadership.

Mandus, Chief of the Far-Eyes, lost little time in laying siege to Ushan. When he could not pierce its walls, he dammed the Physon and then broke his levees, unleashing a wall of water against the city. The flood toppled Ushan's wall and cast the troops within into chaos. Mandus then led a charge into the watery streets. Although the Far-Eyes won a spectacular victory, Mandus himself drowned.

Under most circumstances, the victorious tribe would have looted the city, killed a few of its worst enemies and returned to its old lands to let the war be forgotten. However, a faction among the victors called for a new policy. They wished to keep Ushan, keep their victories, and proclaim an Empire in the full political-military sense of the

word. The Lords of Dis encouraged this clique, and their opinions still carried the ring of the divine.

Mandus' son took charge of the Far-Eyes. The young king was a Christian convert, who called himself John. The idea of a true Empire intoxicated him, for he had a burning desire to leave his mark on posterity. As he considered the matter, a certain tribe among the defeated peoples decided to massacre its Christians. For John, that settled the matter. He would make himself Emperor of the continent, and he would defend the Christians of his land.

Christianity also made an excellent foundation for an Empire. The idea of one tribe ruling another ran counter to all the traditions of the Golden People. No mere conqueror could have sustained his power except through the constant use of force. However, every tribe had its Christian converts and they represented a new class, to which tribal customs did not apply. By basing his empire on his religion, John gave himself the legitimacy to rule.

Commanding his father's allies and the economic hub of Ushan, John conquered the continent. In 1242, he proclaimed his Empire. Seventy-two kings paid tribute to the new lord. In a remarkable reversal of roles, the Colossi led the tribes in making offerings to the conqueror. The Lords of Dis considered John their best hope for curbing the Niobians and imposing order upon the land. John took for himself the title "Presbyter" (Prester), which connoted the Elder of a tribe whom one must never gainsay.

Niobia finally paid grudging tribute to Prester John. Its Queen had no desire to fight the entire continent. The presence of Dis' devils also deterred them from rebellion. At John's insistence, the Niobians even withdrew their decree against Christianity, although angry mobs enforce it even more sternly than the Queen's troops.

In Ushan, John built the Row of Brothers, a vast avenue lined with statues of the chieftains from each tribe. Frescoes exalt their common heritage, and their harmony within the new Empire. Throughout the Empire, John built roads. The Christians here still consider opulent churches inimical to their beliefs, but John has spent fortunes on charity, building mansions and planta-

tions for the poor. These estates also serve as manpower pools for his armies.

Above all, Prester John wants to conquer new lands. He knows quite well that only expansion makes an empire strong and that conquest gives a people pride, even if they were originally among the conquered. John also harbors an ambition of seizing the Holy Lands for Christianity. According to John's most recent information, Jerusalem still belongs to Rome. Nevertheless, once Prester John learned of the more recent events, he would find a crusade against the Saracens worthy of his efforts.

John sent explorers and envoys through the Ring of Fire, seeking other Christians to the North. Those who are attracted to the Golden Empire will, voluntarily or not, find themselves playing a role in John's attempts to stabilize his Empire.

## **Earth Serpent's Dream (Campfire tale of the Mo- Mo Keu-Keu People)**

Earth Serpent grew too large for her skin, and rubbed against a sharp rock until she could shed it. The sun set the dry, discarded skin on fire. We call the smaller flakes "stars." We call the big piece of skin the Milky Way. And that was how lights appeared in the night sky.

After shedding her skin, Serpent felt tired, and fell asleep. The flickering stars she had created became her dreams. Some of her dreams were too big to burn properly, and merely smoldered. The other ones glittered and sputtered into dozens of bright cinders.

Dream-stars rained down upon the world and became its people. We are the little glowing cinders whom Earth-Serpent loves. The big lumps landed in Dis, where they became the Colossi. They have the genius of gods, because they never burned, and none of their primal wisdom has turned to ashes. But because they have never burned, they have no dream-fire in their souls, which means they have no hearts.

## **The Golden Tribes Offer Tribute (From the Inscribed Histories of Dis)**

And when we lit the everlasting campfires the chieftains thanked us. And when we tamed beasts for their use they thanked us again. And when we took the stone from the hills and made it iron, the chiefs fell on their knees before us, and said, "O Titans of Dis, you have taught us the secrets of the gods themselves. Behold, we are sad, for we have no way to show our gratitude!"

To this, the Lords answered, "Not so! Be of good cheer, it is possible for you to thank us. The Lords of Dis require many things which we do not care to manufacture. Bring us the fourth part of your herds and the fourth part of your harvests, gems picked from the Physon and cloth woven by your hands. And such children as you find useless, send them to Dis so that they might be our slaves. If you do as we have said, we will consider your thanks sincere."

So pleased were the chieftains that they left without saying another word.

## **Loshandar Challenges the Lords (From the Inscribed Histories of the Lords of Dis)**

We determined that as steel is the strongest creation of man, we could best control the Spirit by means of confining her in a crucible. And so the slaves tamped the bellows and we heated the pure iron to glowing. And the Spirit Loshandar manifested herself in the iron, and spoke upon the air. There were those of us who saw the form of a woman, white-hot and radiant amid the vapors of the fire.

These were the words of the Devil Loshandar.

"Mankind is a race which lives by bending other things to its will. Have you not enslaved fire and horses? Wheat and ore? Aye, even one another? Then do not marvel when I tell you that I am also an enslaver of others, and have been so for the eons. And now I shall enslave you, and use you for my purposes, just as you have done to me."

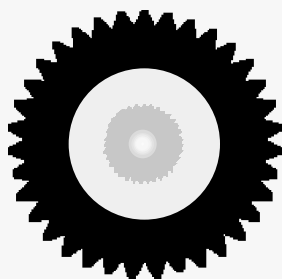
To mortal eyes, it seems that Loshandar boasted in vain. In years which followed, we Lords of Dis learned this spirit's name, and subdued her. Wishes, she granted us, and devils she placed at our command. But Loshandar is a being of incalculable age and malice, which leads many of us to fear that even captivity is but a part of her cunning plan.

Is it possible to submit in order to conquer? Might the master of slaves limit his own freedom as well? These are questions which it grows ever more frightening to ask.

## **Granita Vows Revenge (Spoken by Granita upon the founding of Niobia)**

I weep for Dido, mother of Carthage, and I call on all to remember. When the Trojan Aeneas came to Dido in ruin, she gave him shelter and safety, treasure and . . . even love. And when he abandoned her, she slew herself, aye, for the love of him. And Aeneas, as you know, used his lover's gifts to build the city of Rome. So today, I weep, not because Dido is dead, but because she wasted her life on such a villain.

The spoil of Carthage cannot exceed the spoil of Troy. And if the sons of Aeneas rise from nothing to slay the people who nourished them, how much more shall my daughters do to punish the ingrates of Rome? Oh, Niobians, let us become a great people! And let us remember that although Dido in love was tender, a woman in vengeance is furious, and patient and cold as ice.



## Chapter Four

# Bestiary

The following Bestiary, like that of the **Ars Magica™** rules, is a selection of particularly interesting creatures, not a comprehensive biological survey. It reflects medieval understanding in addition to modern knowledge.

### Buffalo (Water)

Size +2

Cun -5 Stm +7

Charge: 1st +6 — Atk +4 — Dam +8

Dodge: +0

Soak Total: +12

Body Levels: OK/0/0/-1/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: +5

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/0/-1/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

### Crocodile

Size +1

Cun -5 Stm +8

Bite 1st +6 — Atk +7 — Dam +12

Dodge: +0

Soak Total +14

Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: +7

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

### Elephant

Size +5

Cun +2 Stm +10

Brave +1

### Combat

Tusks: 1st +8 — Atk +10 — Dam +20

Trample: 1st +2 — Atk +15 — Dam +20

Dodge: +0

Soak Total +20

Body Levels: OK/0/0/-1/-1/-1/-3/-3/-5/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: +5

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/0/-1/-1/-1/-3/-3/-5//5/Unc.

The people South of the Sun often train elephants and ride them. In combat, a trained elephant must attempt a Brave roll whenever it suffers a wound. If this roll fails, the beast stamperes in a random direction, trampling whatever gets in its way.

### Fire Elemental

The heat of this region manifests itself as living spirits of Elemental Fire. Although all these creatures have the same essential nature, they appear in many different forms. Some appear as lone tongues of flame. Others take the shape of fiery horses, dogs, or serpents.

In the heat of the Ring of Fire, elemental spirits have attained sentience, and possibly genius. These beings represent alchemical principles, and may hold great interest for the magicians of Hermes. Their bodies contain one point of Ignem *vis* per three points of Spirit Might. Anyone who spends a day studying an Elemental can, one time only, gain an increase of one in Ignem.

Unfortunately, fire-spirits see no reason to tolerate mortals in their lands. They feel only contempt for beings of flesh, which cannot endure heat and flame. Although few fire-spirits devote much thought to hunting human travelers, the ones that do add an intelligent enemy to a land

where nature itself provides danger enough.

Elemental spirits have different motivations from things of flesh and blood. The Storyguide should remember this when role-playing the inhabitants of the Ring of Fire. Individual elementals have no fear of death, since the principles which animate them permeate the universe. In fact, Elementals have no permanent individual existence at all. They manifest themselves wherever the forces of their element have grown intense enough to take on conscious thought. Their "motives" are the forces which brought them into existence.

Fire Elementals have a general desire to expand, consume, and grow. At the root of their motivation lies the drive to cause change. The Fire Elementals have little interest in either Prester John or Europe, but if forced to pay attention to these things, they may act to smash both civilizations. The Elementals might actually like to see travelers cross the Ring of Fire, if those travelers brought explosive doctrines from one land to the other. They can protect those whom they choose from the heat. However, having accepted an Elemental's help, one often has some difficulty getting rid of it.

The uninitiated traveler has no means for distinguishing the elemental spirits of flame from demons. Even those with some sophistication in the ways of the occult often find similarities between the two. The stronger and more belligerent fire-spirits can often do more harm than demons anyway, at least in the short term. Both are malevolent, powerful beings which even magi can only partially understand.

Spirit Might (Ranges from 10 to 50+. Usually about 25.)      Size +1

### Combat

Fiery Touch: 1st +7 Atk +13 Dam +10\*

Dodge: +5

Soak Total +10

Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: 0

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

\*The victim's clothes and possessions continue to burn on the round following a successful attack, inflicting another +6 damage.

## Powers

**Birth of Fire** (CrIg varies), 1 Spirit Point: Fire Elementals can use any *Creo Ignem* spell, spontaneous or formulaic. Elementals have a Form and Technique bonus equal to their total Spirit Might.

**Consumption** (CrIg 50), all Spirit Points: This power allows the elemental to flare into an all-encompassing gout of fire, destroying itself and all around it. Consumption consumes all Spirit Points remaining to the elemental. It affects a radius equal to three paces per Spirit Point expended. Those within the area suffer damage of one die plus the original Spirit Might of the elemental.

**Fire Leap** (ReIg 25), 1 Spirit Point: A Fire Elemental can instantly transport itself into any fire within sight, including a fire which it starts.

By spending ten Spirit Points, a Fire Elemental may reach any fire which it knows to be burning, anywhere in the world. However, the Elemental must have previously seen the fire and the fire must still be burning.

## Jackal

Treat as wolf.

## Kor-Ny-Kor, Dragon of the Physon

See Characters of the Wilderness in Chapter Two for the description and statistics of this mighty beast.

## Loshandar

The Colossi of Dis rank the discovery of Loshandar alongside that of fire and the wheel. Their pride has its basis. Since acquiring Loshandar, the Colossi have enslaved many devils. However, Loshandar remains the most thoroughly enslaved and by far the most powerful. Few devils of Loshandar's might have ever strayed out of the Hells.

Loshandar embodies the power to tame and to master, to steal power from nature. At the same time, she represents the ability of power to corrupt, bringing both master and slave into ruin.

For the Colossi, Loshandar's nature is their means to advance civilization. For Hell, it is the power to bring civilization into damnation.

Loshandar has two ways of appearing in Dis. She can manifest herself anywhere within sight of her diamond prison, to advise the Lords of Dis and work magic on their behalf. The Demon can also send Spawn of her self into the world. A description of Loshandar's personal form appears below. Details on the Spawn appear after that.

Most Colossi view Loshandar as female. However, this beast has many guises. Loshandar appears as the masculine Strong Slave, with bowed head and muscles thick as trees. The Demon manifests itself as the callous male Taskmaster, who rose from his place among the slaves to wield the whip. Some have seen Loshandar as Coquette, a charming woman whose favors cost far more than lovers guess. Finally, the Demon appears as a Mother, who gives her daughters birth, and in return demands the right to shape their souls.

Diabolists only guessed what powers Loshandar had when the Colossi called her from Hell. When the Lords of Dis defeated Loshandar, they set a ward upon her, bottling her up in a diamond prison. They hid this diamond itself in a secret vault beneath the Palace of the Lords. From that cell, the Lords of Dis let Loshandar exercise what powers they dare.

When the Lords of Dis desire, they can allow Loshandar out of her prison in a physical form. Her being cannot touch the gem without returning into it, and cannot go beyond sight of the gem. A Lord of Dis carries the gem for Loshandar, taking it wherever Lords require their manifested demon. The physical form serves primarily as a last defense against those who would sack Dis or attack Loshandar's prison.

The Lords of Dis know secrets to loosen Loshandar's bonds, letting her send out more avatars with more power. However, nobody sees the peril of this more clearly than they. The Lords of Dis prefer to keep Loshandar as an advisor. They use lesser devils for more direct services.

Loshandar herself makes few bids for greater freedom. With greater power, she could complete more of her ambitions, but as matters stand, the Lords of Dis often accomplish them for her, which, in the end, is far more satisfactory. The Lords of

Dis will listen to a helpless prisoner. With greater freedom, Loshandar would have more power but less trust.

Loshandar's body would contain one hundred pawns of Vim *vis*. However, one cannot over-emphasize the difficulty in destroying Loshandar. She has formidable powers of her own and all the Colossi sorcerers to guard her. She has numerous Spawn throughout Dis. Furthermore, to actually destroy Loshandar, magi would have to release her from her diamond prison, using magic which only the highest Lords of Dis know. This release, incidentally, would give Loshandar power even beyond her current might, with details left to the individual Storyguide.

Demon Might 80

### Characteristics

Int +5 Str +5 Prs +3 Dex +5  
Per +10 Stm +5 Com +2 Qik +5

### Combat

Touch(PhysicalForm): 1st+8 — Atk+20 — Dam+30  
Defense: +10  
Soak Total: +15  
Body Levels: OK/0/0/0/0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-3/-3/-3/-5/-5/  
Banished  
Fatigue Total: 0  
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/0/0/0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-3/-3/-3/-5/-5/  
Banished

### Spirit Form Powers

The following list shows powers which the Colossi have permitted Loshandar to manifest. She performs these feats at her diamond prison, when subjects lay their hands upon the gem.

**Demon's Commune** (InMe 30, 10 Demon Points): To accept Loshandar's magical gifts, one must enter into a Commune with the demon. In this bargain, Loshandar offers some bit of diabolic wisdom. In return, Loshandar gains complete access to the subject's mind. The demon may read memories, dig up psychological motivations and perceive things which the subject does not admit even to himself. Loshandar then uses this knowledge to bring about the subject's damnation.

**Demonic Genius:** Loshandar's knowledge equals a tome with a value of +6 in any desired

knowledge. Loshandar only imparts this knowledge by means of a Demon's Commune.

In addition to other knowledge, a diabolist who taps Loshandar's Demonic Genius learns the names and rituals for summoning other, lesser demons. In this way, the Lords of Dis have acquired countless infernal allies.

**Bestow the Genius of the Demon** (CrMe 30, 5 Demon Points): This power allows Loshandar to grant anyone a +3 on any skill or ability. Anyone who accepts this gift must also take a +2 or -2 to some Personality Trait, as the Demon desires.

**Give the Gift** (CrVi 80, 20 Demon Points): This power allows Loshandar to grant one subject the Gift of magic, whether for gaining Hermetic, Colossi or other magical abilities. In return, the recipient must enter a Demon's Commune. The new wizard must also swear an oath to Loshandar, promising to perform any one task the demon commands.

Loshandar tailors her commands to times and individuals. Her orders display all the evil craft one would expect from a devil. The Lords of Dis do not know what happens to those who break their vows. A few Colossi seem to have defied Loshandar and although none suffered any immediate penalty, all came to mysterious ends within several months of their perjury.

Loshandar punishes oath-breakers through the magic she granted them. Anyone who accepts Loshandar's Gift and then refuses her service will suffer a dreadful reversal of magic at a time which Loshandar considers most appropriate. The magnitude of this disaster equals that of a double Botch. Oathbreakers could, of course, escape this curse by giving up magic entirely. However, Loshandar and her Spawn work to arrange situations where perjurers find their powers indispensable.

**Aegis of Dis** (ReAu 50, ReTe 50, permanent): Loshandar maintains a permanent shield over all Dis, destroying all poison and keeping nature's fury at bay. Neither earthquakes nor cyclones nor extremes of temperature can harm the Colossi beneath this Aegis.

**Create Spawn** (CrVi 50, variable Demon Points): See Spawn for details.

## Physical Form

A genderless figure resembling a well-proportioned human, formed from a glowing mist of boiling iron.

## Physical Form Powers

**Touch** (CrIg 30, 1 Demon Point): causes +30 fire damage, sets flammable objects on fire. Burning clothes cause the wearer +6 damage per round. Loshandar's touch can turn iron to slag, if the demon passes a roll of Stm against an Ease Factor based on the thickness of the material. Most armor and weapons melt with an Ease Factor of 8.

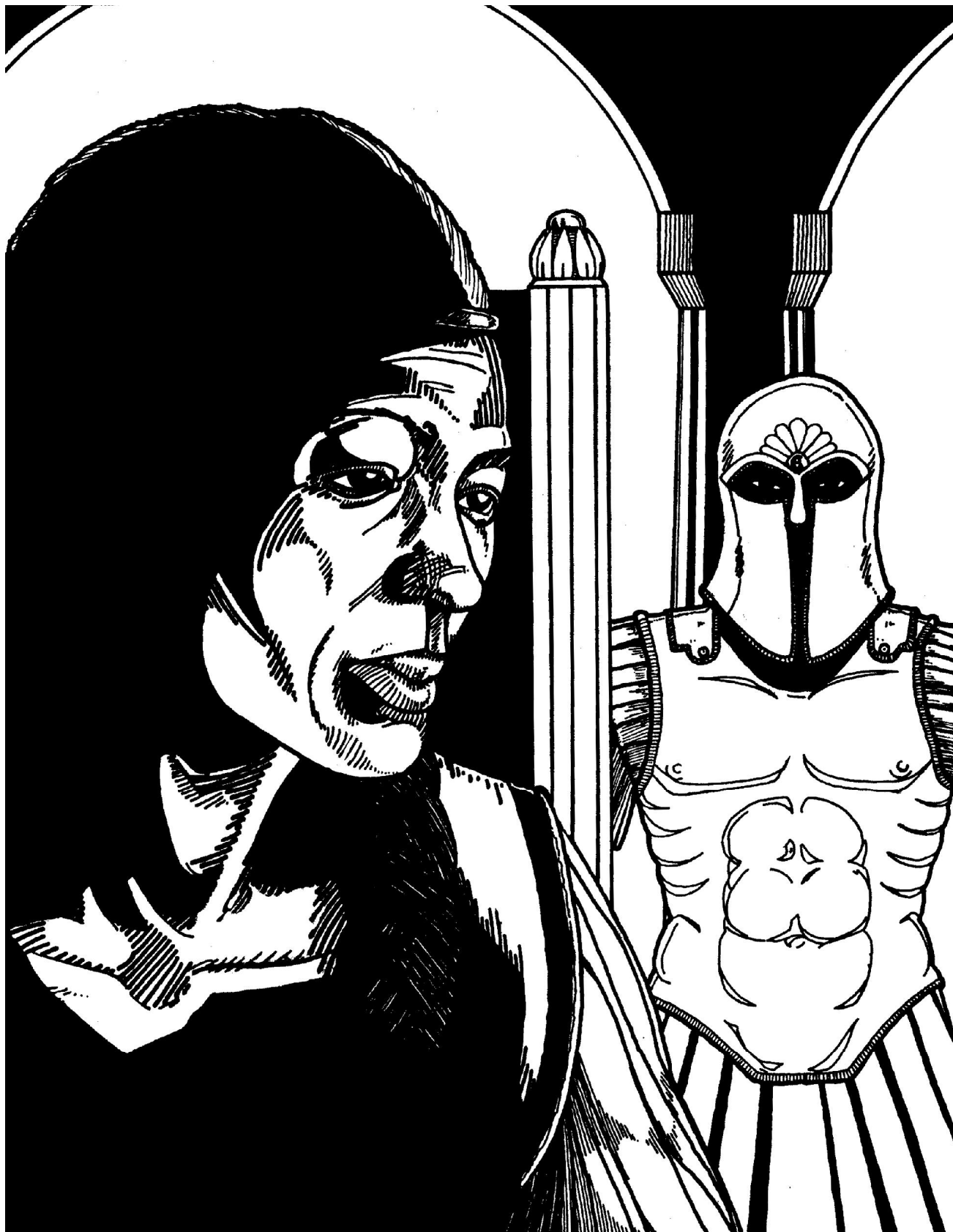
**Magic** (varies): Loshandar can perform spontaneous and formulaic sorcery, as if she were a magus. Assume that her Grimoire includes all the usual spells from **Ars Magica**. Loshandar may acquire Forms and Techniques by spending her Demon Points. One Demon Point buys her one point of knowledge in her chosen field. Once purchased, such spell-casting knowledge remains with her until the following day.

Note that Loshandar's abilities can vary greatly, depending on how she chooses to allot her Demon Points. During an attack upon Dis, she might take enormous scores in Perdo and Ignem, for the purposes of devastating Dis' enemies. However, the Colossi seldom need a warrior, and Loshandar sees little to gain from war. Usually, the Lords of Dis call her into physical form to use Creo spells on their behalf. Loshandar may also equip herself with Rego Mentem powers, the better to influence her masters. At other times, she might use Intellego, either to spy for the Colossi or on them.

**Smoke of Devils** (CrVi 40, 20 Demon Points): This power blankets ten square miles in black, choking smoke. A swarm of mindless, jibbering devils plagues those within the smoke, confusing them and driving them to madness. Loshandar can direct the devils to ignore victims who meet specific criteria. For example, the devils might have orders to spare all Colossi, or all who speak the name, "Loshandar." It costs Loshandar one Demon Point per hour to maintain this Smoke of Devils.

The following effects automatically strike all enemies of the devils.





# South of the Sun

- Shifting smokes continually obscure one's vision and then drift away. Each person should roll a die once per combat turn to determine the number of paces he can see. Although this is not precisely a stress roll, the "0" does count as zero, or total blindness. More fiendish yet, one determines the range of vision after announcing one's actions for the turn. Anyone aiming an attack at a creature beyond the range of sight automatically Botches the maneuver.

- The jibbering demons make sorcery maddeningly difficult. Triple all magical Botch rolls.

In addition to the automatic effects, this smoke of devils can drive folk mad. When the smoke appears, and each hour in which Loshandar renews it, everyone subject to the smoke must roll a stress die adding Stm. The list below shows possible effects.

- **Botch:** They succumb completely to the madness of the devils. These victims stay within the smoke, wreaking misery upon their companions as best they can. Those who succumb to this madness may feign normality in order to complete their cruel schemes. To cure such a victim, one must banish a demon of Demon Might 15.

When a grog, magus or companion goes insane, the Storyguide should usually take over the character. However, exceptional role-players may manage to cause more devastation than the Storyguide ever could.

- **1-3:** The victim feels an overwhelming compulsion to eat the flesh of one particular companion. To satisfy the urge, one must chew off enough meat to cause three Body Levels worth of damage. This ends the obsession. It does not matter whether the character eaten lives or dies.

Victims may resist their cannibalistic temptation if they like, but such an effort requires exhausting feats of willpower. Every Combat Turn of refusal the hungry character to lose a Fatigue Level. Those who fall unconscious with this fatigue awaken normally, but retain a lifelong desire to murder the person they wished to eat. Victims do not recognize this murderous urge until an opportunity for the killing appears. Then, the obsession victim must pass a stress roll with an Ease Factor of 12 to avoid attempting the assassination. One may add (or subtract) appropriate Personality Traits to this roll.

Note that victims of this curse do not know the consequences of eating or refusing to eat their friends. They must decide for themselves whether to succumb to the temptation.

- **4-6:** The victim, entranced by death, rushes toward the most perilous situation available.

- **7-9:** An illusion baffles the victim's eyes, making one enemy look like a friend and one friend look like an enemy. In the devils' smoke, the victim could easily blunder into either one. The confusion lasts until the victim leaves the smoke. To whatever extent possible, the Storyguide should try to delude the players themselves about these confused identities.

- **10-12:** Victims flee headlong in whatever direction they happen to be facing. They continue to run until knocked unconscious or physically restrained.

- **13+:** No Effect.

## Loshandar's Spawn

The true Loshandar has far more power than the Lords of Dis care to release. Instead, they divide their Demon into bits, and allow those pieces out to serve the needs of their city. Each has its own powers, varying according to the desires of the Lords and Loshandar. The pieces, or Spawn, behave as individual demons, acting with independent minds.

Spawn begin existence with Loshandar's own mind-set and desires. However, each spirit has its own memories and its own thoughts. The longer a Spawn exists, the more independent its mind becomes, until at last it becomes a free-willed devil, corrupting souls entirely on its own. Loshandar has no direct mental contact with her Spawn, and cannot compel them to obey her.

As lesser demons, Spawn generally lack the cunning and the patience of Loshandar herself. When a Spawn develops an independent mind, it usually becomes more aggressive, more blatantly violent than its mistress. At first, this tends to make the Spawn more useful to the Lords of Dis, since it willingly uses all the power it possesses. Eventually, however, every Spawn becomes a threat to the diabolists and an embarrassment to Loshandar. Then, the diabolists and new Spawn must hunt it down.

Loshandar creates a Spawn by spending Demon Points. Furthermore, she cannot automatically recover those points in the usual fashion. To regain the power she spent, she must enter Physical Form and kill. She must slay one human for every ten points of Demon Might she spends. Loshandar does not create Spawn until the Colossi can offer her victims.

To keep creating Spawn, the Colossi need a continual supply of slaves and criminals for Loshandar. Fortunately for them, the Spawn themselves encourage a certain amount of crime, considering it indispensable to the corruption of souls. Spawn also play upon the superstitions of the Mo-Mo people, persuading chiefs to send the Colossi tribute. This tribute includes slaves.

The strength of a Spawn depends on the number of Demon Points Loshandar chooses to spend. Every point she spends can give the Spawn one point in any Characteristic she desires, or two points in any Ability. Loshandar often makes Spawn with high Ability Scores in magical Forms and Techniques, to serve as Soul Companions for important diabolists.

Loshandar also gives her Spawn supernatural powers. She may imbue them with spells, at the cost of one Demon Point per spell level bestowed. Even Spawn who understand Forms and Techniques do not usually have actual sorcery abilities. They simply use the spells Loshandar creates them with.

To determine a Spawn's Demon Might, divide the number of Demon Points spent in its creation by two. As usual, Demon Might provides a measure of the spirit's power. Finally, the Demon Points spent provides a rough estimate of the length of time before a Spawn goes renegade. The more powerful the Spawn, the faster it develops a mind of its own.

Although Spawn have only a tenuous connection with their creator, they still comprise a part of her spirit. Therefore, the destruction of a Spawn wounds Loshandar. When a Spawn dies, Loshandar loses Body Levels equal to one-tenth the Spawn's Demon Might.

To replace Body Levels lost in the death of Spawn, Loshandar must commit murder. She must kill one person per Body Level lost. The Colossi always allow her these victims, because they have no desire to weaken (or anger) their

powerful patroness. Therefore, each time the Lords of Dis release a Spawn, they must prepare for many killings, some to create the new demon, and some to lay it aside.

Many believe that the creation of Spawn did not always require Loshandar to kill. She wove these requirements into the magic for no reason other than to introduce a bloody note into the affairs of Dis. The killing itself has little value for her. However, by forcing the Lords of Dis to produce sacrificial victims, she introduces unspeakable evil among the Colossi.

A Spawn's corpse initially contains *Vim vis*. The number of pawns equals half the Spawn's Demon Might. However, when Loshandar completes the killing which restores her Body Levels, any *vis* taken from the Spawn vanishes. The magical energy returns to Loshandar. Spells and devices powered by the *vis* become inert.

Demon Might Varies

**Characteristics**  
Varies.

**Combat**  
Weapon, etc.: Varies  
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Destroyed  
Fatigue Total: 0  
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Destroyed

**Spirit Form**

Spawn in Spirit Form are invisible. Those who can see spirits observe a glowing outline similar to the Spawn's Physical Form.

**Physical Form**

Spawn appear in all the horrid forms demons take, although the majority resemble Loshandar in one of her guises.

**Powers**

Loshandar grants Spawn spells as powers, using the system described above. The Spawn may use these powers at will, by spending one of its own Demon Points. On general principle, a Spawn must take physical form to use powers which cause direct harm. Illusions, Intellego

powers and similarly passive activities take place in spirit form.

## Rhinoceros

Size +3

Cun -5 Stm +10

Charge: 1st +6 — Atk +7 — Dam +24

Dodge: +0

Soak Total +20

Body Levels: OK/0/0/-1/-1/-3/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: +7

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/0/-1/-1/-3/-3/-5/Unc.

## Salamander

A salamander is a small, playful spirit of the flames. Unlike larger fire elementals, it cannot sustain its own fires through magic alone. Therefore, salamanders must sap the heat from other sources, dwelling in fires, volcanoes and the desert sun. A salamander can extinguish small fires and absorb the heat from larger ones.

In most lands, folk view salamanders with dread. At best, these spirits are a nuisance, extinguishing cookfires, forges and lanterns. At worst, these spirits set fires, expending a little of their precious heat to create far more. Tales say that a salamander can develop a taste for the smoke of searing flesh. These twisted spirits lurk in buildings until the householders enter and then set fires especially planned to kill the inhabitants.

Travelers in the Ring of Fire, however, welcome the salamanders. Here, the fire-spirits have no need to set fires, and their presence creates cool patches wherever they stay. Mo-Mo Dream-shamans envision the salamanders as dolphins of the desert, cavorting in the heat. Salamanders in the Ring of Fire seem especially friendly as well and seldom intentionally harm humans.

Most of the time, a salamander remains invisible. When these creatures choose, they may appear as bluish lizards tinged with fire.

Spirit Might 15

Size -1 to -3

### Characteristics

Dex +3 Qik +3

### Combat

Fiery Touch: 1st +5 — Atk +10

— Dam +10

Dodge: +8

Soak Total +10

Body Levels: OK/-1/-3/-5/Incap.

Fatigue Total: 0

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

### Powers

**Incorporeality:** A salamander may enter incorporeal form at will. In this state, it is invisible. Weapons can touch it, but it gains a +20 to all Soak rolls due to the insubstantial nature of its body. A Salamander cannot use its Fiery Touch in this state.

**Drain Heat:** A salamander subsists by draining the heat from fires, magic and sunlight. It can extinguish any fire it crawls into. The temperature in a 10' radius of the salamander drops 50 degrees F. A salamander's heat-draining ability may also protect any one person from the sun and from fiery attacks of any sort.

**Fiery Touch:** In addition to causing damage in combat, a Salamander can ignite flammable objects. A typically-equipped character takes +6 Dam per round from burning clothes.

## Serpent

Size -1

Cun -1

Bite 1st +2 — Atk +4 — Dam \*

Dodge: +3

Soak Total +0

Body Levels: OK/-3/Incap.

Fatigue Total: 0

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

\*Anyone wounded by a serpent must pass a Stm roll with an Ease factor of 9 or suffer +20 damage from poison.

## Sphinxes

The sphinxes that rule the veldt are described under Characters of the Wilderness, in Chapter Two.

## Totem Beasts

These beings are ordinary animals of enormous size and nobility of spirit. Dreamer shamans direct their people to worship these creatures, seeing the totems as representations of the ideal in their respective kinds. A totem lion, for instance, embodies courage and strength. Each totem beast also has one or more supernatural abilities associated with its form. Shamans often acquire these abilities by means of Soul Companionship.

In the ordinary world, totem animals often seem like other specimens of their kind. They do have two more points of Stm and Cunning than the typical member of their kind. In the Dreamworld, these beasts can speak and reason, at least with regard to matters which concern them. They also have at least two or three Dreamer Exceptional Talents at +3.

Most totem animals have 20 Magic Points.

The heart of a totem animal contains five points of Animal *vis*.

A totem animal's supernatural abilities vary with the animal type. Common examples appear below.

**Crocodile.** Submerge (ReVi 40), 3 Magic Points: This ability lets a crocodile single out one victim and fight that enemy alone. On any Combat Turn when a crocodile uses Submerge, it can fight normally with a chosen opponent and no other combatants may interfere. The victim's allies see their friend vanish into a murky cloud. Shamans compare this ability to a normal crocodile's propensity to drag victims underwater.

**Herd Beast.** Run (ReCo 20), 1 Magic Point: This ability lets a creature run at triple the normal speed.

**Lion.** Roar (ReMe 20), 2 Magic Points: This bellow raises the lion's Bravery and Stm by +4. The effects last until the lion kills.

**Serpent.** Strike (ReCo 20), 2 Magic Points: A Strike allows the serpent to make one attack immediately, before any other action takes place in the round.

**Serpent.** Venom (PeCo 20), 2 Magic Points: Anyone who suffers damage from the serpent's attack must pass a Stm roll with an Ease Factor of 9 to prevent the damaged area from ballooning into a useless mass. Those hit in the abdomen, etc., suffer a -3 to all physical actions due to the swelling. Note that a serpent may also have its own natural venom in addition to this power. A

shaman using Venom through spirit companionship may transmit the poison through any instrument which causes damage.

The Storyguide may decide where a poisoned blow lands, as seems most logical. Serpents may also attempt a Qik roll with an Ease Factor of 9 to choose a specific limb.

## Verdant Dreamer

This spirit appears in dreams throughout Mo-Mo Keu-Keu land. Many tribes worship it as a god. It resembles a cloud of cool mist, which glows with the green hue of leaves. The Verdant Dreamer has a +7 ability in all Dreamer Exceptional Talents.

The Verdant Dreamer shows great curiosity about mortals in general, and the lands beyond Mo-Mo in particular. Its inquisitive nature has acquired it a great collection of lore, which it shares when properly entreated. The Dreamer has a +5 knowledge of any field one wishes to name, including the Hermetic Arts.

Usually, the Verdant Dreamer seems harmless. However, it shows great hostility toward the Colossi, their spirits and those of them who choose to take up Dreaming. Since the Mo-Mo know nothing of Dis' diabolism, they consider the dreamer's prejudice irrational, the whim of a strange spirit. In fact, the Dreamer knows the true nature of Loshandar, and has no desire to see that demon infiltrate the land of dreams.

Nobody knows what physical form the Dreamer takes. However, many suspect it of being a gigantic tree.

Magic Might 20

Size +8

### Characteristics

Int +5 Prs +1 Com +3

### Combat

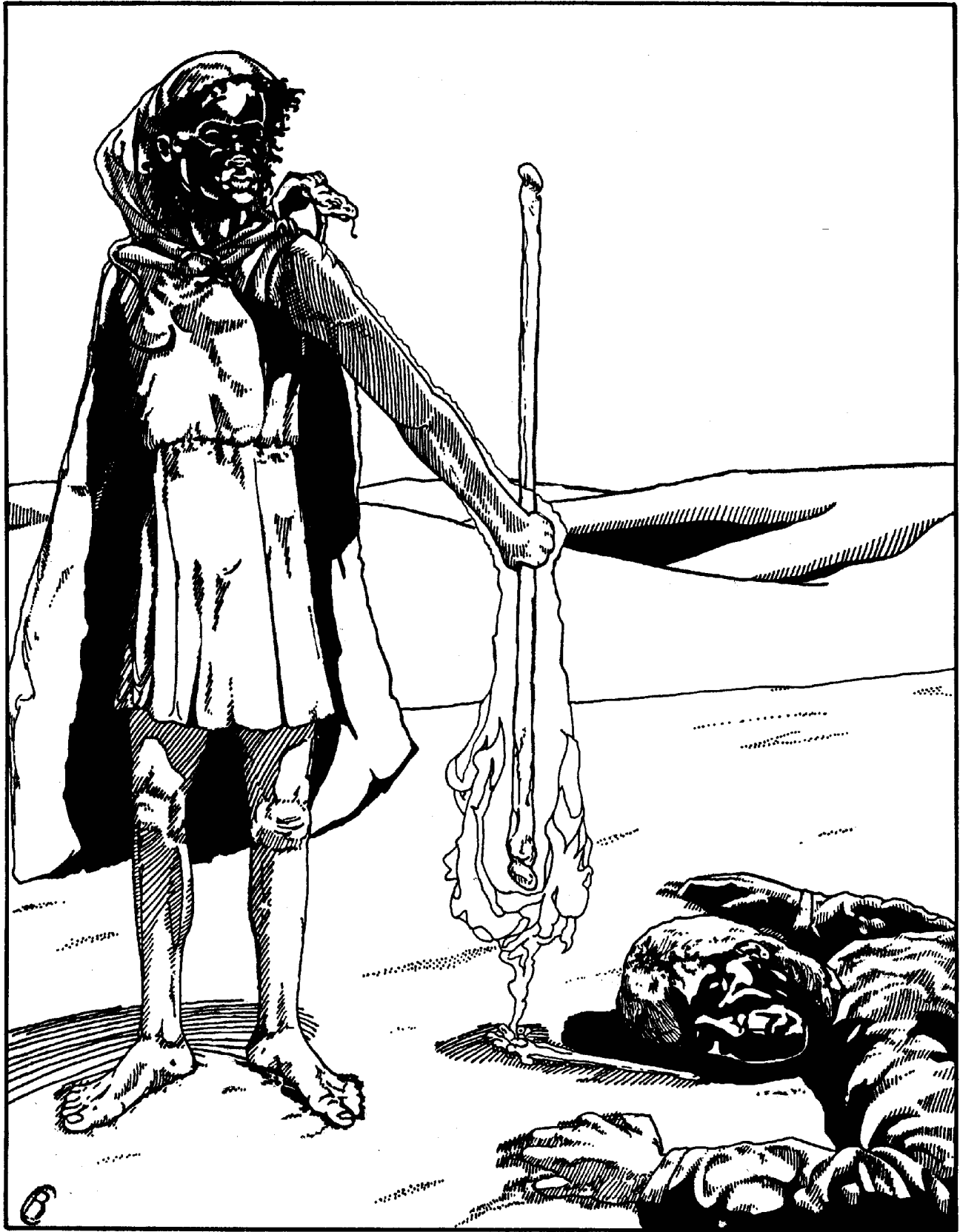
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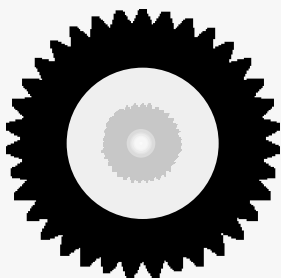
### Abilities

All Dreamer Exceptional Talents at +7

All Lore Abilities at +5

# South of the Sun





# Chapter Five Magical Traditions

## Theoretical Foundations of the Non-Hermetics

*(From the writings of Zuno,  
Magus of Florence)*

First, a definition of terms. Magic is the force which subjugates physical Fact to metaphysical Truth. All other theories serve only as crutches for our understanding.

We magi of Hermes understand sorcery through the teachings of Plato, the foremost metaphysician of the West. Specifically, Plato held that things perceived as objects are but shadows of their ideal, non-material Forms. One who effects changes in the Forms can thereby effect far greater changes in the things they represent. It was the genius of Bonisagus to condense the numberless Forms to but fifteen Arts, which, in combination, account for all creation.

The Non-Hermetics, however, know nothing of Bonisagus' blessed simplification. For them to cast spells in the Hermetic sense, they must study a separate Magic Art for every individual object of their magic. Those who have labored to learn but fifteen Arts can imagine the futility of such a task! Therefore, the Non-Hermetics must draw their magic from other schools of philosophy.

South of the Ring of Fire, we see three thriving magical traditions based not on Arts, but on instinct. We see the Lords of Dis, who rape their magic from the minds of beasts. We also see Dreamer shamans, who draw on the Mentem and Imagonem

powers revealed by sleep. Finally, we see the pagans of Niobian tradition, who receive their magic in revelations from their goddess.

Let the smug Hermetic take heed! The sorcerers South of the Sun can derive Forms and Techniques from their sources as surely as we can from ours. Hence, we see both formulaic and spontaneous spells among a people who have never heard of Bonisagus. True, the Parma Magica remains a secret of our Order. Nevertheless, these traditions have their own unique powers, which are beyond Hermetic theory to explain.

## The Gift

Non-Hermetic magic, like Hermetic magic, works only for those with a certain Gift. Furthermore, the years of single-minded study necessary to learn magic imbue a magus with enough prejudices to make an easy transition between different magical traditions impossible. The magical traditions South of the Sun belong primarily to Storyguide Characters. Storyguides may control these arts as tightly as they wish.

Of course, the Order of Hermes will want to study the unusual magic South of the Sun. If the Storyguide believes that a new sort of magician will improve the saga, a troupe can introduce Non-Hermetic magic in the following ways. All of them give the Storyguide complete power over who can use Non-Hermetic magic, and to what extent.

- A character with the Latent Magical Ability virtue may suddenly develop a knack for Non-Hermetic magic.

- A new character could take Non-Hermetic Exceptional Talents as Virtues, after the fashion of Entrancement, Visions, etc.

- The magi could go on a quest for some artifact or spirit that can grant them these new powers. Loshandar, the Demon of Dis, can freely confer the Gift of her land.

- Magi could duplicate these powers by researching Hermetic spells. In general, assume that these spells must have an actual Level equal to one-and-one-half the spell Level listed for the magical abilities. For example, a spell allowing a magus to take a Soul Companion (see below) would be IntMe 30. This reflects the difficulty in translating concepts from one school of magic to another.

- Those who base whole sagas South of the Sun may wish to allow Non-Hermetic wizards to begin the game as such, just like ordinary magi. This can produce exciting stories and memorable characters. However, one must keep in mind that non-Hermetic wizards were never designed to be “balanced,” with powers equal to those of other character types. Since Hermetic magi also have powers far in excess of their companions, this in itself need not deter you from running such a saga. Magical characters may not be fair, but they are usually fun.

- Whenever a Dream-shaman meets a person in the land of sleep, that person may then spend a few hours wandering the realm of Dreams. Note that such experiences seem like dreams of the ordinary sort. Those with no experience in Dreamer magic may miss the opportunity to explore the Dreamworld, simply because they believe it to be no more than a nighttime fantasy.

- The priestesses of Niobia may confer magic on anyone they choose.

## Soul Companions

Every magical tradition South of the Sun acquires a part of its lore from other beings. Wizards borrow power from ordinary animals, totemic spirits and, in Dis, devils from the Hells. In return for the magic wizards take, they must share lore or abilities of their own. Wizards call their partners in such trades Soul Companions. Companionships may be temporary or permanent,

mutually satisfactory or one-sided. As in human companionships, such things depend on the personalities and powers of both parties.

The ability to form a spirit companionship is an Exceptional Talent (IntMe 20). However, those with Talents in Dream-magic, Dis-sorcery or Niobian Invocation may acquire this Talent like any other skill. They do not need a separate Virtue for it. The Storyguide may also allow spirit companionships to form as a result of a well roleplayed encounter between person and spirit. In this case, the human participant need not have any predilection toward spirit companionship at all.

A spirit companion can give its counterpart either simple knowledge, a specific magical ability or a general wizardly art. For example, a Mo-Mo Dreamer might commune with a leopard and gain that creature’s instinctive knowledge of the jungle terrain. A Lord of Dis might enslave a devil and gain that devil’s supernatural ability to cause physical wounds with hateful words. A Niobian priestess might receive a cat as a messenger from her goddess, and the divine beast might lend her the Arts of Creo and Ignem, which she would use to work spontaneous or formulaic fire-spells of her own design.

In most cases, a spirit demands some return for its companionship. Often enough, it wishes to borrow some human virtue. The companion leeches its debtor’s Abilities or Characteristics, for a point value and time equal to that which the human borrowed from it. Assume that five spell Levels equals one point of an Ability or Characteristic. Note that spirit companions can borrow a mortal’s physical attributes as well as magical talents. This is not true in reverse.

For example, a Dreamer Shaman finds a serpent-spirit as a companion. The shaman uses the spirit’s innate Entrancement +3 ability for one day. Then, at some future time, the serpent may borrow the Dreamer’s +3 Qik score for 24 hours, giving the companion three more points of Qik but reducing the dreamer to a Qik of zero. If the serpent-spirit preferred, it could have borrowed the shaman’s +2 Dex and +1 Folk Ken, or any other abilities with a total value of +3.

One may not cheat a spirit companion. Many spirits will negotiate the manner of their repayment, but once one accepts a spirit’s aid, it may



take its due at any time. Occasionally, a shaman attempts to destroy the holder of its debts.

The penalties for this deed resemble those for a human murderer. Any spirit which learns of the killing attempts to avenge it. Animals instinctively recognize such killers, and shun them.

Spirits with an interest in the material world may accept services or gifts in place of borrowed abilities. Those who wish to dominate mortals have also offered their companionship in return for more personal concessions. Demons, in particular, grant their favors in return for influence over a person's mind and soul. They appear to give their gifts freely. Meanwhile, such spirits begin a campaign of insinuations and subtle suggestions designed to warp the victim's personality. In game terms, the spirit modifies the debtor's Personality Traits. A victim must change his Personality by one point per point of abilities borrowed.

One can never write down or articulate supernatural lore acquired from a soul companion. Once one's period of companionship ends, one irrevocably forgets the arts until one borrows them again.

The Lords of Dis, who customarily draw their powers from devils, do not permit ordinary spirit companionship. They wrest away spirits' powers by force, using the ability Cull the Virtue of the Spirit. However, devils may tempt individual Lords into bargaining for powers they do not have the strength to steal. The hypocrisy of overt hostility combined with secret connivance infests the magical society of Dis.

Storyguides should use spirit companionship as a role-playing hook, and as a way to introduce special powers into stories. A spirit companion can give the characters or their enemies any power or knowledge that might help a tale. Furthermore, if the spirit has a properly quirky personality, the Storyguide may remove it from the saga at any time. Whole stories can revolve around the appearance and departure of interesting spirit companions.

## Powers of Companions

When seeking spiritual partners, wizards must consider what particular soul companions can offer them. Some have obvious virtues to offer. Spirits of the jungles and Hell tend to know useful

magical tricks and beasts which dwell in a certain area have an intrinsic knowledge of the region.

Other soul companions offer more subtle boons. See the Bestiary (Chapter 4) under Totem Animal for details.

The Abilities, Forms and Techniques available from a soul companion depend on the Storyguide's desires. Since most soul companions belong to NPCs, the Storyguide may pick whatever powers will create the most interesting challenge for the magi. When a character acquires a soul companion, the event represents a major turning point in the story, and once again, the exact powers should depend on the needs of drama. That said, the following guidelines explain the knowledge of the typical soul companion.

- Intelligent beings learn Abilities like characters, and have the same general range of learning. Storyguides should design these beings as they would human NPCs, keeping in mind that most beings study Abilities out of personal interest, not out of consideration for some future wizard. (Demons are a notable exception to this, since they often learn arts which may help them seduce humankind.)
- An intelligent spirit may learn Magical Arts appropriate to its nature. Although the spirit's understanding has nothing in common with Hermetic formulations, these rules refer to standard Forms and Techniques for the sake of simplicity.
- Spirits with great knowledge of useful arts understand their value and use it when bargaining.
- Dumb beasts have instinctive knowledge of their area, wilderness subsistence and other abilities necessary to survival. An animal's Level of ability equals its Cunning.

## The Lords of Dis

The inventors of the early Colossi discovered fire, wheel, wheat and rice. They also developed magic. Sorcery has always had a place in Dis society as yet another art which enables humanity to rise above the beasts. The Colossi philosophy of spellcraft rests on the principle that humankind is the highest product of creation, and other beings exist only to serve it.

The wizards of Dis call themselves Lords, not because of what they can do with their power, but because the means by which they garner it. They draw their magic from the domination of other beings. Colossi wizards know few spells in the Hermetic sense of the word. However, they can bind beasts and spirits as servants and suck supernatural power from its soul.

To expand their art, the Colossi sought more powerful beings to control. They learned to tame beasts, then the spirits of land and water. By the birth of Christ, some Colossi wizards knew secrets for calling up spirits of the dead. Inevitably, the Colossi's studies led them to encounters with demonkind.

The pagan folk of Dis had no moral objections to enslaving devils. If anything, they considered diabolism more humane than preying upon the souls of innocent animals. The Masters fully understood the danger of diabolism, but not the evil. Therefore, Colossi sorcerers pursued the study of demons with scientific zeal and it did not take long for them to bring devils under their control.

By ordinary standards, Colossi diabolism seems wildly successful. Demons obey the masters pliantly. No disaster has struck Dis. However, the Masters are trafficking with beings far older than themselves, and Hell may yet prove the victor. Devils overshadow every aspect of life in Dis. The Masters must shed blood to work their magic. The preservation of their power requires them to shed yet more. If the Devils had conquered the Colossi, they might not have asked for much more.

## Colossi Magic

A Colossi wizard does not rely on spells in the Hermetic sense of the word. Instead, Masters learn supernatural Abilities, which generally function like the Exceptional Talents in the **Arts Magica™** rules. A Lord of Dis could extract the knowledge of Forms, Techniques and spontaneous or formulaic spells by using Cull from the Spirit on an entity which understood these arts. However, the Colossi themselves have no such lore.

Unsuccessful use of Colossi magic exhausts the user. Whenever one attempts to use these abilities and fails, one loses two Fatigue Levels. This is, however, short-term Fatigue.

The Colossi originally used their abilities on animals. Now, they employ them primarily with regard to spirits of Hell. Novices and eccentrics still follow the old techniques. Under most circumstances, Colossi do not work with human beings, since that practice involves a great deal of danger for comparatively little gain. However, most of these abilities would function quite well upon humankind.

The typical Lord of Dis has three layers of powers. First, the Lord possesses two or three Abilities of this art, as listed below. These powers can be useful of themselves, but more significantly, they constitute a means for acquiring powers greater yet. Second, the Lord owns a retinue of beasts and minor demons, which retain their free will, but must do his bidding. At need, the Lord can sacrifice these creatures to heal his wounds or steal their powers. Finally, the Lord has used a combination of intimidation and bargaining to obtain special gifts from the agents of Hell. These unusual abilities vary with the Lord's power and the beings he has managed to encounter. Therefore, the Lord has both powerful servants and an array of supernatural powers himself. He is a formidable opponent.

A character can acquire Colossi magic in three ways. First, one can buy the Abilities as +3 Virtues, like any other Exceptional talents. Second, those born with the Gift may train in the Colossi tradition instead of the Hermetic tradition, and learn these powers like any other Abilities. They gain no Magic Arts, Parma Magica or spells. Finally, one may make a direct appeal to Loshandar, the mighty Demon chained within the bowels of Dis. It is an easy matter for the Evil One to confer such gifts.

### *The Call (ReMe 30)*

When the Lord whistles and speaks a name, one being named must immediately come to the area. The being is not forced to do anything else for the caller, but it must come. The being must travel to the Caller using its usual mode of transportation. If this requires a journey of many days, the being may make all usual stops. If the Call requires an impossible journey (summoning a fish in the desert) the power does not work.

The requirements of the naming depend on the intelligence of the subject. One can Call an animal simply by speaking the name of the species

desired, although one might use specific names in order to bring a specific beast. To Call a human being, one must know that person's complete, full name, as given at birth, baptism, or whatever analogous ceremony applies. To Call a spirit or demon, one must know that being's secret name, which is never spoken except by wizards. It is quite possible to Call a devil from Hell, or a spirit from the dead.

Intelligent beings may escape this geas by speaking the full name of the Lord who Called them. If this name is unknown, the subject must answer. Victims of a Call remain completely rational. They simply cannot be at ease until they find the source of the Call.

To Call something or someone, a wizard must pass a Com + Call roll. The Ease Factor for a Call equals 5, modified by the subject's Intelligence or Cunning. If the being called is out of physical earshot, double the Ease Factor required. If the being is more than an hour's journey away, triple it. Quadruple the Ease Factor if the being is in Hell, Faerieland or some other realm beyond our own.

After Calling a being once, successfully or not, a wizard may not immediately Call the same creature again. To "recharge" this ability, the Caller must make physical contact with the subject.

## ***Culling the Life (ReCo 25)***

This power steals the health from one being and transfers it to another. By using this power, a Lord can heal wounds. However, he must kill one creature for every Body Level restored. This victim must have a body mass at least equal to the character receiving healing. The user of this power must perform the killing, and the wounded person must drink the blood of the sacrifice.

The Ease Factor for Culling the Life equals 10, plus the sacrificial victim's Stm.

## ***Culling the Virtue (ReCo, ReAn or ReMe 30)***

This power steals the physical or natural blessings of a victim. A Lord may use it to acquire any Characteristic of a victim. For example, one

could Cull a bull's strength or a monkey's nimble fingers. Culling the Virtue also works on instinctive abilities. For example, one can cull a predator's cunning for finding game. Culling does not work on supernatural powers or learned skills. It also cannot provide a human with wings, gills or other animal organs.

When one Culls from a creature, that being loses the appropriate Virtue, and never gets it back. From then on, it functions with the natural ability of the character who did the Culling. For example, if you raise your Stm of -1 by Culling from a horse, the horse will have a permanent Stm of -1. Note that this spell usually renders its victim unable to survive.

Although the bad effects of Culling last forever, the benefits wear off. Characters may keep Culled Virtues for a number of hours equal to their Culling ability score. After that, their abilities and instincts return to normal.

This power does not work unless the victim remains tranquil throughout a ritual lasting fifteen minutes. The Storyguide must determine an animal's emotional state at any given time. Obviously, one cannot Cull Virtues from an enemy in battle. In fact, Lords cannot even use this power on tame beasts until the animals know and trust the Culler. Obviously, one can never Cull from an intelligent being who knows what the power can do.

To successfully Cull a Virtue, a character must make an Opposed test of Com + Cull against the victim's Per. If the animal wins this test, it panics. One cannot Cull from a panicked animal for a minimum of one day.

## ***Cull From the Spirit (ReVi 35)***

This Ability resembles Culling the Virtue, but functions only on beings without material form. Unlike Culling the Virtue, this power does allow the acquisition of magical abilities. Among other uses, Cull from the Spirit allows the Cullers to steal the very ability to exist in the incorporeal world. By using this power, Cullers can touch, fight and harm beings which they might otherwise be unable to contact.

Cull From the Spirit even allows a character to draw thoughts from a spirit's mind. If the Culling succeeds, the Culler may pose any one

question, which the spirit must answer to the best of its ability.

A naked spirit cannot feel the fear of flesh and blood, and therefore, cannot defend itself from Culling. Cull From the Spirit functions even on intelligent entities which wish to escape its effects. However, spirits have another way to protect themselves from this treatment. They can attempt to reverse the magic and seize control of the Culler.

Anyone attempting to Cull From the Spirit must make a stress roll of Int + Cull. The spirit makes a stress roll and adds a score equal to one-third its Spirit Might (or Demon Might, or Faerie Might). If the Culler scores higher, the magic succeeds. If the Spirit wins this contest, the Culler falls under his intended victim's control.

Those who attempt to Cull from a Spirit and fail must immediately release their victims from all constraints. They will then obey one command, whatever it might be. An unimaginative spirit could simply demand the Culler's suicide, and the Culler would have to obey. Creatures of Hell, of course, would seldom be satisfied with something so direct.

One more peril threatens those who Cull from Spirits. Anyone who rolls a Botch during the success test goes insane. This applies to both Culler and Spirit. Therefore, no matter how well the Culling ritual works, it may leave a demented spirit in its wake. The nature of this insanity runs the full gamut of madness, from psychopathic rage to insidious, subtle twists of personality. Storyguides should feel free to use their imagination.

Unlike Culling the Virtue, Cull From the Spirit does not leave its victim permanently crippled. The Culler and Victim simply trade Characteristics for a number of hours equal to the Culler's Cull ability score. After that time, they trade back. The stuff of ghosts and demons is less fragile than flesh.

The Colossi use Cull From the Spirit as their equivalent to taking a soul companion.

### ***Duel With the Soul (ReMe 30)***

This Ability allows the user to conquer another being's spirit, and seize control of its mind. A Duel With the Soul involves a spiritual battle,

which takes place in rounds like any other fight. Each round, both the Attacker (the user of the power) and the Defender (the intended victim) must roll a stress die and add various modifiers. Whichever side rolls lower drops a Fatigue Level.

Attackers in a Duel With the Soul ability add their score to all rolls. Defenders may protect themselves in any of three ways. Anyone may defend using simple stubbornness (Stm). Spirits may defend using one-third their Spirit, Demon or Faerie Might, rounded up. Finally, if the Storyguide agrees, characters may defend themselves by clinging to some principle which they hold dear. A steadfast grog might refuse to succumb if that meant abandoning his post. A young bride might draw strength from the sight of her swain. When the Storyguide considers it appropriate, characters may use a relevant Personality Trait to survive a Duel with the Soul.

If a Duel With the Soul takes place during a physical battle, the attacker can take no actions other than attempting to seize control of the victim's mind. Duel victims, however, can both fight their mental battles and carry on ordinary combat at the same time. In fact, the concentration required for combat helps focus the mind away from the assaults of a Soul Duelist. Anyone engaged in life-threatening combat gains a +1 to rolls for defending in a Duel With the Soul.

A Duel With The Soul ends when one fighter loses enough Fatigue Levels to fall unconscious. The fighter who remains conscious, whether attacker or defender, may then subject the fallen duelist to possession. An animal or other mindless being has a 50% chance of possessing its attacker (roll a die and assume that on a 1-5, possession occurs). Intelligent beings may use or ignore this option as it suits them.

When one being possesses another, the possessor enters the victim's body and has complete control over it. For these purposes, "body" can include the physical form of a demon or similar being. The possessor may see through the victim's eyes, use any natural or magical abilities, etc.. However, possession does not give the possessor access to the victim's thoughts or learned skills. Possessors may leave their stolen bodies at any time, but this allows the original owner to return.

Wounds remain with the body which suffers them. Fatigue travels with the spirits from body to body. Therefore, a Lord who suffers a sword-

thrust and then possesses a healthy body is temporarily healed. When he returns to his own body, he has the wound back. Any mental fatigue he suffered in accomplishing the possession remains with him whatever body he inhabits.

The body of the possessor sinks into a trance. If someone destroys it, the possessor remains trapped in the new body forever. If “killed” in the body of a possessed being, the possessor must make a Stress Int roll with an Ease Factor of 12. If this roll fails, the possessor dies. Otherwise, the possessor may return to his or her usual body.

## ***Break the Body, Break the Spirit*** **(ReMe 30)**

This ability allows Lords to command any being they defeat in physical combat. To use this power, the Lord must fight in single combat with a creature or spirit, and pound the victim to the point where it ceases to resist. At that time, the Lord may make a Duel + Prs roll, and the victim must make a Stm roll. At the Storyguide’s option, the victim may use Personality Traits in this roll, as described under Duel With the Soul, above. If the Lord’s roll is higher, he or she cows the victim into loyal servitude.

Victims of a broken spirit must try to obey the Lord’s commands. Animals even gain a limited ability to understand orders, as long as those orders concern things which they might normally do. A Lord could order an untrained dog to fight, but not to walk on its hind legs. Even creatures with a broken spirit may attempt personality rolls to disobey commands the Storyguide considers especially loathsome. Anyone may refuse an apparently suicidal command by passing an Int + Stm check with an Ease Factor of 6.

The victim of a broken spirit does not dare attempt to escape or betray the Lord. However, outside friends can break the magic by forcibly rescuing the victim from the Lord’s control. Once a victim goes beyond the reach of the Lord’s punishment, this power loses all effects.

## **The Dreamers**

The ancient shamans of Kerait and Mo-Mo Keu-Keu devoted their lives to the task of finding

gods for their people. Such quests led them to deserts, jungle lakes, mountain-tops and eventually out of the world itself, into the land of Dreams. In the realms of sleep, the shamans found spirits of every variety, including all the totems and nature-deities they could desire. They also learned that trips to the Realm of Dreams could be rewarding in other ways as well.

Shamanic religions no longer enjoy their old sway, at least in the settled East. However, the Dream-shamans still wield considerable influence in every land. At night, the Dreamers flit about the land, trafficking with spirits, communing with each other, reading thoughts and warping minds, all through the power of dreams. Common superstition holds that they can make people die and women miscarry, although the Dreamers themselves deny such abilities.

No organization trains or protects Dreamers. People select themselves for this profession, and either find their own mentors or study alone as best they can. The education of a Dreamer can take many forms, but it always ends with a grueling quest to some wilderness, in which, at the edge of death, the shaman sees the true power of dreams. Many, of course, claim shamanic powers but lack them.

To many, the Dreamers seem to be mad. Some live as pale, gentle recluses, supported by friends or relatives and terrified of social attention in any form. Others preach like street-corner prophets, ready to condemn sinners or pronounce Armageddon. The forests reputedly contain shamans more powerful and eccentric yet, who cannot live in normal society. Most Dreamers either care nothing for their appearance or actively attempt to look as bizarre as possible. Dreaming has no connection to actual mental illness, but there is a general understanding that shamans need not conform to normal society, and most Dreamers take full advantage of the tolerance that belief accords them.

The eccentricity of Dreamers helps explain why these shamans do not receive the respect usually granted to a priesthood. For this reason, many Dreamers do not reveal their skills. Since Dream-Magic takes place entirely within the realm of sleep, there is no way, magical or mundane, of revealing those Dreamers who wish to hide their talents.

In game terms, one can design a Dreamer shaman in either of two ways. A companion-type character may take Dreamer abilities as +2 Virtues. One can also design a character as a magus, taking Dreamer abilities as ordinary abilities. Such a character has no Parma Magica, Magic Arts or spells.

Note that the uncapitalized word, “dreamer,” can refer to any sleeping person. The capitalized Dreamer or Dream-shaman refers to those who have cultivated the Exceptional Talents of the Mo-Mo sorcerers.

## The Dreamworld

For ordinary folk, the typical dream means nothing. Dream-shamans, however, can “come awake” in their own dreams, and can draw even untrained sleepers into the phantom world. Under these circumstances, dreams take on significance and reality. The troupe should play out such important dreams like any other stories. One’s Dreamworld statistics equal those of real life.

The Dreamworld mirrors the real world. Dreamers may go anywhere that they have been in real life. They may meet and talk with any other sleepers who happen to have dreamed themselves into the same place. One can work, fight and cast spells in the Dreamworld, using the same game mechanics which govern such activity during the day. However, the reality of the Dreamworld lasts only as long as the dream. One can dream the death of foes and the ruin of whole kingdoms, but another night, the wasted cities will be restored and the enemies, if sleeping, will have returned.

Anyone who dies in the Dreamworld immediately wakes up with the dream unfinished. The victim receives no rest for the entire night, and suffers all the penalties described under “Waking Up,” below. It is generally not worthwhile to kill one’s enemies in their dreams. However, someone who took the trouble to kill the same person night after night would eventually become a threat.

The exact landscape of the Dreamworld depends on the knowledge of the dreamers. When one falls asleep, one “awakens” into a dream-place which corresponds with one’s actual location. One may then travel to any place one has seen or heard of, using normal means of transportation. When dreamers arrive at their destinations, things seem

as the sleepers remember them, no matter what changes have occurred in the waking realms. Although dreamers cannot independently visit places which they have not seen, other sleepers may “guide” them to new places in the Dreamworld. In such instances, the landscape automatically duplicates the guide’s vision of the place.

One can encounter real people in the Dreamworld if two conditions apply. First, both parties must be asleep. Second, both dreamers must occupy the same dream-place. If someone dreams himself into a dream-house, other dreamers must visit this house to find the sleeper. After meeting a Dream-shaman in one’s dreams, one may spend the rest of the dream acting freely in the Dreamworld, whether one has any Dreamer talents or not. See the Dream Exceptional Talent (below) for rules on determining how long a dream lasts.

People can meet and talk in a dream-place even if they perceive it in different ways. For example, if a dreamer camps in the ruins of a sacked fortress, he dreams of the fortress as destroyed. A dreamer from another place might see the fortress as undamaged, but he could still encounter the newcomer there. This could lead to considerable confusion if the two decide to talk about their surroundings.

When two sleepers believe different things about the nature of a place, they may attempt to force their views upon each other. Each side rolls a Stress die + Com + Dream (an Exceptional Talent, described below). Whichever dreamer rolls the higher number may establish his or her belief as “reality.” Sleepers must make this roll if events give the landscape an objective importance, as in combat. One may not voluntarily fail such tests in order to let one’s opponent’s view of reality prevail.

More things than people inhabit the land of dreams. Animals sleep too. Furthermore, totem animals, jungle spirits, ghosts, demons and magical beings of every sort can enter the Dreamworld. The Bestiary describes some denizens of the Dreamworld. Any faerie, demon or ghost of your creation could also appear there.

A large part of a Dream-shaman’s sorcery consists of finding supernatural entities and dealing with them. Shamans anoint the most potent spirits of their dreams as tribal gods. They entreat lesser beings to become their Soul Com-

panions. Tribes also expect Dream-shamans to drive off the more horrible spirits, although unscrupulous Dreamers have tried to form accommodations with such beings.

## Waking Up

Anyone in the Dreamworld may attempt to wake up. Waking up requires a Combat Round of uninterrupted concentration. During this period, dream-enemies may do as they wish unmolested. At the end of the concentration, the sleeper rolls *Stm* + *Per*. The Ease Factor equals a base of 9, plus the total of all the sleeper's Dreamer Exceptional Talents. Note that the more one knows about the Dreamworld, the harder it becomes to escape it.

Those who wrest themselves from the Dreamworld with a dream unresolved lose all the refreshments of sleep. They grow tired, dazed and irritable. Such victims must pass a stress Fatigue roll in the morning or lose one Long-Term Fatigue Level. Anyone who rolls a Botch becomes uncontrollably sleepy, and may drift off at any time. When not actively talking and doing things, such characters must pass a *Stm* roll with an Ease Factor of 9 to stay awake. All such effects vanish after the character sleeps for eight hours without interruption.

## Dream (CrIm 5)

This ability allows the Dream-shaman to enter the Dreamworld. It also controls the length of time a shaman can dream. Upon going to bed, Dream-shamans must attempt a simple roll and add their Dream scores plus any modifiers from the Dream Modifiers list. Untrained dreamers make the same roll, with a modifier of +0 for their Dream score. The Dreamer Table shows how long a dream lasts.

### *Dream Modifiers*

- Dreamer has previously slept (and awoken) within the past sixteen hours: -8 (i.e., someone who just slept all night probably cannot go back to sleep immediately.)
- Noisy, Uncomfortable Conditions: -4

- Short-Term Fatigue: -1 (penalty) per Fatigue Level

- Long-Term Fatigue: +1 (bonus) per Fatigue Level

Note that although general weariness actually helps a Dream-shaman, the exhaustion of recent exertion does not.

Roll	Time in Dreamworld
up to 3	None
4-6	1 hour
7-9	2 hours
10-11	4 hours
12+	8 hours

## Dreambuilding (CrIm 30)

This power allows a shaman to create new people and things in the Dreamworld. Dreambuilding can produce anything the user can imagine. However, created beings may have no skills or Mental Attributes higher than those of the creator. These images may have no Physical Attributes which exceed the creator's Dreambuilding score. Inanimate Dream-objects cannot inflict Dream-wounds with a higher Dam modifier than the Dream-building score. Objects created by Dreambuilding automatically vanish when their creator wakes up. No other restrictions apply.

Common uses of Dreambuilding include:

- The creation of weapons, equipment and tame beasts for use in the Dreamworld.
- The creation of false people and things to confuse other dreamers.
- The creation of imaginary settings and situations for amusement or for purposes of training.
- The creation of people and things for use with Manifestation or Nightfancy.
- The alteration of one's personal appearance. A shaman may use this ability to appear in any form he desires. The disguise is perfect, since belief comprises part of the dream. Note that this aspect of Dreambuilding makes it impossible to recognize any Dream-shaman who wishes to conceal his or her identity. Dreambuilding also

allows anyone to impersonate anyone.

Once a shaman adds a new feature to the Dreamworld, that person or thing becomes real (in the context of the dream). Creators cannot automatically control their creations. One can Build things with specified propensities, but once they become part of the Dreamworld, they behave like actual things of their kind. A Dream-woman may spurn the man who made her. A Dream-wall does not let its creator through.

## Dreamwaking (CrIm 15)

This ability allows a shaman to see and hear the real world from a dream. To see a specific place, the shaman must travel to an equivalent location in the Dreamworld. A shaman who knows the art of Dreamwaking can use it to spy out an area, invisibly, inaudibly and safe from any material defenses. However, users of this power may only observe places which they can reach in their dreams. They see only what they would see if physically standing at the site under scrutiny. Dreamers cannot search or manipulate real objects. For example, someone using this spell could not turn pages to read a book.

Note that if Dreamwaking reveals substantial changes in the real world, one's dream-image of that place must change as well.

Hermetic magi may detect Dreamer spies by using the Vim spell, *The Invisible Eye Revealed*.

## Manifestation (CrIm 25)

This power makes the Dreamworld visible to the wakeful. Shamans can combine Manifestation with Dreambuilding to create illusions. Dream Manifestations have no substance and can never cause direct harm, but they look and sound real. To determine how much of the Dreamworld a shaman can manifest, roll a simple die + Manifestation + Com and read the result in cubic feet.

Manifested Dreams appear in the portion of the ordinary world which corresponds to their location in the realm of sleep.

## Dreamsparking (IntMe 25)

Dreamsparking allows Dream-shamans to read minds. Using this ability, a Dream-shaman

can propose a topic and force some other sleeper to dream

upon it. Onlookers in the Dreamworld may then watch the dream, or even participate with the use of Dreambuilding. The dream is only as complete as the subject's understanding. However, this ability allows shamans to probe their victims' memories, examine their beliefs and gather information about their plans.

For example, a shaman could induce an enemy warrior to dream about an upcoming battle. By watching the warrior's story unfold, the shaman would learn his foe's strategy. If the shaman wished, he could even use Dreambuilding to test his own counterattacks and see how the enemy would respond. The last option, of course, risks giving the enemy an idea of what to expect.

To use Dreamsparking, one must meet one's subject face-to-face in the Dreamworld. One must then mentally recite a silent chant for one full minute. This means that a victim who recognizes the Dream-shaman gets a chance to flee, fight back or wake up. Finally, the Dream-shaman makes a roll of Com + Dreamsparking. The Ease Factor depends on the amount of interest the dream-topic holds for the victim.

If a Dreamsparking roll fails, the victim's dreams remain unaffected.

### *Dreamsparking Ease Factors*

Dream Topic	Ease Factor
Subconscious Urge	18
Fleeting Thought	15
Obscure Personal Memory	12
Vivid Memory	9
Matter of Interest	9
Matter of Importance	6
Obsession	3

## Nightfancy (ReMe 30)

Nightfancy exploits a dream's ability to directly touch one's passions. With this power, shamans can plant passions and compulsions within a victim's mind. The victims then act on their Nightfancies in the waking world. Even if they realize the origins of their behavior, the emotional power of the Nightfancy is too strong to disobey.

To use Nightfancy, a shaman must contrive a "lesson" for the victim and a dream-situation to





teach it. The shaman must then find the victim in the Dreamworld and use Dreambuilding to make the “lesson” occur. For example, a shaman who wished to induce a phobia of dogs might create a dream in which frenzied dogs tear the victim apart. Particularly vivid lessons definitely deserve a roleplaying modifier.

If the victim overcomes the dream-situation, the Nightfancy has no effect. Continuing the previous example, if the victim managed to tame or kill the dream-dogs, he would, if anything, gain confidence in his relations with canines. Victims who voluntarily wake up before the lesson is complete do not succumb. However, the Dreamshaman may attempt to teach the “lesson” again.

When a “lesson” takes effect, the victim receives a command or a belief. The strength of this feeling equals the caster’s simple roll + Nightfancy score + Com + Role-playing Modifier. Victims use this number as the Ease Factor in a Stm roll to resist. However, if the “lesson” went as planned, the compulsion lasts at least one day.

Anytime that a Nightfancy victim sleeps eight hours without re-experiencing the “lesson,” he or she may attempt to escape the enchantment. The player rolls a stress die, adding Stm. The Ease Factor equals the strength of the Nightfancy, as determined above. Victims may also add or subtract Personality Traits when the Storyguide considers it appropriate.

Note that a Dream-shaman who can continually reappear in a victim’s sleep can teach the “lesson” over and over again. This prevents the victim from receiving a resistance roll. However, victims may eventually think of a new strategy with which to escape the “lesson.”

Suggested Nightfancies appear below. Storyguides may add new ones, or keep this list as an absolute limit.

- **Compulsion.** The Dream-shaman may speak a command of one sentence or less. If this command does not involve suicide, the victim must attempt to obey.

- **Despair.** Victims suffer general misery, in which nothing in life seems worthwhile. This despair increases all Ease Factors by +3.

- **Devotion.** The subject grows devoted to some companion or moral principle. He or she must pass a Stm roll with an Ease Factor equal to

the Nightfancy’s strength to take any action against the object of

Devotion.

- **Fury.** The victim develops an irrational hatred of some person or thing. He or she attempts to satisfy this anger by the most destructive means feasible. Victims need not use physical violence if other techniques offer better prospects.

- **Terror.** The victim develops a phobia of some person or object. Victims must pass a Stm roll with an Ease Factor equal to the Nightfancy’s strength to remain in the presence of the feared thing.

## The Order of Juno

In Niobia, magi see a glimpse of their past. The Priestesses of Juno, like the worshipers of Mercury in fading Rome, have developed their pagan rites into a system of magic. Here, magic remains tied to ritual and religion. Lacking any scientific understanding of Forms and Techniques, the Niobian Priestesses seek magic directly from their Goddess — often with spectacular results.

## The Worship of the Goddess

The Niobians not only practice a lost form of magic, they follow a lost form of religion. They worship Juno, a Goddess of the classical pagans. The role of heathenism in both classical culture and the rise of the Order of Hermes makes the Niobian religion fascinating for magical scholars. Juno’s cult also presents an interesting object for religious study. One cannot dismiss Niobian religion as a primitive superstition. The priestesses of Juno have a sophisticated set of beliefs, which govern both life and sorcery within their city.

Juno is the wife of Jupiter, Queen of the Gods and Patroness of Married Women. Worshipers depict her as stunningly beautiful, although slightly more sedate than such Goddesses as Venus. Most tales of the Goddess concern her consuming (and justified) marital jealousy. Juno also has a merciless appetite for vengeance, not only regarding her husband’s lovers, but against anyone who happens to displease her. She readily uses her position as Jupiter’s wife to revenge herself upon mortals.

People have called Juno a Goddess of intrigue. Certainly, she played a role in some of the most infamous factionalism among the Gods, but Niobia's Cult interprets this fact in a fairly rigid way. Juno does not practice or tolerate the oily double-dealing of the courtier. Compromise, the hallmark of the cynical intriguer, runs directly counter to Juno's nature. Juno represents smoldering grudges and emotional manipulations, the tools of a domineering wife in a society nominally ruled by men.

Niobia's priesthood contains plenty of cliques and unspoken enmities of the sort Juno favors. However, Niobia does not tolerate outright conspiracy. Anyone who contemplates treason against the city can expect swift and horrible punishment.

Juno often appears in the form of a cow or a peacock. Her worshipers consider both animals sacred. Juno's worshipers honor her monthly, on the full moon. They perform their ceremonies indoors, in stone temples.

Carthage always considered Juno its patron Goddess. The worship of Juno had its basis, not only in tradition, but in mutual interest between the Carthaginians and the deity. Juno sided with the Greeks against the Trojans. She also assisted Jason in his quest for the Golden Fleece, which, if one follows a convoluted path of mythological symbolism, makes her a patroness of traders. Both of these facts serve to endear her to the Carthaginians, with their history of trade and enmity with the descendants of Troy who settled Rome.

Niobians worship in a more personal way than most (20th-Century) Christians. People expect direct signs and favors from their Goddess, in return for which they are willing to perform concrete services. Juno's worshipers envision their Goddess, not as the representation of a universal philosophical principle, but as an individual with a distinct personality.

Pagans, who follow many Gods, feel no duty to despise foreign beliefs. They also do not burden themselves with any neurotic preoccupation with sin. Nevertheless, Niobia has far more in common with the monotheistic sort of theocracy than romanticizers of heathenism would like to believe. The whims of a Goddess, especially a Goddess like Juno, can seem every bit as encumbering as the commandments of a moralistic God. Furthermore, the Cult of Juno has a patriotic and civic role.

Juno's priestesses must fulfill the duties of a secular bureaucracy, and every government requires the adoration of its people.

Magi themselves cannot agree whether the pagan Gods are real. Some believe that they are. Others believe that the Gods existed once, but faded away as their worship died out. Some agree with strict Church doctrine, which states that the heathen Gods were devils, while others feel that the Gods were spirits, not necessarily evil, but certainly not divine. This book does not impose an answer on your saga. However, the Priestesses of Niobia have real magical powers, with which followers of every theory must contend.

## Niobian Spellcasting

Priestesses of Juno, like the Priests of Hermes, work magic in the form of spells. One can resolve their sorcery using the same rules which govern formulaic spells for Hermetic magi. However, like all wizards South of the Sun, priestesses of Juno lack a knowledge of Forms and Techniques. They must receive their spells in the form of direct inspiration from the Goddess.

When Juno's worshipers please her, she grants revelations to the cult. Each divine message provides the necessary wisdom to cast a particular spell, once. The proficiency with which a priestess can use a given spell depends not on the knowledge of the sorceress, but on the clarity of the vision. Priestesses of Juno compare their sorcery to a bag of coins with different values, which their Goddess gives them to spend as they choose.

In game terms, assign each priestess a fixed list of spells. Every spell on the list has an inherent bonus for Form and Technique. When a priestess decides to cast a spell, she makes a roll, adding her Stm and the spell's bonus. If the total falls below the level of the spell, the priestess loses a Level of Fatigue. Should the result fails to come within ten of the spell's Level, the priestess suffers Fatigue and no magic occurs. All normal rules dealing with formulaic spells apply.

The Cult of Juno may choose which spells Juno gives it, but after the Cult has chosen, priestesses cannot change their minds. Furthermore, once priestesses cast their spells, they cannot re-use them. When a priestess casts a

spell, she must mark it off her list until she receives it again from her Goddess. Of course, the same spell may appear several times, possibly with different bonuses.

## Gifts From the Goddess

Priestesses of Juno seldom receive their magic through individual effort. Instead, the Cult organizes rituals involving from two or three to several dozen participants. Visions, and therefore spells, go to whichever priestesses play the key roles in the ceremony. Therefore, the priestess who organizes a ritual may distribute the harvest of spells among participants in any way she sees fit.

For a ceremony of Juno to succeed, one of the members must have an Exceptional Ability known as Supplication. No matter what role this priest-

ess plays in the ritual, she is the one whose prayers actually reach Juno. The skills of one Supplicant can determine the power of any number of priestesses. A Supplicant could, in theory, perform a ritual alone, keeping all spells for herself, after the fashion of a Hermetic magus. However, such a ceremony would provide a paltry amount of magic compared to a mass ritual.

Those who excel at Supplication have obvious influence in the cult. They usually manage to acquire most of the spells and bonuses for themselves and their friends. However, there is no direct connection between a priestess' rank in the cult and her skills at Supplication. Furthermore, the Supplicant cannot control the outcome of a ritual. If the Cult wished to bestow powerful spells upon a novice, un-gifted priestess, it could.

The ceremony of Supplication may take place only once per month, on the Full Moon. It lasts for the entire night. Ceremonies involve dancing, singing, feasting and the symbolic cutting of hair. Much of the ceremony is public, although the most secret parts take place within the closed temples.

### Exemplia Gratis

A group of three priestesses perform the ritual of Supplication. The Supplicant has a Supplicate skill of +5. All members have a Juno Lore skill of +3. The leader selects 20 spells which she considers useful for the upcoming month. She then allots ten spells to herself and five to each other participant. This leader happens not to be the Supplicant, but she has a higher rank in the Cult, and the decisions about spells belong to her.

During the ritual, the Supplicant rolls a ten-sided die and receives a five. With her Supplicate skill, this makes a total number of ten. Multiplying this by the total Juno Lore figure of nine yields 90 (three priestesses with scores of +3).

The leader of the ritual has 90 bonus points to divide among the 20 spells. She puts 30 points into one of her own spells, The Shrouded Glen. She then keeps 30 more points to divide among her other spells. Finally, the leader divides her remaining 30 points among the spells of the other two priestesses, effectively limiting them to spells of Level 15 and below.

## The Gifted and the Learned: Supplication and Juno Lore

Supplication is a supernatural ability akin to True Faith or the magus' Gift. Hermetic magi cannot duplicate Supplication, nor can they rate its Level by Form and Technique. When designing characters, consider Supplicants the magi of Niobian society. They appear roughly as often as people with the Hermetic Gift. Supplicants determine their level of proficiency at Supplication as if it were any other Exceptional Talent.

The success of Supplication depends on the piety and wisdom of all the ritual's participants. Therefore, Niobian priestesses also need high ability scores in Juno Lore. This is a purely non-magical field of study similar to Area Lore, Legend Lore and Church Lore. One adds the Juno Lore skills of all participants to determine the strength of a ritual. Two priestesses with Juno Lore of +5 have the same value as ten with Juno Lore of +1.

Obviously, hypocritical priestesses who offend their Goddess do not benefit from high skills in Juno Lore.

## Receiving Spells

In game terms, Priestesses of Juno acquire their spells using the following steps.

1. The priestess who organizes the ritual (not necessarily the Supplicant) chooses which spells to request. She also decides which participants will receive them.
2. The Supplicant rolls a die + Supplicate. *Multiply* the result by the total Juno Lore figure for all worshippers taking part.
3. The result of step 2 equals the number of Form and Technique bonus points available to the group. The leader of the group divides these among spells as she sees fit.

When using Storyguide Character priestesses, a Storyguide may wish to skip the Supplication procedure and simply assign wizards their spell lists by fiat.

## Spells

Since both the Order of Hermes and the Cult of Juno have their origins in Greco-Roman paganism, nobody should be surprised to learn that they use similar spells. Most of the spells listed in the *Ars Magica*<sup>TM</sup> rulebook appear among the Niobians. However, their names and visual effects may vary. When strangers first encounter Niobian magic, the Storyguide should describe it in unusual ways. A Pilum of Fire might appear as an drop of venom, which the caster spits through her teeth. It might even do a new amount of damage.

The Cult of Juno particularly favors spells which Hermetic magi refer to as Rego, Intellego,

Mentem, Imagonem and Corporem. They use such abilities to monitor and protect

their city. Even when a serious danger threatens Niobia, the priestesses seldom use personal combat spells. Instead, they Supplicate Juno for single spells of enormous power, such as Rain of Oil (with the fire component) or Crest of the Earth's Wave.

Individual priestesses often carry spells of divination and mystic knowledge, such as Posing the Silent Question and Summoning the Distant Image. Nearly every priestess receives an allotment of Rising Ire spells, for use in inciting followers to revenge. Priestesses also use Aura of Rightful Authority, Aura of Enobled Presence and Confusion of the Numbed Will.

## Magic Auras South of the Sun

The Dominion has not yet covered the lands South of the Sun, and magic remains strong throughout the land. The following chart shows the dominant Magic Auras in each area, as per pages 72-73 of *Ars Magica*<sup>TM</sup>.

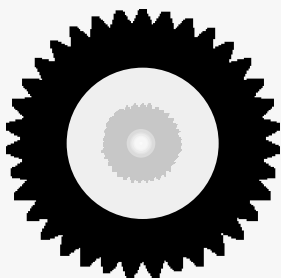
Naturally, all lands have pockets of other forms of magic. Christians maintain a few consecrated sanctuaries in Dis, with positive Divine Power ratings. Both sorcerers and diabolists dwell inside Niobia. Kerait resembles the more magical regions of Europe, with a nominal Dominion interspersed with pockets of untamed magic or Faerie.

*Magic Aura Table*

<u>Region</u>	<u>Divine</u>	<u>Magic</u>	<u>Infernal</u>	<u>Faerie</u>
<b>Dis</b>				
– Rural	0	0	+1	0
– City	0	0	+3	0
<b>Niobia</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Kerait</b>				
– Rural	0	0	0	0
– Town	+1	0	0	0
– City	+2	0	0	0
<b>Mo-Mo</b>	0	0	0	+1

# South of the Sun





## Chapter Six

# Stories South of the Sun

Previous chapters described conflicts and stories of the Golden Empire. These final notes suggest possible futures for the lands South of the Sun. Some involve direct appeals to the Order of Hermes. Others cover outside events which may rock the lands both north and south of the Ring of Fire. Magi may respond as suits the goals of their covenant, but all these events may inspire stories in the Golden Lands.

## John's Quests

Good Prester John, Lion-Hearted Emperor, winner of wars and first among heroes, loves noble quests and loves to send travelers to foreign lands. Such journeys bring back treasures. More importantly, they enhance the grandeur of his realm. Therefore, the adventurous of his kingdom can always find occupation, as explorers in the service of their King. Furthermore, the powerful of other lands can expect visits from the agents of Prester John.

John described his riches to the Emperor of the Byzantines, and called for a friendly embassy. To the Order of Hermes, John might well do the same. In the Golden Empire, magic and Christianity have not yet become estranged. John might welcome the chance to foster a magical organization in his lands, one with no connection to the old power-blocs, one which owed its patronage to him.

John might also grow entangled in the wars with the Saracens. Popes and kings have prayed for a Christian Emperor to aid them in the Crusades. John cannot dismiss the attractions of tempering his new-forged Empire in holy war. The Ring of Fire, of course, hinders John's ambitions to send an army north. However, should his troops

appear, their political influence will extend far beyond the Holy Land.

## Sophia's Demise

The people of Niobia are warlike, bitter and strong. They resent John's empire, resent Christians and nurse their old grudge against Rome. Currently, Queen Sophia submits to Prester John. However, Sophia may not always be the Queen.

Perhaps some palace clique contrives Sophia's abdication. Perhaps some madman strikes her down. Perhaps her death is natural, if most convenient. Whatever the cause, Sophia's removal gives stronger queens a chance to seize control. Sophia may even become a martyr to their cause.

Sophia's demise may spark a rebellion. It may lead to forays north against the lands of ancient Rome. Niobia wields not only troops but potent magic. Juno's priestesses have no scruples about using magic to interfere in the world of mortals.

Niobia's victims may call on Hermes for protection. The Hermetic magi may hear or reject their plea. Magi might prefer to prevent the whole disaster. Perhaps they join in the politics of Juno. Some magi might even attempt to bring Juno's followers into the Hermetic Code, creating a House Juno within the Order.

## The Nightmare

A subtle terror threatens magi who go South of the Sun. The devils of Dis miss no chance to corrupt new victims, and magi always receive special attention from the agents of Hell. Geogra-

# South of the Sun

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phy and culture combine to further the demons' schemes. Dis lies in the north of the Golden Empire, where travelers are likely to emerge from the Ring of Fire. Furthermore, the enlightened people of Dis welcome foreign scholars and gladly share their learning.

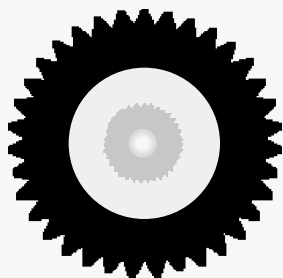
Magi who escape seduction in Dis may find it elsewhere. The devils can pursue them into Mo-Mo Keu-Keu land, into the realm of dreams. There they may disguise themselves as benevolent spirits once again. They may also terrorize their foes at night, weakening them for capture by tribesmen who follow infernal spirits.

In Niobia, the demons enjoy a cult more brutal than that of Dis. Turmoil in that city would bring the worshipers of Baal and Molech into

power. If the magi make friends among the Priestesses of Juno, they may find themselves in open battle with the diabolists. However, if the magi and the priestesses fight each other, the diabolists may go unnoticed until their plans reach completion.

Not even Christian Kerait lies outside Dis' influence. People throughout the Golden Empire respect the Colossi. Prester John won his throne only after Dis recognized his empire. The lack of sorcerers hinders Dis' attempts to found diabolic-magical cults in Kerait. When Hermetic magi enter John's court, the demons certainly do not forgo their opportunity. Lords of Dis represent them in the mortal world, and these dignitaries have nearly as much authority in Kerait as they would at home.





## Chapter Seven Akeem's Crusade

### The Crusader

We have long known of a country to the utter south, blessed with unheard of riches. It is a land of savages, hungry for Faith but unlearned in Piety. It is the land of the Good Prester John, who may yet render us aid against the Saracen. Too long have we left these lands fallow.

I, Sir Akeem Jerbon, Holy Knight of the Levant, do claim the Holy Quest of visiting the lands South of the Sun. Providence has shown me the way south and Faith shall lead me safe on my journey. With Gentle Words shall we bring Prester John the Teachings he yearns for. And with Fire and Sword shall we smite the heathen sorcerers who dare resist us.

(Sir Akeem Jerbon, a wandering Lebanese knight, took this vow before departing for the south. He leads a small company of knights from across Europe, who take vows of piety and chivalry.)

### The Magi

The story begins when a Redcap of Hermes overhears Akeem's vow. Akeem's expedition constitutes a minor crisis for the Order of Hermes. Magi have their own interests in the lands of Prester John. They do not wish for a crusading fanatic to serve as Europe's sole representative South of the Sun. Therefore, the Order sends its own ambassadors South, to establish productive dealings with the powers there, and to undo whatever harm Akeem has done.

The magi who follow Akeem will be some of the first disciples of Hermes to explore the lands

South of the Sun. They will enjoy the power and prestige of envoys to Prester John. Their covenant can claim newly-discovered lore as its own. Therefore, the players' characters should eagerly accept the errand of pursuing Akeem.

### Storyguiding Akeem's Crusade

The magi follow in Sir Akeem's wake. In four separate sections, they encounter different peoples South of the Sun. The course of these scenes depends entirely on the party's approach, but most of these people are initially hostile, due to unpleasant encounters with Akeem. If the magi manage to smooth ruffled feathers, they can track Akeem deep into Kerait. There, they may finally deal with the Knight in whatever way they choose. They also meet representatives of Emperor Prester John, who have come to parley with the visitors from the North. Storyguides have free reign to determine the long-term outcome of this encounter.

Storyguides should be prepared to improvise during this tale. The magi have a whole new continent to explore, and may easily stray from the established storyline. This sourcebook provides material for describing areas and people not specifically part of the story. Since the magi want to make friends, combat statistics should rarely become necessary.

The outcome of this story shapes all future tales South of the Sun. Nearly every encounter ends as a contest of roleplaying, in which the Storyguide must decide whether the magi have made friends or enemies. Obviously, these decisions depends largely upon the behavior of the

party. The Storyguide should also use these alliances and rivalries to prepare the scene for the rest of the saga. Give the magi some informants and worthwhile foes as well.

## Theme

The theme of this story is First Impressions. (As we all know, you never get a second chance to make one.) The magi undertake this mission to correct improper impressions made by Akeem. However, the characters form opinions too, as they meet the different peoples South of the Sun. On the level of the story's plot, the party's decisions to make friends and enemies sets the stage for a whole Saga of conflict and intrigue. On a more philosophical plane, this story examines both the gross unfairness of judging by appearance, and the frequent necessity of doing just that.

## Akeem's Expedition

Akeem's expedition took the following course. Predictably enough, he and his knights came to grief in the Ring of Fire. Those who survived took shelter in a village called Ogo-Ogo. There, they encountered a herdsman tribe and communicated with its chief using Greek. When the chief of the tribe mentioned the raiding Veldt Tribes, Akeem insisted on leaving a knight to protect the town. The rest of the Knights went East, to the great city of Dispolis.

The Colossi of Dispolis welcomed the knights like princes. Sir Akeem and his followers received banquets and audiences throughout the city. The Lord Santil Doran made a tower estate available for Akeem's private use. This tower stood in the hills to the south of the city. For several days, the knights enjoyed Colossi hospitality.

Then Sir Akeem witnessed a rite of Loshandar. He saw two sorcerers at the Temple of the Page slit the throat of a slave-boy. Sir Akeem immediately gathered his knights. In the heart of Dispolis, Akeem and three followers made a gallant, doomed assault on the Temple.

Naturally enough, Sir Akeem failed in his quixotic attack. His knights managed to kill several Colossi, but failed to interrupt the ritual. Akeem and his knights cut their way free and

retreated to their tower south of the City. There, they sealed themselves in, awaiting the end.

The end has not come as quickly as Akeem would have expected. Political considerations make it difficult for Lord Santil Doran to kill them. Emperor Prester John has received word of Europeans within his empire. The Emperor expressly forbids any actions which might endanger relations with the lands to the North. Santil Doran does not want responsibility for killing Europeans.

If Prester John did not have influence enough, the demon Loshandar also forbids her subjects to murder Akeem. She knows of the magi's arrival. The demoness would enjoy finagling the followers of Hermes into destroying the holy knight Sir Akeem. By getting the magi to kill Akeem, she would destroy the holy knight, lay another sin upon Hermes and make her Colossi appear inoffensive, all in one stroke.

## Running the Story

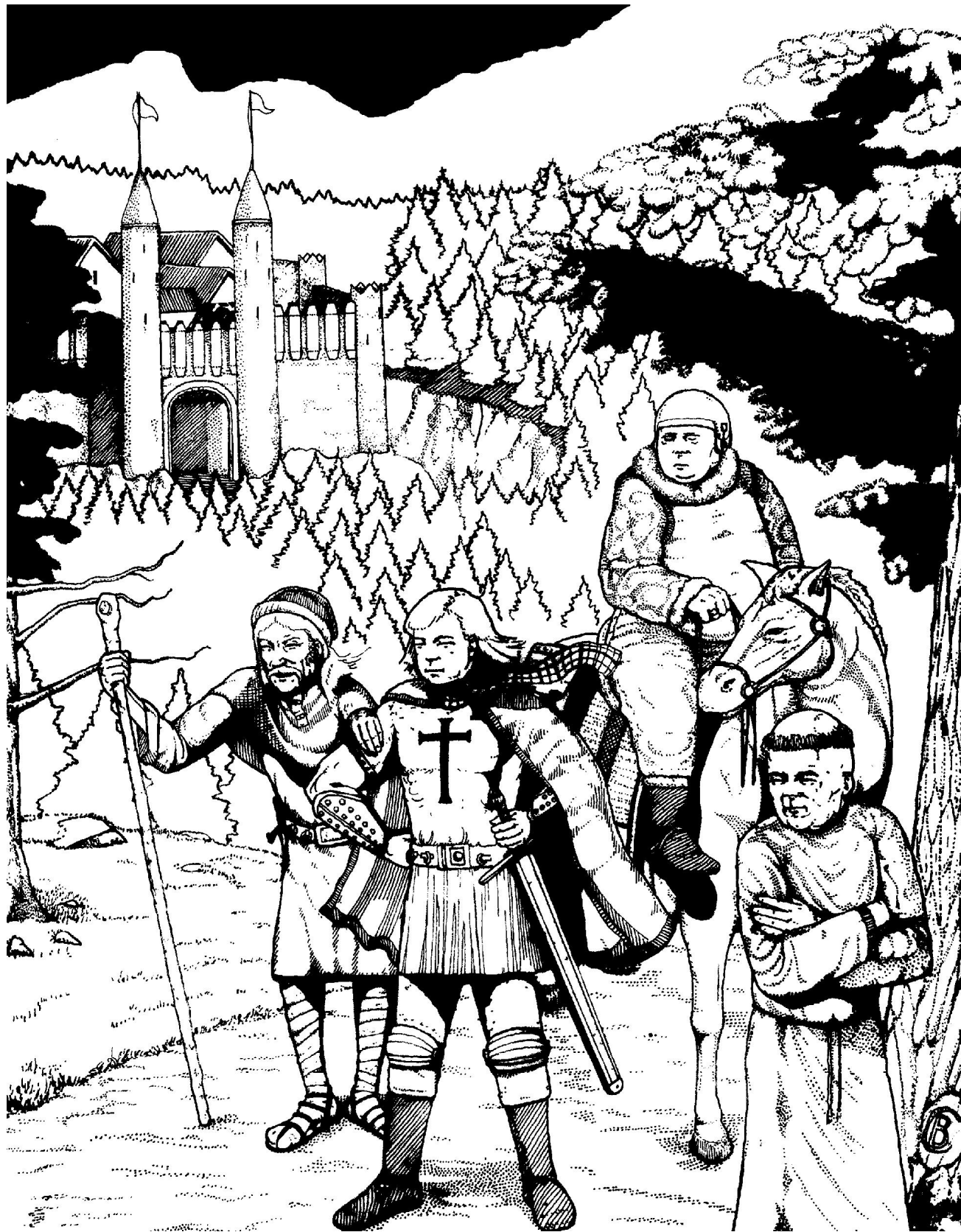
This story consists of several Sections, describing important events and personalities of the tale. For background information on the people and places these Sections describe, consult the rest of the book.

The story begins with Section A, the Ring of Fire. After that, it will proceed through B (the village of Ogo-Ogo) and C (Dispolis) to D (where the magi decide Akeem's fate). However, the characters need not go through this story in any particular order. If the group bypasses one area and goes straight to another, the Storyguide can simply adjust the plot accordingly.

### A. Ring of Fire

To go South of the Sun, one must pass this 20-mile inferno. The main sourcebook describes this region and its horrors. It also contains game statistics for the heat. The Ring of Fire encounter tests the characters' skills at raw survival, before the diplomatic parts of this story enter play.

The magi find traces of Akeem's expedition. Unsurprisingly, Akeem's companions came to grief within the Ring. The characters stumble upon six stone cairns, each assembled with loving effort.



# South of the Sun

The builders raised mounds of boulders almost five feet high and sealed each crack with smaller stones. Each grave displays a rudely-incised stone with the name of a knight. The dead knights are: Sir Percival, Sir Marck, Sir Otto, Sir Elfhaussen, Sir Cheval and Sir Dubois.

Akeem's path leads straight South to Ogo-Ogo (section B). One may follow him by passing a Track + Per roll with an Ease Factor of 6. Magi may also come to Ogo-Ogo by sheer luck, simply by taking the shortest route out of the Ring of Fire.

## B. Ogo-Ogo

Beyond the Ring of Fire, the magi come to low hills. The barren peaks of Dis lie to their East. Here, tufts of grass grow amid the stone. An occasional stream wanders through the ridges. As the magi travel through these more pleasant lands, they come upon the hoofprints of cattle and the remains of campfires.

This region of the hills belongs to the Ogo-Ogo, a herdsman tribe which nominally pledges loyalty to Prester John. The party could learn more about Akeem's expedition and its encounters here. Magi could develop friends within the tribe.

Veldt tribes occasionally raid this region. When Sir Akeem learned of this, he left a knight named Archibald to defend the "simple folk." Sir Archibald's protection, far from helping Ogo-Ogo, makes this town a target for Veldt raiders. Yo-Lin, a tribal Queen and Dreamer shaman, interprets the knight's presence as a challenge. She may attack while the magi visit Ogo-Ogo. The characters could defeat her, becoming heroes to Sir Archibald and winning some respect from the town. They might also make Yo-Lin into a valuable associate.

If the magi wish to find Ogo-Ogo, they have little difficulty. If they wish to bypass it, that too is easy. This town nestles into the corner of a hillside. Here and there, one can spot a lone tribesman, still and erect on a rock, holding a staff, watching over the lands. Ogo-Ogo contains 80 people. A king named Mogla rules it. Akeem's company visited this town. They left a knight, Sir Archibald of Cornwall, to defend and instruct the people of Ogo-Ogo.

When the magi approach Ogo-Ogo, they find it in a state of tension. People have driven their

cattle into the town. The beasts groan nervously. A few villagers plant sharp stakes into the ground, forming a crude barrier. People lope toward town as strangers approach. They shout as they go, not screaming, but hooting in their own tongue.

The group must take care how it responds to the tribe. Recall that animals find the presence of magi disquieting. If the group presses on toward Ogo-Ogo, it may set off a stampede. Someone must pass an Animal Ken + Com roll with an Ease Factor of 8 to avoid it. The Ease Factor becomes 12 if magi insist on entering the town.

During a stampede, three cattle trample each character, in a frantic attempt to escape. The beasts then scatter in all directions, a few impaling themselves on the stakes. Grand panic sweeps the town, and tribesmen flee as randomly as their cattle. Cornered tribesmen attempt to fight. Sir Archibald alone remains to defend the town. He challenges the magi sword in hand.

In the aftermath of a stampede, the characters must pass a Com roll with an Ease Factor of 6 to convince Archibald that they mean no harm. Then he upbraids them in his clipped British accent about the "irreparable injury" they have inflicted on the, "poor heathen folk." The tribesmen return to their village a few hours later. They shun the magi, at least initially.

If the magi avoid a stampede, or manage to overcome one, they may talk to people in the town. Sir Archibald forces his way through the tribesmen to speak with other visitors from abroad. His lacy surcoat, chain armor and sandy mustache make him look ridiculous among the natives. Sir Archibald informs the magi that Sir Akeem left him to defend the "poor heathens" against "native bandits." Archibald will talk with the westerners as long as they wish.

Archibald knows that Akeem went on to the "great metropolis" of these people, to the East. Magi who follow his directions come to Dispolis, Section C. Although Archibald knows nothing whatsoever about the lands South of the Sun, he volunteers an immediate answer to any question magi ask. He fabricates his stories, using the principle that if he does not understand something, it cannot be significant.

Most herdsmen speak only Khili. Even if the magi found a way of making themselves understood, these presence of strangers awes these

tribesmen. They speak with exaggerated politeness, insisting that the magi “could not possibly be interested in our worthless village.” None of them trust the outsiders. The herdsman admit that tribes from the Veldt raid their village. However, when asked about Sir Archibald’s defenses, they frown and seem more truculent than grateful.

If the magi make a point of seeking out the tribal king, they find a man named Mogla. He knows a little Greek, which he uses when trading with Niobians. At first, Mogla barely consents to look at strangers from the north. He resents Sir Archibald’s intrusion. Furthermore, he knows that Sir Archibald’s “defense” is exactly what will bring ruin upon Ogo-Ogo. Mogla answers all questions with the words, “surely the Northern Heroes know more of that than a mere barbarian.” He pretends to know far less Greek than he does.

If the magi make it clear that they neither serve nor respect Sir Akeem, Mogla may tell them more. He complains bitterly about Archibald’s defense. Yo-Lin feels a certain kinship with the cattle tribes, and only raids them when she must. However, she loves to attack wealthy outsiders. Furthermore, she will certainly interpret Sir Archibald’s defenses as a gesture of defiance. Thanks to Sir Archibald’s protection, the village can expect a raid at any time.

King Mogla also has basic information on all the lands South of the Sun.

## Yo-Lin’s Raid

One night after the magi arrive in Ogo-Ogo, Yo-Lin scouts the town in her Dreams. Sleeping characters see a golden Lioness prowling the town. She roars in challenge. The Storyguide should inform all sleeping characters of this dream and ask for their response. Those uninitiated in Dream-Magic probably fail to understand the significance of this vision. If the characters take no action, then the Storyguide should not prompt them. However, those who try to talk or act in the Dreamworld discover that they can.

Yo-Lin would gladly talk to the characters. She does not deny her identity, nor does she attempt to harm characters in the Dreamworld. This chieftain feels curious about the strangers

and although she wants to prove herself their mistress, she feels no animosity toward them.

Yo-Lin intends to attack the town before dawn. The magi could attempt to dissuade her, but only if they earn her respect. Appeals for reason and mercy have no effect but the proud words of a fellow warrior might sway her. She would not attack if she considered the battle beneath her dignity. (Perhaps a dreaming grog can try this ploy, and, for a moment, outshine the magi.) Yo-Lin wants only to humiliate Sir Archibald, and if the characters can arrange for her to do that without pillaging Ogo-ogo, she may go along with their plan.

The Lioness of the Veldt knows about Akeem’s journey to Dispolis. She knows that he attacked the Colossi and that the giants now have him under siege. She also knows that Prester John has sent an envoy to meet Akeem. If asked, Yo-Lin can direct the characters to Akeem’s redoubt (Section D). Yo-Lin enjoys seeing the Colossi discomfited, but she considers Akeem a fool to attack the Lords of Dis in their own city. She also cannot fathom why the Colossi do not merely storm Akeem’s fortress and kill him.

Despite all the ways in which the party could befriend Yo-Lin, she will probably end up attacking Ogo-ogo. She attacks with 12 archers and 12 spearmen. The bowmen spread out on either flank. Her approach triggers a stampede like the one mentioned above, where three cows trample each friendly character and most of the village flees. If the magi defeat Yo-Lin, they receive indifferent respect from the tribesmen and long adulation from Sir Archibald.

## Sir Archibald

Age 21    Cnf 3    Enc 2

### Characteristics

Int -1	Str +2	Prs +0	Dex +1
Per +0	Stm +2	Com +0	Qik +0

### Combat

Attack/Broadsword: 1st +5 — Atk +9 — Dam +12  
 Defense/Round Shield: +6  
 Soak Total (Chain Cuirass): +10  
 Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.  
 Fatigue Total: +0

Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

Speak (Khili): +3

### Skills

Broadsword Attack (Wild Melee): +4  
Round Shield: +3

### Knowledges

Speak (Arabic): +2  
Speak (English): +4  
Speak (French): +2

### Personality Traits

Ignorant +1  
Overbearing +2

**Description:** A tall Briton with a sandy mustache, Sir Archibald joined Akeem at age 15. He feels a strong respect for the codes of chivalry and teachings of the Faith. Despite (or perhaps because of) his long campaigns in exotic lands, Sir Archibald feels contempt for all non-Europeans. He views the people South of the Sun as ignorant, if amusing, savages.

**Role-Playing Tips:** Project your voice in the self-assured way of an upper-class Briton. Always be ready to feign expertise on a subject about which you know nothing.

## King Mogla

Age 33   Cnf 2   Enc 0

### Characteristics

Int +2   Str +1   Prs -1   Dex +2  
Per +1   Stm +2   Com -1   Qik +1

### Combat

Attack/Long Spear: 1st +12 — Atk +7 — Dam +10  
Defense/Long Spear Parry: +5  
Soak Total: +2  
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.  
Fatigue Total: +2  
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

### Skills

Long Spear Attack: +3  
Long Spear Parry: +2

### Knowledges

Speak (Greek): +1

### Personality Traits

Conservative +1  
Resentful +2

**Description:** A wiry black man with a perpetually glum face, Mogla has ruled his tribe for over a dozen years, and knows the land and its people. Mogla's people have raised their herds here for countless centuries, and his greatest ambition is for them to continue to do the same. He wants no excitement or upheaval in his realm.

**Role-Playing Tips:** Remain civil but unhelpful. If foreigners do not understand your people or your love for the land, they have nothing to offer you. You bitterly resent the arrogance of outsiders in your domain. Do not make eye contact with haughty strangers.

## Yo-Lin's Warriors (24)

These warriors consider raiding their right. They admire and obey Yo-Lin, Lioness of the Veldt. Twelve wield bows and twelve wield spears.

### Characteristics

Int +2   Str +1   Prs +0   Dex +3  
Per +3   Stm +2   Com +0   Qik +1

### Combat

Attack/Long Spear: 1st +12 — Atk +9 — Dam +11  
Attack/Self Bow: Rate +8 — Atk +7 — Dam +8  
Defense/Long Spear Parry: +5  
Soak Total: +2  
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.  
Fatigue Total: +2  
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

### Skills

Long Spear Attack (Wild Melee): +4  
Long Spear Parry: +2  
Self Bow (Wild Melee): +4

## Yo-Lin

Consult Chapter Two.

## C. Dispolis

The magi descend straight from barren hills into a magnificent city. The white stone towers of Dispolis speak of a civilization greater than any since the fall of Rome. Both buildings and people seem to be built on a massive scale, as if to match the grandeur of their surroundings. The streets seem quiet, with only a few pedestrians.

Following Akeem's riot, the Lords of Dis instructed their henchmen to detain any strangers in the city. Unless the magi are actually invisible, they cannot escape detection. Their language, dress and behavior mark them as obviously foreign. Therefore, the magi spend only moments in the city before the Lords' agents arrest them.

A party of eight handsome Colossi in blue tunics carry out the arrests. Their leader uses halting Latin to demand the strangers' weapons. If the characters fight back, they may defeat the arresting officers, but they must then flee the city at once. Those foolish enough to defeat the guards and remain in the city must face increasingly larger bands of Colossi warriors until they succumb. The Storyguide may include Spawn and other magical horrors if the situation truly warrants it.

If the magi submit to arrest, the guards take them to a well-furnished stone villa. They spend a day there in relative comfort. Then a smiling guard in a red toga returns their belongings and informs them, in Latin, that the Lord Santil Doran desires the honor of their company at a grand feast.

Santil receives the magi in an upstairs chamber of the Temple of the Page. He, along with several dozen Colossi scholars, offer the travelers a sumptuous feast and invite them to discuss their homelands, their lore and their intentions South of the Sun. If the magi betray any inclination toward learning, either magical or not, the Colossi engage them in long conversations on the subject.

The dinner at the Temple provides the magi with a golden chance to serve as ambassadors for the Order of Hermes. Let them play that role.

Later in the evening, Santil approaches the magi. He informs them that he has less pleasant business to discuss, then describes Akeem's visit. He glosses over the exact nature of the sacrifice, saying only, "This man accused us of blasphemy

against his god, whom we never claimed to worship." Santil then describes the attack on the

Temple in vivid terms, emphasizing the deaths of Colossi scholars. Santil concludes by explaining that Akeem seized a tower south of the city and fortified himself there. Colossi troops have the tower under siege.

Lord Santil Doran tells the magi the truth about his situation. He has no desire to attack a foreign ambassador, but he resents "the forcible expropriation of my property." He cannot allow the situation to continue. Therefore, he hopes that the magi, as Akeem's fellow Europeans, will give Akeem the punishment he deserves.

"This is a deed which you can perform but I cannot." Santil adds, "Furthermore, we, unlike you, are not a warlike people."

If the party refuses to help Santil, he dismisses them from his mansions and leaves them to their own devices in Dispolis.

### Lord Santil Doran

Age 42   Cnf 4   Enc 0   Size +1

#### Characteristics

Int +2   Str +0   Prs +2   Dex +0  
Per +2   Stm +0   Com +3   Qik +0

#### Combat

Noncombatant  
Body Total: +0  
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-1/-3/-5/Incap.  
Fatigue Total: +0  
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

#### Colossi Magic

Cull From the Body: +3  
Cull From the Spirit: +2  
Duel With the Soul: +2

#### Skills

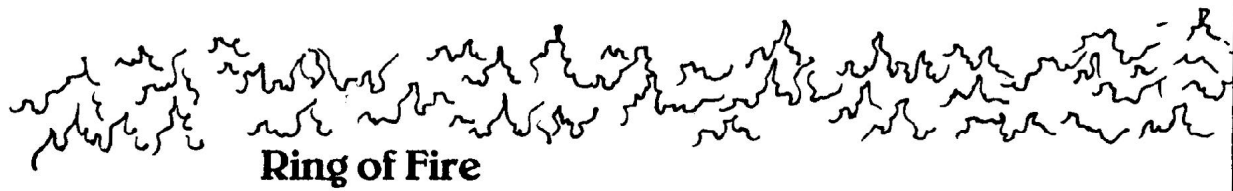
Intrigue (Politics): +2

#### Knowledges

Fantastic Beast Lore (Races of Cain): +2  
Legend Lore (Dispolis): +2  
Scribe (Atha): +4  
Scribe (Khili): +3  
Scribe (Latin): +2

# South of the Sun

## Akeem's Crusade

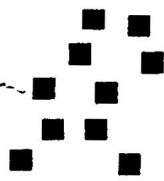
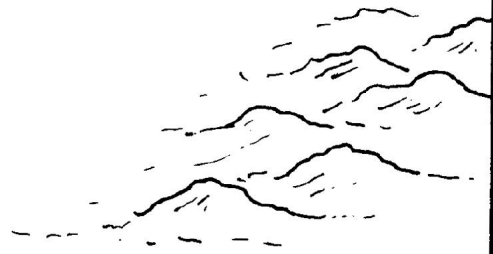


Ring of Fire

(A)



(B) Ogo-Ogo

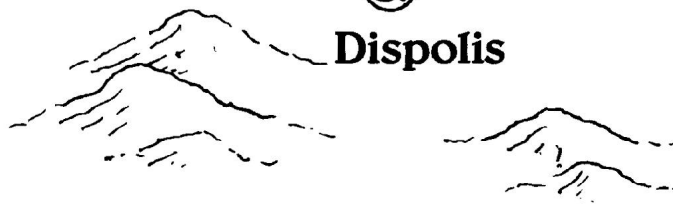


(C)

Dispolis

X

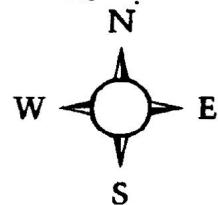
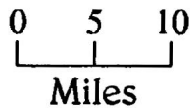
Yo-Lin's Encampment



(D) Tower



	Tower
	Woods
	Ring of Fire
	Hills





Speak (Astha): +4  
 Speak (Greek): +2  
 Speak (Khili): +3  
 Speak (Latin): +2

**Personality Traits**

Cautious +3

**Reputation**

Well-mannered (Dis) +2

**Description:** A soft-spoken, well-mannered Lord of Dis, it was Santil Doran’s ill fortune to become involved with Akeem. He has a studious interest in foreign peoples but no practical experience with diplomacy. Santil Doran has political reasons not to use his own henchmen in the recapture of his tower. However, even if he did not, he would have personal reasons to want others to do the job.

Santil has graying hair and slightly wrinkled skin.

**Role-Playing Tips:** Use long sentences and pretentious language. Remind others that war is not a tradition of the Colossi.

**Santil’s Warriors**

Colossi neglect the arts of war, but these lusty fellows serve as Dis’ closest equivalent to soldiers.

Enc 0 Size +1

**Characteristics**

Str +4 Dex +3  
 Stm +4 Qik +1

**Combat**

Attack/Broadsword: 1st +8 — Atk +11 — Dam +14  
 Defense/Wicker Tower Shield: +8  
 Soak Total (Carved Cuirass): +7  
 Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-1/-3/-5/Incap.  
 Fatigue Total: +4  
 Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

**Skills**

Broadsword Attack: +4  
 Tower Shield Parry: +3

**D. Akeem**

**Under Siege**

Akeem and his men occupy a tower belonging to Santil Doran, Lord of Dis. The Lords of Dis build for beauty, not warfare, but nevertheless, this tower is well defended. Its stone walls stand atop a jagged peak. An impassable cliff rises behind the tower. The magi can see this fortress from many miles away. As the characters approach, they see the smoke of campfires as well. The Colossi have placed this tower under siege.

Inside the tower, Sir Akeem and his surviving warriors prepare to sell their lives dearly. Outside, the various factions of the Golden Empire dither over the proper response to the troublesome outsiders. If the magi have the leadership to propose a solution, they may tip the decision in any direction they choose. The magi must decide whether they have come to rescue Sir Akeem or to destroy him.

**Arrival**

When strangers arrive at the siege, sentries accost them. Colossi guards watch in pairs, in positions shown on the Siege Map. The guards grip their weapons and raise their hands in a gesture meaning, “halt.” One sentry watches while the other fetches their Sergeant, who speaks Latin. If the characters try to fight or escape, the Colossi attack, and the meeting becomes a battle royale. See below for details. However, most intelligent magi will wait to see what the guards want.

The Sergeant demands to know if the newcomers serve Akeem. Assuming that the magi declare their neutrality, the Sergeant nods with satisfaction. “Then your appearance is a blessing. Our masters need the opinion of Northerners in a most vexing dilemma.” He then escorts the group to the Captain’s tent. There, the magi meet Polos, Santil Doran’s Captain of Expedition, Joshua Paul, Prester John’s ambassador and Lucus, a warrior of Niobia. The magi may join in the debate over Akeem’s fate.

If the magi ask general questions about the lands South of the Sun, these people provide answers. However, none of them want the conver-

sation to veer too far from the subject of Akeem.

Captain Polos wants Akeem destroyed. As his argument, he relies on the simple righteousness of his case. The knight came to Dispolis as a stranger, and accepted the hospitality of Lord Santil Doran. Then, for no apparent reason, Akeem murdered innocent Colossi and seized Doran's property. Those actions befit a madman more than a knight. Only Santil Doran's deep desire to avoid political friction have caused him to delay his revenge.

Polos, like Santil Doran, asks the magi to take responsibility for destroying the knight. "I blush at asking you to fight my battle. But, just as duty has compelled so many cowards to be brave, so duty compels me to be a coward. If you aid my master, his reward shall not be meager."

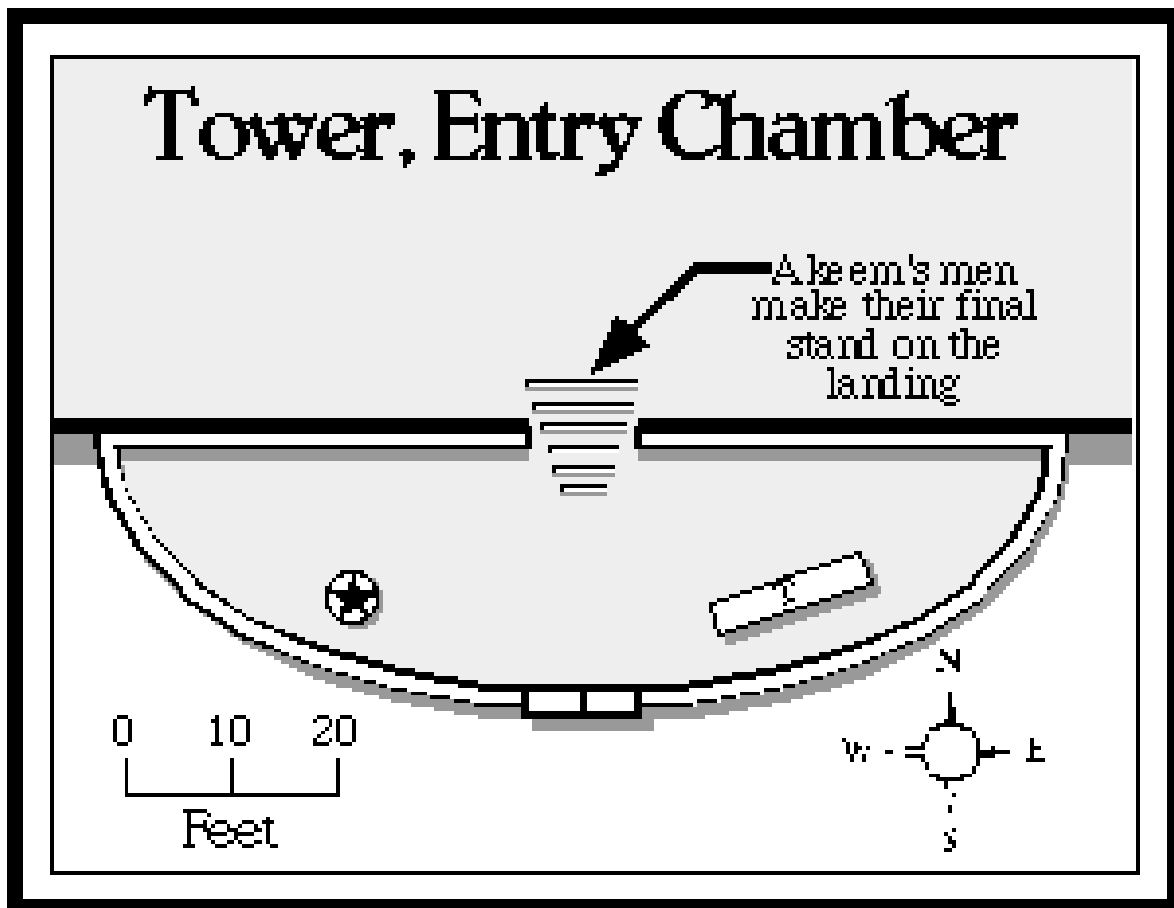
Joshua Paul cannot deny the justice of Polos' argument. However, he believes that the Christians of the North may become powerful allies of Emperor Prester John. He wants a parley with

Akeem, but knows he can hardly arrange one under current circumstances. Therefore, he quibbles and wastes time, hoping to buy time until he can find a way to bring Akeem before Prester John. He has already delayed the siege for many days.

If the magi talk privately with Joshua Paul, he asks them to secretly rescue Sir Akeem. "Such daring would John reward with rivers of gold."

Lucus identifies himself to the magi as a Precentor of Niobia. He answers questions briefly, then retires into a sour silence. The Niobians resent Dispolis, fear Prester John and hate Christians of every sort. No matter what happens here, the appearance of Akeem's people can only hurt them.

If the magi distance themselves from Akeem and the European Church, they find Lucus growing more friendly. If the characters seem sympathetic to Niobia and its concerns, Lucus may invite them to his land. That journey lies beyond the



scope of this story. However, Lucas can take characters straight to his Queen.

## The Siege Troops

If the magi decide to rescue Akeem, or if they simply wish to sneak into the tower without Captain Polos' permission, they must contend with the siege forces. Polos has twelve guards on sentry duty around the hill. Sentries watch in pairs and have horns with which to summon help. Polos has a force of sixteen warriors in the camp, ready to respond to any call. The map shows the location of these troops.

The Colossi keep pens of bulls and deer by their camp. Polos uses these animals in combination with Cull From the Body to make his warriors fast and strong. At any given time, assume that five Colossi have a movement rate of 30 paces per round and a Str of +6. These troops react first to an attack.

## Akeem's Defense

Akeem defends the tower with a plan based on the simplicity of desperation. He and his three surviving followers have gathered stones to drop upon attackers. When enemies force the door, Akeem plans to challenge them to individual combat. If the attackers agree, he will fight his enemies one at a time, until he wins or dies. Otherwise, the knights defend the tower stairs as bravely as they can.

On the stairs, the knights gain a +2 bonus to First Strike and +1 bonus to Attack rolls due to their advantage in altitude. On the landing at the top of the stairwell, they can duck around corners to avoid missiles. Furthermore, normal opponents cannot surround them here. Magi, of course, might use spells to enter the tower through an upper-floor window. They could then descend and take the knights from behind.

Akeem has a Holy Sword which gives his knights limited protection from magic.

Akeem's men can roll their stone missiles as far as the base of the hill. The map shows the range of these tumbling boulders. Unless the magi plan their route to the tower carefully, they must endure several rounds of this fire to reach the tower. Furthermore, since dropping a rock re-

quires very little aim, the knights do not expose themselves to use these weapons. Anyone firing missiles at them suffers a -4 to Attack rolls.

Attackers continue to suffer from the stones while they work on the gate. This tower has a door of iron, with an internal bar. If grogs attempt to batter this gate with an improvised ram, they must pass an Str roll with an Ease Factor of 20. If the ram is long enough, multiple attackers may add their Str to this roll. Every five feet of length allows one extra attacker to participate. Rammers may hit the gate as often as they like, but each strike requires a round. The rammers suffer a hail of stones in each round they attack.

Akeem expects no friends in this land. Normally, he and his knights fight anyone who approaches them. They do respect a flag of truce. However, Akeem refuses any compromise with the Colossi, calling them sorcerers and demon-worshippers.

Naturally, Sir Akeem would be glad to escape the tower. He pays his rescuers the respect they earn, even if they happen to be magi. Akeem will never trust magic, but he has enough gratitude to speak well of the Order of Hermes before Emperor Prester John.

## Captain Polos

Age 32      Cnf 3 Enc 0      Size +1

### Characteristics

Int +2    Str +4    Prs +0    Dex +3  
Per +1    Stm +4    Com +1    Qik +1

### Combat

Attack/Broadsword: 1st+9 — Atk+11 — Dam — +15  
Defense/Wicker Tower Shield: +9  
Soak Total (Carved Cuirass): +7  
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-1/-3/-5/Incap.  
Fatigue Total: +4  
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

### Skills

Broadsword Attack: +5  
Tower Shield Parry: +3

### Personality Traits

Earnest +1  
Efficient +1



**Description:** Captain Polos rose to the top of Santil's henchmen through his cheerful readiness to accomplish his master's goals. He often knows Santil's mind more accurately than Santil himself. Captain Polos often finds himself called upon to make decisions for his master. In such cases, he simply adheres to logic as closely as possible.

**Role-Playing Tips:** Speak loudly, and rely on the justice of your case.

## Joshua Paul

Age 22 Cnf 1 Enc 0

### Characteristics

Int +1 Str +0 Prs -1 Dex -2  
Per +1 Stm -1 Com -1 Qik -1

### Combat

Noncombatant  
Soak Total: -1  
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.  
Fatigue Total: -1  
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

### Skills

Diplomacy (Politics): +2

### Knowledges

Church Lore (Doctrine): +1  
Speak (Astha): +3  
Speak (Greek): +2  
Speak (Khili): +4  
Speak (Latin): +2

### Personality Traits

Naive +1

**Description:** An outcast from the Smiths tribe, Joshua Paul has found unexpected fortune in the service of the Empire. He recently received his baptism, and has a convert's fanaticism about religion. Nevertheless, Joshua knows quite little about the actual teachings of his Faith. Paul's innocence and religion cause him to feel a great affinity for Sir Akeem. However, even Paul must admit that by murdering the Colossi in their own city, the knight made his case difficult to support.

**Role-Playing Tips:** Speak in a loud, clear voice. You have trouble expressing your mixed

feelings about Sir Akeem.

## Lucus

Age 32 Cnf 3 Enc 2

### Characteristics

Int +0 Str +2 Prs +2 Dex +1  
Per +0 Stm +2 Com +1 Qik +1

### Combat

Attack/Broadsword: 1st +6 — Atk +9 — Dam +12  
Defense/Round Shield: +6  
Soak Total (Chain Cuirass): +10  
Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.  
Fatigue Total: +0  
Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

### Skills

Broadsword Attack(Wild Melee): +4  
Round Shield Parry: +3

### Knowledges

Speak (Arabic): +2  
Speak (Greek): +2  
Speak (Niobian): +3

### Personality Traits

Gruff +1  
Persecuted +1

**Description:** A hardened warrior, with dark skin and a mishappen face. Lucus continually feels that others are conspiring to persecute Niobia.

**Role-Playing Tips:** Grunt and scowl at other people. Since you expect others to persecute Niobians, you are seldom very friendly. However, you show gratitude to anyone who makes a point of befriending you.

## Sir Akeem

Age 29 Faith 1 Enc 1

### Characteristics

Int +1 Str +3 Prs +2 Dex +3  
Per +0 Stm +2 Com +1 Qik +2

# South of the Sun

## Combat

Attack/Broadsword: 1st +9 — Atk +12 — Dam +14  
 Attack/Stone: Rate +0 — Atk +3 — Dam +12  
 Defense/Round Shield: +8  
 Soak Total (Chain Cuirass): +10  
 Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.  
 Fatigue Total: +1  
 Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

## Skills

Broadsword Attack(Single Combat): +5  
 Round Shield Parry: +5

## Knowledges

Church Lore (Doctrine): +3  
 Speak (Arabic): +4  
 Speak (English): +1  
 Speak (French): +2  
 Speak (Greek): +1  
 Speak (Latin): +2

## Personality Traits

Somber +2  
 Fanatic +3

**Description:** A small man, with the coal eyes and dark features of an Arab, Sir Akeem comes from Tyre, in modern-day Lebanon. He follows the Levantine branch of the Church, which claims to trace its founding back to Christ himself. As a Christian from the country of the Saracens, he always took a powerful interest in the Crusades. Akeem served as a scout during the Crusade of Frederick II. During that campaign, a German baron knighted him.

Now, with no great war to serve in, Akeem has gathered other knights with a taste for glory. They swear vows of piety, poverty and service to mankind. These paladins undertake quests such as their current expedition South of the Sun.

Sir Akeem owns a sword of pale steel, quenched in the river where John baptized Christ. It gives him one Faith Point and a Magic Resistance of +20. All members of his company within ten feet share in the magic resistance.

Akeem knows beyond a doubt that the Colossi are diabolists. If he survives this story, he will devote himself to destroying them.

**Role-Playing Tips:** You are quiet and thoughtful, but a crusader nonetheless. Your eyes

burn when you speak of holy things and you cannot mention religion without affirming your faith. Akeem learned his European languages from a German and retains a slight Teutonic accent.

## Sir Akeem's Knights

These three men, Sir Poul, Sir Hans and Sir Floro feel devoted to chivalry and their own tiny Crusades. They would quite willingly trust their lives with Akeem and their souls with God.

Age 20-23 Faith 1 Enc 2

## Characteristics

Int -1 Str +2 Prs +0 Dex +1  
 Per +0 Stm +2 Com -1 Qik +1

## Combat

Attack/Broadsword: 1st +6 — Atk +9 — Dam +12  
 Attack/Stone: Rate +0 — Atk +3 — Dam +12  
 Defense/Round Shield: +6  
 Soak Total (Chain Cuirass): +10  
 Body Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Incap.  
 Fatigue Total: 0  
 Fatigue Levels: OK/0/-1/-3/-5/Unc.

## Skills

Broadsword Attack(Wild Melee): +4  
 Round Shield Parry: +3

## Knowledges

Speak (Arabic): +2  
 Speak (English): +4  
 Speak (French): +2

## Colossi Troops

See Section C.

## Conclusion

At the conclusion of this story, the party should have a new constellation of friends and enemies South of the Sun. If the party destroys Akeem, they win the approval of Niobia and the enthusiastic friendship of Lord Santil Doran. Doran, of course, is a diabolist, but that does not

make his friendship less valuable. If, on the other hand, the party rescues Akeem, they have earned a bit of friendship from Akeem's order of knights, and deep respect from the Emperor Prester John. The Colossi, however, will view them coldly at best. No matter what the magi do, they have a chance to make their case before Yo-Lin, King Mogla and Queen Sophia of Niobia.

Prester John, Lord Santil Doran and Queen Sophia all can and will reward their heroes with gold and gems. The magi may also investigate the lore of these lands South of the Sun.

The only real way for the party to fail in this story is by doing nothing. If the party refuses to involve itself in the matter, Santil Doran eventually orders his troops to destroy Akeem. He views

the magi as a disappointment.

Prester John assumes that the magi did not care enough to help their fellow Christians. The Niobians conclude that the magi were too weak to intervene.

This is not the sort of story where the characters solve all the mysteries. Akeem's Crusade serves as an introduction to the lands South of the Sun, which can lay the seeds for many future tales. Magi may seal a promising friendship with Prester John, but they may have Niobians or Veldt Tribes as bitter enemies. Most significantly of all, characters may fail to realize the role of the Demons in Dis. After all, what magi believe a religious fanatic's accusations against the enlightened scholars of a benevolent city? These foes, both known and unknown, will certainly appear in future stories.