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Introduction

[Y]et even now there is much learning in the same city; for teachers of various sects flourish, and many kinds of secret knowledge are explained….

> — Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Roman History*, XXII, 16:20

The world of **Ars Magica** is one of archaic splendor and ancient secrets, and none are more aware of this than the magi of the Order of Hermes. Where once mighty wizards flourished amidst the great empires of history, now Mythic Europe is ruled over by the ignorant, intolerant, and fearful; the petty kingdoms are but pale shadows of the once-glorious empires of the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans.

In the golden age there were thousands of wizards and warlocks, countless rites and rituals. The wizards of times past tamed the wild spirits and elementals of antiquity, fought magical duels that invoked gods and angels, called down curses and blessings that lasted for seven generations. The philosopher-wizards of Greece and Rome vied with Syrian spirit masters, Egyptian alchemists, and barbarian witches to gain precious and irreplaceable knowledge.

Alas, the fall of the Roman Empire, and the growth of the Dominion, have seen the glories of the past fade; the secrets and lore that once saw mages ascend to godhood or gain immortality were lost in the centuries of ignorance, war, and decay called the Dark Ages. The secrets of the ancient wizards were lost as these practitioners died and took their knowledge to their graves. The mystical continuity of a thousand years was broken, never to be replaced.

Welcome to Ancient Magic

Not all of the secret knowledge of antiquity was lost. Fragments survived, waiting for the brave and adventurous to seek them out. This book contains a small portion of the once-great wizardry of times past. Included in these pages are the mystical coordinates of Ptolemy, the fetishes of fertility cults, the primeval tongue of Adam and Eve, the sublime hymns of the Hyperboreans, details of ancient curse tablets, and much more.

Ancient Magic details the arcane practices of nine distinct magical traditions, thought by most to be lost to the world. Each of the nine chapters details a non-Hermetic form of magic, the way in which Hermetic wizards can adapt and integrate this knowledge into Hermetic Theory, and a number of story hooks and quests for magi who want to search out and uncover this centuries-lost knowledge.

Each of the distinct forms of magic in this book is inspired by the myths and legends of Mythic Europe, from Ptolemy's *Geographica*, to the secret *Books of Enoch* and Herodotus's *Histories*. These legends have been adapted to fit into the Mythic Europe setting of **Ars Magica**. Each one includes a complete system for use by Hermetic characters in learning or adapting the ancient magic to Hermetic Theory in the Laboratory, as well as details on the legends that inspired the magical tradition.

Ancient Magic is a tool-kit for troupes: it includes new kinds of magic for players' characters to learn and use, as well as legends and story hooks for storyguides to gain inspiration from. Suitable for both players and storyguides, *Ancient Magic* is about the quest for lost knowledge and the way Hermetic magi can use that knowledge.

How to Use This Book

Within this book is a great deal of information on the magic of the ancient world, ranging from new Virtues and Flaws, to unique languages and Supernatural Abilities, to mystical relics and wondrous spells and arcane rites. All of this is divided into this introduction, nine chapters, and a bibliography:

INTRODUCTION: What you are reading at the moment, the introduction also details the system used for

What Ancient Magic is Not

This book is not a book of Mysteries for Initiates of Hermetic sects and cults. Hermetic Mysteries have been detailed extensively in *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults* and *The Mysteries Revised Edition*. The magic in this book cannot be Initiated by a Hermetic magus; rather, it must be integrated into the very essence of Hermetic theory. Unlike a Hermetic Mystery, there are no living practitioners for Hermetic wizards to learn ancient magic from, to assist them in understanding the golden age lore, or to advise them on how to overcome the many obstacles in the way of even finding the lost secrets. The result of discovering these secrets may, however, be a new Hermetic Mystery, if the troupe so desires.

Furthermore, *Ancient Magic* is not an adventure book. Although it does contain numerous story hooks and saga seeds, as well as locations for characters to visit and explore, they are offered as the beginnings of ideas that can be used to build and develop your own stories, rather than as ready-made scenarios. They detail many possible quests and obstacles that may stand between a Hermetic magus and the lost secrets of the ancient world.

Finally, although this book is inspired by real-world legends and myths, it is neither a how-to guide for real magic, nor a textbook for students. The tales retold in this book have been adapted to fit into the imaginary Mythic European setting of **Ars Magica**. If you seek more information on anything in this book, a bibliography has been included.

Hermetic characters who are trying to integrate the ancient knowledge of the following chapters into Hermetic theory.

CHAPTER 1: THE LANGUAGE OF ADAM. The first language of the world names things more truly than later tongues, giving those who speak it Arcane Connections to anything they can name. Learning the language, however, is far from easy, and may lead the characters to the Garden of Eden itself.

CHAPTER 2: CANAANITE NECROMANCY. The necromancers of biblical Canaan could contact almost any of the dead, without the need for specific Arcane Connections.

CHAPTER 3: DEFIXIO MAGIC. The curse tablets of the ancient world could affect their targets without the need for an Arcane Connection.

CHAPTER 4: FERTILITY MAGIC. The relics of an ancient fertility cult hold the key to affecting the traits of the unborn, and even ensuring that they are born with The Gift.

CHAPTER 5: GRIGORI MAGIC. The angels who fathered the Nephilim also taught secrets of magic, which magi today could learn in order to break the Limit of Vis.

CHAPTER 6: HERON OF ALEXANDRIA'S LEGACY. Heron was a great engineer and magician of the Hellenistic world, and his legacy might enable magi to create items with independent intelligence.

CHAPTER 7: THE HESPERIDES. Ptolemy's coordinates allow magi to form Arcane Connections to any place, but the place where their secret can be found may be more interesting still.

CHAPTER 8: HYPERBOREAN MAGIC. The sages of Hyperborea could heal and create enchanted items without vis; magi who study their relics may be able to reproduce those and other great feats.

CHAPTER 9: RUNE MAGIC. The rune wizards who attacked much of Europe and fought against the Order of Hermes between the eighth and tenth centuries are thought to have died out, but their artifacts may remain, allowing magi to learn how to make magical changes to objects that are, nevertheless, natural and thus unaffected by Magic Resistance.

FURTHER READING: A list of books and sources used by the authors as inspiration. Use this resource to learn more about the myths and legends contained within.

Ancient Magic and the Order of Hermes

The Order of Hermes is, relatively speaking, a new tradition, comprising a hodge-podge of arcane methods and knowledge from the barbarian secrets of the druids to the mighty rites of the Romans. Most of what constitutes Hermetic theory is based on the surviving remnants of rituals from the Cult of Mercury. Apart from the innovations Bonisagus learned from Bjornaer and Diedne, Hermetic magic derives from a single magical tradition; most Founders traced their lineages back to the Roman Cult of Mercury. The ancient magic in this book is distinctly non-Hermetic, and pre-dates the Order of Hermes, and even the Cult of Mercury, by hundreds of years.

The magi of the Order of Hermes are well aware of the once-mighty magic of the past. While many scoff at the powers of the wizards of yore, pointing out that Hermetic magic is more versatile than any past form of magic, other Hermetic magi search out what remains of the long-lost and forgotten rites and rituals. These

magi, called Seekers, lust after the secrets of the ancients, and search the world, from Hibernia to the Middle East, for hints and rumors of the old ones and their magic. Seekers come from all of the Hermetic Houses and are a guarded and cagey group, often unwilling to assist each other for fear that they may unwittingly help a rival stumble across a great secret.

All of the Houses of Hermes would be interested in learning one or more of the forgotten secrets of the ancients. While Bonisagus magi may wish to expand and improve the theory of magic, Criamon may wish to gain a greater understanding of the essence of magic, and wary Tremere look at the potential to safeguard the Order from attack or collapse. There are innumerable reasons for Hermetic characters to go in search of ancient magic and attempt to reconcile it with the Hermetic theory: personal advancement, glory and prestige, or to altruistically spread and preserve knowledge are but three examples.

Many of the secrets within *Ancient Magic* reach or even break the limits of magic; however, this knowledge cannot be learned from the laboratory. Hermetic wizards who wish to make use of these glorious powers must venture out into the world and risk their lives in the hunt for knowledge.

Hermetic Integration of Ancient Magic

Ancient Magic contains a variety of pre-Hermetic magics and arcane secrets. While complete synthesis of these magical traditions is not possible, Hermetic magic is versatile enough to integrate many of the principles of these magics, pushing the bounds of Bonisagus's theory and perhaps even the limits of magic themselves.

Historical Settings

Many of the traditions described in this book are given enough detail to make it possible to play a living member of the tradition. While the traditions are dead in 1220, at least in the standard **Ars Magica** setting, you might choose to set your saga in an earlier period, when they are still active. You will need to fill in a few rule details, as the traditions have not been written up as full examples of hedge magic traditions, but most of what you need is here.

THE BREAKTHROUGH

A magus ambitious enough to attempt to unify the various magics contained in the chapters of this book with Hermetic theory may attempt to achieve a Breakthrough in Hermetic theory, accomplished through research and experimentation. Any magus may, at any time, attempt a Breakthrough; there are no minimum Art or Ability scores required. To successfully integrate the magic into Hermetic theory, he must accumulate a number of **breakthrough points** determined by the type of Breakthrough he is attempting.

Each chapter of *Ancient Magic* details the number of breakthrough points required to integrate a specific part of that ancient magic into Hermetic Theory.

There are three kinds of Breakthrough: **Minor**, **Major**, and **Hermetic**. Note that it is recommended that the exact number of breakthrough points required be varied, so the players do not know the precise number needed for the Breakthrough.

A **Minor Breakthrough** is a development that is immediately useful and applicable in the existing frame-

The Integration Process

1. Find a source of ancient magic, such as a relic, book, or the like. This typically involves a quest or adventure of some sort.

2. Investigate the source to gain Insight; this typically takes two or three seasons.

3. Invent a spell or magical device incorporating the Insight. A magus must experiment while doing this. If she succeeds in inventing the spell, she gains a number of breakthrough points equal to the magnitude of the spell or device. The spell may break Hermetic limits, but if it does, it cannot be invented by another character without access to the inventor's Lab Text, and cannot be varied in any way.

4. Continue to research, gaining more breakthrough points, until the threshold is equaled or exceeded.

5. Bask in the glory of having improved Hermetic theory, or alternatively, prepare for the political consequences of your impudence.

work of Hermetic magic, such as a new Range, Target, or Duration. It improves upon or adds to existing theory without truly reaching the limits of magic. (Typically requires around 30 breakthrough points.)

A **Major Breakthrough** pushes those limits, but does not break them; these include creating new Hermetic Virtues for Gifted characters. Incorporating hedge magic into Hermetic theory is a Major Breakthrough, and the incorporation can then be taught to others as Supernatural Virtues. (Typically requires around 45 breakthrough points.)

A **Hermetic Breakthrough** is research that breaks one of the Hermetic limits of magic, whether by creating a new Arcane Ability or giving the ability to cast permanent duration spells without vis. Hermetic Breakthroughs re-write the theory books; the only Hermetic Breakthrough in the last 450 years was the development of the Parma Magica by Bonisagus. (Typically requires around 60 breakthrough points.)
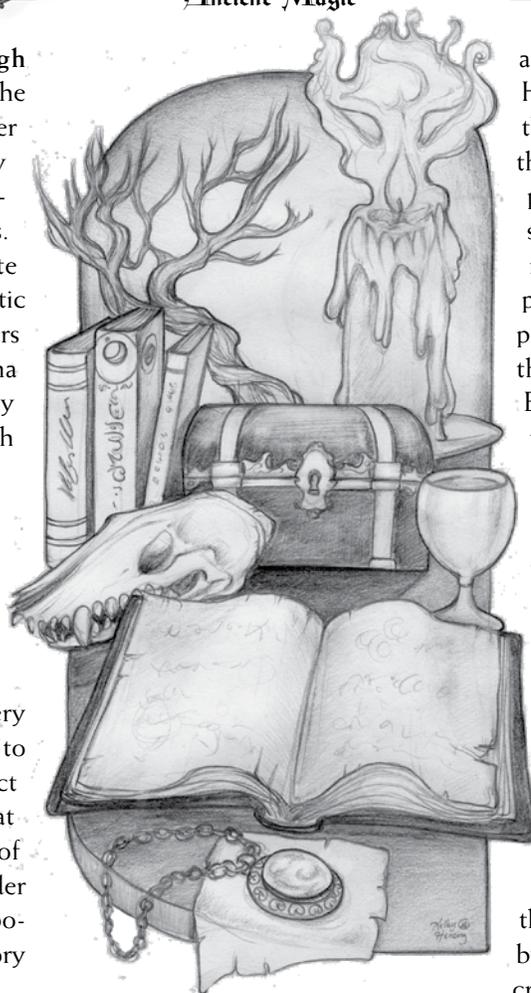
INSIGHT

Insight is gained from studying some existing source of the ancient magic in question. Every Insight the magus gains allows him to produce a partially Hermetic effect incorporating some aspect of that lost magic. As he produces more of these effects, he gains the broader understanding necessary to incorporate that aspect into Hermetic theory as a whole.

The seasons spent gaining Insight produce Lab Texts. Any magus may study these Lab Texts over the course of a season in order to gain the same Insight for himself, even without direct access to the source. Summaries of Lab Texts are not useful in this way, however; only the whole thing can be used. For purposes of copying, Lab Texts that detail Insights have a level equal to the typical number of breakthrough points needed for the type of Breakthrough in question.

There are three sources of Insight: **texts**, **relics**, and **teachers**.

Texts are ancient books and tomes, symbolic wall paintings, or other explanatory sources that describe how to learn, perform, or cast a magical effect. If the text contains the information needed to gain a Supernatural Ability, a character could use it to learn the Ability, as per the normal rules. Most Hermetic magi, however, cannot learn Supernatural Abilities due to prohibitive penalties. Alternatively, the text may contain the rites and practices needed to perform a magical spell or ritual associated with the ancient magical tradition.

Relics are mystical devices or sacred items enchanted by practitioners of the ancient magic, and incorporate unique aspects of that tradition. Additionally, a relic may be an ongoing mystical effect caused by magic of the ancient tradition. Like Hermetic magical devices, a magus is able to investigate the device to learn its secrets and unlock the methods used to craft it.

Teachers are individuals who possess the Supernatural Abilities associated with the ancient magic and are able and willing to instruct a Hermetic magus. The very nature of the ancient magic in this book means that there are no remaining living practitioners to teach the arcane secrets of antiquity. Nevertheless, most of the ritualists who knew and performed the various magics were pagans; their ghosts may still haunt the mysterious regions of Mythic Europe, and could be convinced to teach a Hermetic magus.

For every season a magus spends investigating a source of insight, make a stress roll of Intelligence + Magic Theory against an Ease Factor of 18. The Inventive Genius Virtue adds three to this roll, and some sources of Insight may add their own modifiers. If the roll succeeds, the magus gains an Insight. If it fails, he learns nothing now, but may try again in another season. He may do other things before returning to his study. On a botch, the magus thinks he has an Insight, but does not. He realizes this if he creates an effect, as described below, in an attempt to use the Insight; upon completion, he discovers that the final product is either entirely Hermetic, or simply non-functional.

A single source can generally only provide a single Insight, although there may be rare exceptions. The same source provides the same Insight for any magus who studies it.

CREATING THE EFFECT

A particular Insight allows a researcher to create one specific effect. This effect might be a spell, or an effect enchanted into an item. It could, conceivably, be another laboratory project; anything that uses a Lab Total and creates something may be a legitimate Insight outgrowth. However, spells are by far

the most common, followed by item enchantments.

The researcher does not get to choose the effect for which he receives Insight, and as the level of the effect is fixed, the Insight might only be useful for creating an effect he cannot yet invent. For example, the effect might be level 40, while the researcher has a Lab Total of 32. In that case, the researcher would have to increase his Lab Total before he could work on the effect.

The troupe should decide on the effects that result from particular pieces of Insight, choosing ones that advance the saga without upsetting play balance. Player characters can vary things as much as they like once they fully integrate the system, so the restrictions at this stage should be accepted with good grace.

The researcher must invent exactly the effect inspired by the Insight. He may not vary the Range, Duration, or Target, or any other parameters. As the magus must experiment while inventing the effect, the result may be slightly different, as a result of rolls on the Extraordinary Results Table.

A spell is cast like a normal formulaic spell, and characters with Flexible Formulaic Magic may vary it at casting time in the normal way. The spell may also be mastered, again in the normal way.

The effect created may bend or break the limits of magic, as it incorporates non-Hermetic elements. Setting the level of the effect may require a judgment call by the troupe, as it may do something for which there is no Hermetic guideline.

If the effect is successfully created, the magus gains a number of breakthrough points equal to the magnitude of the effect. This applies even if the final effect is warped or has

Integration and Original Research

Houses of Hermes: True Lineages includes rules for original research, which allows magi to add features to Hermetic magic based purely on their own inspiration. Integrating ancient magic tends to be faster and safer, but it does have two disadvantages. First, the magus can only aim for the Breakthroughs suggested by the ancient magic in question. Second, he has to get out of his laboratory and find existing sources of Insight. From the storyguide's perspective, these may be advantages, of course.

The two sets of rules are similar, and both approaches may be taken to a single Breakthrough. That is, breakthrough points from integration may be added to breakthrough points from original research to determine whether a Breakthrough has been achieved.

a side effect. These points are added to the magus's running total, and he must find another source of Insight before repeating the procedure.

The effect produced in this way can be reproduced by other Hermetic magi. However, they can only do so if they have access to a Lab Text describing it, and it is not possible to vary the effect in any way; it must be reproduced exactly as it was initially created. Reproducing the effect in this way does not grant breakthrough points unless the reproducing magus also gains the relevant Insight, whether from investigating the same item or from reading the original investigator's Lab Texts. It is possible to reproduce the effect first, and study the insight Lab Texts later.

AFTER THE BREAKTHROUGH

Minor Breakthroughs are usable immediately in the game, and are understandable by all Hermetic magi. New Ranges or Durations may be incorporated into new spells or items, and the Lab Texts distributed for a spell may be used by another Hermetic magus without his needing to research the Breakthrough. Any magus who has created an effect using the Breakthrough can then use that Range of Duration freely in his other spells, and any magus trained by that magus, in either Arts or spells, may also do so.

Major and Hermetic Breakthroughs must be taught to Hermetic magi directly. An Ability may be taught in the usual way, either in person or through books. The discoverer converts his breakthrough points into experience points in the new Ability, so that a magus who accrued 50 breakthrough points to integrate an Ability would start with a score of 4.

A new Virtue may be Initiated according to the normal rules for Mysteries. The discoverer gains the Virtue when he completes the integration, and does not need to be Initiated. He does need to design an Initiation Script, following the rules in *The Mysteries Revised Edition.*

Inventing a Major or Hermetic Breakthrough that does not require teaching necessitates another Major Breakthrough, which may be achieved by these rules or the original research rules. If this succeeds, any magus may create an effect using the Breakthrough as long as he has a Lab Text, and then may use the Breakthrough freely. As for Minor Breakthroughs, the same applies to any magus taught Arts or spells by a magus who understands the Breakthrough.