

Sorcerously Advanced

a game of cutting-edge magic

Alpha Edition

Sixth Distribution, November 2018

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What is Sorcerously Advanced?

Sorcerously Advanced is a "hard fantasy" game of cutting-edge magic. It focuses on questions of power, justice, safety, and potential in the aftermath of a metaphysical singularity. In this world, sorcery is so ubiquitous, powerful, and well-developed that it has become the basis for the world's technology. Sorcerously Advanced is a speculative fiction game that doesn't revolve around rare, powerful mages and mighty warriors, but instead around the destiny of a world where *everyone* has magical power.

Player characters in Sorcerously Advanced are envoys and archaeologists for the Archive, an organization that seeks out historical records and magical inscriptions from ages long past. Because many of their sites are in war zones, strange otherworlds, and other dangerous surroundings, Archivists often recruit locals to help them complete their tasks. The Archive serves as an institution of learning for many civilizations, not all of whom are completely comfortable with their work.

This alpha version of Sorcerously Advanced is written as a supplement for Sufficiently Advanced Second Edition. Eventually it will be published as a stand-alone game, but for now it's easier to test out pieces of it by using SA2 as the core rules.

In this draft I'm going to call this game SsA, and the original SA (using SA1/SA2 when I need to refer to a specific edition).

What's intentionally missing from this draft?

- Advice for GMs and players.
- Some more detail on the civilizations and societies.
- Art and layout.
- A consistent authorial tone.
- Page references and consistent capitalization.

If you find something unintentionally missing...

Tell me about it. <http://suffadv.wikidot.com/forum:start>

Additions and changes are the point of an alpha build, so you should expect to see some major differences between this and the final publication. Feedback is welcome.

Changes from Distribution 5

Reduced Power/Import costs for characters with multiple Traditions.

Supernatural Natures now cap other Natures at 7 minus their own score instead of 6 minus.

Substantial changes to the Worldbuilders and the Unroyal. Minor changes to Glimmermere.

Additional applications for each key technology.

Minor fixes, wording updates & clarifications.

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The Singularity

In the Beginning

In the beginning was the Great God Aum.

Aum took of its hands and made a bowl, and this bowl is the world.

Aum took its eye and made the sun.

Aum took its heart and made the moon.

Aum's every wish becomes a star.

Aum gave life to its thoughts, and these were the Worlds Beyond and the gods who dwell there.

Aum gave life to its hopes and fears, and these are the people of the world.

Aum gave life to its dreams, and this was the Gift.

This is not metaphor. The world is a bowl, the "Great Basin", two million miles across. If you fly up high enough, where the atmosphere begins to thin and you can see forever, you will see a titanically large androgynous golden human with a single vacant eye-socket, a hole in its chest, and twenty-four arms, twenty-two of which are in constant motion and two of which carefully hold the entire world.



What was the Gift?

Before the Gift, only certain people from certain bloodlines could do magic. Afterward, everyone was capable of it. Most adults became quickly capable of magic that rivaled the most powerful wizards at the time. Intensive research has since surpassed that level.



In addition, free-willed individuals became impossible to dominate via mind control, possession, or the like, though they can still be influenced in various ways. As a part of this, all sorcerous bindings were broken, such as those controlling demons and spirits. This part of the Gift was given to all creatures, even the dead and the denizens of the Worlds Beyond.

The Gift was about 400 years ago. The Great Basin is roughly 4.32 billion years old.

How do Science and Magic Differ?

This is a world where magic has been developed and technologized. Besides differences in what can and can't be done, how is that different from a world with scientific technology?

- **Intent matters.** Science doesn't care why you're doing something; it'll work regardless. Magic cares. You can't take an earth-moving spell from Industry and easily turn it into a rolling wall of rocky death for War. The inner intent that says "I want to excavate a foundation to help construct this building" does not match the intent for "I want to crush my foes with a wave of earth." It takes substantial work to adapt spells from one Nature to another. You may even need to reconceptualize it and rebuild it from the ground up. Sometimes it can't be done at all.
- **Science is prosaic. Magic is poetic.** Science is only about the facts of the story. Magic is also about the embellishments. Magic works better when things "seem appropriate," with beginning, middle, and end. Dramatic irony and archetypes matter. Both science and magic can use formulae (e.g. alchemy, mystic geometry), and both have cause-and-effect chains (usually), but science never does something just because it makes for a good story.
- **Form matters as much as function.** Science is independent of representation. It might be easier for others to understand if you present your work in certain ways, but in the end, whether you show your data as a graph or a table of numbers, it means the same thing. Magic, on the other hand, is representation-dependent. If you translate your spell to a new language, it stops working. You need to rewrite it from the ground up. This is a major reason why the people of the Great Basin research ancient languages.
- **A sentient world.** A scientific universe can be dangerous, but not malicious. In a magical universe, places can have opinions and agency. Some parts are malicious, some benevolent. The vacuum of deep space is dangerous, but not because it's angry. The Elemental Plane of Fire is similar - it's not mad at you, it just burns everything equally. The Dream World of Khai'gholam, on the other hand, actively wants to kill you.
- **The User is Part of the System.** Part of technology's job is to be reliable. Magic is inherently unreliable. That's not because "anything could happen" or because the Basin's understanding of metaphysics is insufficient, but because the interactions between intent and effect, between aspect and intent, and between mana and magic are very complex. In order to be reliable, technology needs to be built on a solid understanding of those very complex interactions. Technology needs to control mana flows, to adjust aspects, and to control or focus the user's intent and state of mind.

Note that this is specifically for the world of Sorcerously Advanced. I'm not trying to say that these guidelines are the universal constants separating magic and science in all creative works, just in this game.

What is the Archive?

The Archive is the Basin's oldest continually-operational library. The society of librarians, archivists, philosophers, strategists, and researchers who operate and benefit from the Archive's operations are known as Archivists. There are about two thousand Archivists in all.



Physically, the Archive is a stone tower, a keep, and a walled village. They retain this antique appearance to reduce the chance that they will be spotted from a distance and attacked. All of this is on a large island in a relatively calm ocean, which the Archive shares with a handful of small villages and one medium-sized city named Binnera.

The core mission of the Archivists is:

1. To obtain knowledge from the ancient world, especially magical knowledge.
2. To translate that knowledge so that modern audiences can understand it.
3. To place that knowledge within each and every Universal Repository, so that it can be shared with every sentient being.

However, the Archive is not a single monolithic entity. It might present itself that way to outsiders, but inside the city walls there are countless arguments about all sorts of matters. These run the gamut from the proper interpretation of a particular ancient passage to whether it should be acceptable for the Archive to send missions into sovereign territory without permission. Most people agree on the core mission, but even then questions abound. What methods are acceptable when obtaining ancient knowledge? Should all knowledge be shared, or is some of it too dangerous? If so, who makes that decision? Do some civilizations deserve to keep certain knowledge for themselves if it helps them support their economy? The leaders of the Archive are often argumentative on these matters, and sometimes bitterly divided.

The Archive has a policy of neutrality in conflicts between civilizations and between societies. Because of that they are typically welcome in every civilization. Many people look at Archivists with suspicion, as they have a reputation as tomb-robbers, but no one suggests that the Archive's work has not benefited every civilization in the Great Basin and beyond. Only the Fellowship of Truth have regularly opposed the Archive and its work.

As Archivists, your characters will officially seek out knowledge, return it to the Archive, and disseminate it to the masses. Unofficially, you may also wind up negotiating digging rights, buying and selling information, helping to write a peace treaty, fighting off bandits, teaching people about magic, escaping from Returner cults, becoming embroiled in local politics, and discovering unexpected truths about the world and its creator. It's a busy job.

Character Creation

Follow this checklist to create your character. Each is explained below, but the equivalent pages in Sufficiently Advanced 2nd Edition are also listed next to each item for reference.

- ☐ Come up with a concept (SA2 page 12)
- ☐ Select a Civilization or create your own (SA2 page 13)
 - ☐ Select a name (see page xx)
- ☐ Select a Society or create your own (optional) (SA2 page 15)
- ☐ Select an Earthly Form (No equivalent in SA2. The closest is Neuroform on page 16, but this game currently focuses more on the body than the mind.)
- ☐ Select your Core Values (SA2 page 17)
- ☐ Select your Themes (SA2 page 20)
- ☐ Select your Tradition (No equivalent in SA2.)
- ☐ Select your Nature scores (Equivalent to Capabilities, SA2 page 23)
- ☐ Select your Expertise and Professions (SA2 page 30, 31)
- ☐ Calculate Power and Import (SA2 page 37)

Concept

You work with the Archive. You might be:

- An archaeologist, seeking out ancient ruins and interpreting the materials found therein.
- An envoy, talking with the local leadership to obtain access to new ruins and finds.
- A theoretician, trying to fit new discoveries into your theories about mana and magic.
- A scout, watching out for danger in the ruins and surrounding lands.
- A soldier or bodyguard, making sure that everyone makes it safely through the mission.
- A double agent, working for the Archive while reporting on them to another employer.
- A would-be tomb robber, looking to grab something important for yourself.
- A local expert, filling any of the roles above and more, with specialized knowledge of the area and perhaps an interest in joining the Archive full-time.

((Insert the usual "check with your GM and the other players" stuff here.))

Civilization

Civilizations bestow two Core Values, a mechanical benefit, and a choice of Traditions. You can choose one or more of the Traditions listed. Note the maximum Nature scores provided by each one. You should set your Nature scores separately for each Tradition you know. You can find more detail on each civilization starting on page xx, and more detail on Traditions on page xx.

The Archive recruits from all across the Basin, so you can feel free to select any of these civilizations or to invent your own. See page xx regarding inventing your own Traditions.

The Cult of the Empty Grave - Their ancestors were a death cult, living as ghosts and teaching the living. Eventually the Gift let them all cross the veil. Now they even give birth to ghostly children.

- Core Values: Respect your Traditions, Explore Yourself
- Benefit: Once/session, improve an Advantage that deals with the afterlife or eerie events
- Traditions:
 - The Practice (Language -> Necromancy, C5 I5 M5 S5 T3 W3)
 - The Rage (Belief -> Necromancy, C3 I5 M3 S5 T4 W5)

Diadem - Richest of the civilizations, showered in the gifts and traditions of other lands. Diadem's fashions and fads set trends for many across the Basin.

- Core Values: Embrace the Eclectic, Face Duty
- Benefit: Citizens improve an Advantage once/session that deals with wealth or connections. Non-citizens instead improve Advantages that let them avoid notice or punishment.
- Traditions:
 - Transubstantiation (Reagents -> Oneiromancy, C5 I3 M5 S5 T5 W3)
 - Drudgery (Discipline (body) -> Elementalism, C3 I5 M3 S5 T3 W5)

The Geometer's Guild - When the Gift was given, the ancient masters of holy geometry decided to share their wisdom rather than trying to hold their power - but knowledge can be leverage, and this civilization is still rigidly hierarchical and ruled by the most powerful.

- Core Values: Order Above All, Transcend Your Limits
- Benefit: Once/session, improve an Advantage that deals with logical deduction, mathematics, or geometry.
- Tradition (the Guild has only one):
 - Sacred Geometry (Geometry -> Alchemy, C4 I5 M5 S4 T4 W5)

Glimmermere - Representations carry power, and artistry enhances it. The citizens of Glimmermere step into dream worlds created by their own artwork, inspiring others to follow them.

- Core Values: Live your Truth, Carry the Thread.
- Benefit: Artist profession at 3 (with the usual 2 specializations), and competitive advantage in Artist.
- Traditions:
 - The Higher Talent (Artistry -> Oneiromancy, C5 I5 M5 S5 T4 W3)
 - The Mad Power (Wild Magic -> Arete, C5 I3 M3 S5 T5 W5)

The Golden Ægis - When they found out that the heaven they had been told of didn't exist, they decided to become gods and angels themselves.

- Core Values: Bring the Light, Answer the Call.
- Benefit: Once per session, reduce a Complication by one level by shunting part of the effects to a celestial patron.
- Traditions:
 - The Calling (Belief -> Invocation, C5 I5 M3 S5 T3 W5)
 - The Aura of Heaven (Patrons -> Arete, C4 I3 M5 S5 T4 W3)

The Hearth-Kin - Many people left the Basin during the Interregnum. The Hearth-Kin regretted their abandonment of the world, and returned to take responsibility for their actions and their potential.

- Core Values: Love your Family, Build a Just World.
- Benefit: Gain a Moderate Advantage once/session when finding allies in the Worlds Beyond.
- Traditions:
 - What Binds Us (Blood Magic -> Earthpower, C5 I5 M3 S3 T3 W5)
 - What Defines Us (Belief -> Arete, C3 I3 M5 S5 T5 W3)

Nova Commonwealth - The largest civilization in the Basin, subcultures of Nova continuously seek new ways to exist. Many cast-off "conservative" sects drew the line somewhere, while other "radical" sects crossed a line no one else would.

- Core Values: Cause No Harm, Do What Thou Wilt.
- Benefit: Receive an extra Twist each time their use of Themes is stymied in a session.
- Traditions: Each sect has one or more Traditions. They generally focus on Alchemy and Oneiromancy, and the more material Paths dominate as they are easier to experiment with. Use the rules for creating your own Tradition on page xx.

The Sovereigns of Hell - Their lands had been ravaged by demons for untold ages. When the Gift came, they invaded the demon realms and forced their denizens into servitude to provide magical power for every citizen.

- Core Values: Transgression, You Need Prove Nothing.
- Benefit: Reduce the teamwork bonuses that others receive against them in conflicts by one, including when facing opponents with Infrastructure.
- Traditions:
 - Devilpower (Patrons -> Invocation, C3 I5 M3 S3 T5 W5)

- The Sage's Path / The Coward's Path (Geometry -> Invocation, C3 I5 M5 S5 T3 W3)
- The Silent Path (Reagents -> Necromancy, C5 I3 M5 S5 T4 W3)

Those Above the Sky - They initially left the Basin to escape their enemies, retreating to fortresses that float above and near the Basin. Then they found the Attic Lines, and their position seemed rather like an advantage.

- Core Values: Seek Independence, Take Responsibility.
- Benefit: Competitive advantage in Industry
- Traditions:
 - The Starlit Way (Reagents -> Alchemy, C5 I3 M5 S3 T5 W5)
 - The Home-builder's Art (Geometry -> Elementalism, C3 I5 M5 S5 T3 W3)

The Unroyal - This civilization began as slaves to a magical family in a distant realm. When the Gift came, they used it to overthrow their captors. Now they're dedicated to preventing other people from being enslaved in the future.

- Core Values: Let None Rule You, Shine Brightly.
- Benefit: Once/session, improve an Advantage that deals with inspiration or freeing others. Also, one step faster at giving the Gift.
- Traditions:
 - The Key of Freedom (Wild Magic -> Earthpower, C5 I3 M3 S5 T3 W5)
 - The Key of Courage (Belief -> Elementalism, C3 I5 M5 S3 T5 W3)

The Worldbuilders - Recognizing the Basin as finite, the Worldbuilders seek to populate as much of it as they can, calling cities into being from the depths of time.

- Core Values: Be Relentless, Plan for the Future.
- Benefit: Once/session, improve an Advantage that deals with time-winding magic.
- Traditions:
 - **Parelthonia** (Artistry & Geometry -> Necromancy, C3 I5 M4 S5 T3 W5)
 - **Symmachis** (Patrons -> Elementalism, C5 I3 M5 S5 T5 W3)

There are also two catch-all groups:

The Unruly Lands - Some nations fell apart during the Interregnum and haven't found peace yet. These states war with one another or try to remain hidden in the hopes of surviving.

- This is a category rather than a single civilization.
- Core Values and Traditions vary from nation to nation. There are no unifying facets to the civilizations of the Unruly Lands. Some examples are given on page xx.
- Benefit: Competitive advantage in a Nature, typically.

Returner Cults - From the phrase "Returning the Gift." Some cultures intentionally reject magic, either by refusing to use it or by living in a Null Zone.

- This is a category rather than a single civilization.

- Benefit: Takes no penalty for using Professions in low-mana areas.
- Core Values: Magic is Harmful or something similar, and one other depending on the group.
- Traditions: none.

If you create your own Civilization, see page xx for creating a Tradition or two. Suitable civilization benefits include competitive advantage (SA2 page 48) in one or two Professions, a one-level shift in an Advantage or Complication under certain circumstances, or an extra Core Value. You should also come up with the naming conventions for that civilization. Examples are on page xx, with some additional guidelines on page xx.

Society

Societies require a particular Core Value, but offer an additional Tradition (optional) and a special benefit (standard). More details for societies start on page xx.

Archivist - Longtime or particularly committed members of the Archive (see page xx) should probably have this society. Not all their employees do. This society is not a requirement for any character.

- Core Value: Knowledge for the sake of _____ (fill in your own reason)
- Tradition: None. Archivists bring their own native Traditions to their role rather than passing on a common one.
- Benefit: Archivists have access to the Magical Archaeology profession, which covers both Linguistics and Historian.

Fire and Scale - Everyone's a dragon! Maybe some cats.

- Core Value: Hedonism
- Tradition: The Languid Art (Belief -> Elementalism, C4 I5 M5 S5 T5 W3)
- Benefit: Once/session, improve an Advantage that ties into their physical forms.

The Fellowship of Truth - Long ago, before the Gift, the Fellowship was created to collect and share incantations. Now they think it was better before. They're trying to undo the Gift.

- Core Value: The Old Ways
- Tradition: True Wizardry (Language -> Alchemy, C3 I5 M4 S4 T4 W5)
- Benefit: The Fellowship are trained in ancient languages, the better to decipher spells from olden times. They receive Scholar: Alchemy 3 for free.

Peacewalkers - An alliance of pacifists, each forsaking their War-Nature to build a more peaceful world.

- Core Value: Non-Violence.
- Tradition: The Peacewalkers do not teach a specific tradition.
- Special: All Peacewalkers live disconnected from the War-nature.
- Benefit: Once/session, deepen a Complication that moves people away from violence. Also, can use the conflict escalation rules in non-stressful situations.

Proteans - There was a time when no one trusted a shapeshifter. The Proteans banded together to have a place to be themselves without suspicion. Now it's more of an artistic society.

- Core Value: Freedom of Form
- Tradition: Proteans have no one specific magical tradition that binds them together. High Self scores are very common.
- Benefit: Proteans use shapeshifting for more than most people do. They have Competitive Advantage in the Self-Nature.

The Soulpack - The soul is sacred and eternal, but many people are trapped in awful afterlives or soul repositories. The Soulpack uses necromancy to rescue them.

- Core Value: Redemption
- Tradition: The Diamond of the Soul (Discipline (body) -> Necromancy, C4 I3 M5 S5 T5 W4)
- Benefit: Members of the Soulpack have, appropriately, a great deal of experience dealing with souls. They receive Theurge: Necromancy 3 for free.

If you create your own Society, their benefits are typically focused on the skills that a member of that society needs. They might offer a competitive advantage (SA page 48) in a particular Profession, an extra point of Reserve that can be used with a particular Profession, or a special Profession that only members of that Society can have. The special Profession should be broader than usual, covering the same ground as two standard Professions.

Earthly Form

Choose one and only one item from each row below. The left-most item (in bold) is the "default" that fits the majority of sentients.

Physical / Energy Being / Phased Out

Balanced / Aspected / Manavore

Single / Swarm

Born / Sprung Full-Grown / Constructed

Embodied / Possessing

If you choose something other than the default, either:

- A. It will give you a benefit as described below, or...
- B. When your body inconveniences you or prevents you from taking an action, you gain Twists as per the Bad Luck rule (see SA2 page 48).

Having all of your choices be the default is referred to as having a "conventional" earthly form. If you have just one facet that's different, you might be considered a "conventional swarm" or a "conventional energy being".

Physical beings have bodies made of matter, whether that's flesh and blood or a golem's clay. *Energy Beings* are made of fire, lightning, or some other sort of very active material. They can fly as fast as they could run, are immune to their own element, and can move quickly through appropriate carriers for that element, but cannot necessarily pass through walls. That's reserved for beings who are *Phased Out*. They can fly and move through physical materials. They're immune to purely physical attacks, but mental or energy attacks will still harm them. Ghosts and

spirits are the most common members of this category. If you're not sure where you belong - for instance, if you're made of vapor or starlight - you should just decide which category you're in and stick with it.

Most beings are *Balanced* with respect to mana aspects. They can use any sort of mana, though some (like death mana) present challenges to safe handling. *Aspected* beings generate and resonate with one specific aspect of mana (see page xx). This makes them more powerful in that area, and less so in others. *Manavores* are beings who do not generate their own mana at all, and must consume it to stay alive. If they have a number of willing friends who will donate their own, or if they live on a ley line, they're perfectly safe. Otherwise, they slowly starve, becoming more and more desperate for a meal.

Single beings have just one body, as opposed to *Swarms* who have more than one and are in full control of all of them. The more bodies you have, the less you can accomplish with each individual one, though Themes can help to mitigate this.

Most beings were *Born* as children and grew up to be adults. Some, however, *Sprang Full-Grown* from the minds of gods or from unusual conditions in the Basin (or elsewhere). Others were *Constructed*, built by someone for a particular purpose, from manual labor to companionship. Beings in the two later categories often have significant blind spots in their understanding of the world - they may look like adults, but they might be just a year or two old. The more severe the problem is, the more often you are likely to gain Twists for it.

Embodied beings have a soul that lives within a body (whether that body is physical, energy, or phased out). *Possessing* beings, on the other hand, are nothing but a soul. If they wish to interact with the world of matter and energy, they must share a body with a willing host or have a custom body constructed especially for them.

The Beta version will have notes for playing characters with human-like capabilities but very different baselines, such as merfolk, origami people, intelligent squid, living clockwork spiders, and stranger things that dwell in other parts of the Kaleidoscope.

Core Values

Select CVs exactly the way you would in SA2 (page 17).

Themes

Select three Themes, exactly the same as in SA2 (page 20). Later versions of this game will include new examples that are more magic-oriented, but expect that there will not be any new Themes added. As always, feel free to create your own descriptors.

Tradition

Simple magic can be done with intent alone. Skillful use of the Gift, however, is not just a matter of wanting magic to happen. Traditions are the mechanism by which magical effects are expertly created and shaped.

Traditions consist of three pieces:

- A **Path**, which describes the motions you go through (physical, mental, emotional) and the physical objects you need in order to invoke magic. Paths are described in more detail on page xx.
- A **Fount**, which describes the flavor of magical effects that you can create. Founts are described in more detail on page xx.
- A set of **maximum Nature** scores that indicate the strengths and weaknesses of this particular Tradition.

Paths, founts, natures, and professions are not well-separated ideas. You will find pieces of the Reagents path in the Alchemy fount, and pieces of the Mystery-nature in the Scholar profession. Don't expect them to be perfectly clean and distinct.

You can select Traditions from the list provided by your Civilization and/or Society. You can also invent one yourself. GM approval is technically required but can generally be assumed. Select one of the arrays from the list below and assign them as you see fit for the maximum Nature scores in your Tradition:

- 5/5/5/4/3/3
- 5/5/4/4/4/3

Remember that you select your Nature scores separately for each Tradition.

Most people know a single Tradition, but a sizeable minority learn more than one. If you have access to more than one path, increase your Power by one (which reduces your Import). If you have access to more than one fount, increase your Power by one for that as well. You can skip one of those if your secondary Traditions provide you with Nature scores that are all lower than your primary Tradition, and skip both if they're 2 points lower. For instance, someone with 5/5/4/4/4/3 from one Tradition who selects Nature scores of 3/3/2/2/2/1 in another Tradition has no path or fount surcharge.

Nature

Nature scores represent the degree to which your character harmonizes with universal facets of humanity. There are six of them: **Communion** (connection with other beings), **Industry** (building and working), **Mystery** (whether creating or solving them), **Self** (understanding one's self and one's soul), **Trickery** (fooling people and getting away with it), and **War** (striving to overpower others). Magical effects are sometimes called "Expressions" because they express a particular part of your Nature.

When you create your character, you choose any score you want from 1-5 in each Nature. A score of 1 represents an unenhanced human with little to no magical prowess. A score of 5 represents someone who is deeply technologically enhanced. The higher your Nature scores are, the less ability you will have to use Themes later on.

Remember to select a separate set of Nature scores for *each* Tradition. You would normally select values equal to or less than the maximum allowed by your Tradition. You *can* go above that, but you take a 1-point penalty to your Import the first time you do so.

At Nature 2, magic can be done (inefficiently, inaccurately, poorly) by naked intent and sheer force of will. It can be done better with a Tradition, but you don't *need* one. Above Nature 2, you need a Tradition. That doesn't mean that everyone needs a tutor to reach Nature 3. Instead, everyone who learns on their own builds their own Tradition as they go, focusing on what works for them.

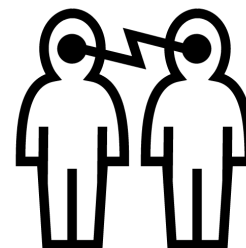
Everyone can reach Nature 3 without technological support. Nature scores of 4+ indicate some form of technological support built into the body, mind, and/or soul. When you read "People with Nature 4 or 5 can accomplish X", you should imagine that it always says "...with the proper support" afterward. Most magi carry the support they need with them, but this can be damaged or stripped from them by Complications.

All six Natures are described in detail below. Many of them refer to expressions and techniques that are described later on, in the Technology chapter. Unlike with paths, founts, and traditions, it will be very difficult to insert a new nature into the game.

Communion

Offer • Share • Heal

The Communion-Nature reaches for connection with other creatures, from animals to fellow intelligent beings to Aum itself. The stronger one's Communion score is, the deeper the connection. Communion also covers fast-learning and healing.



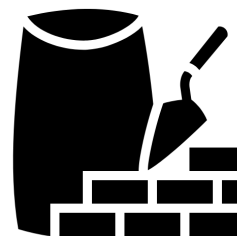
Communion is not about gathering information – that falls under Mystery. You might use Communion to get someone to open up to you, but it won't let you read their mind. The exception is with Core Values, which Communion makes obvious just as accurately as Mystery does. Communion is also not about bending people to your will. If you want to show someone a truth and urge them to act, that's Communion, but if you want to browbeat someone until they obey, that's War. Communion is about connecting with others. Higher levels do it more deeply, more quickly, and at greater distances.

1. Interactions can put social pressure on others through conversation or oratory, swaying opinions and reinforcing or undermining Core Values. Such methods are generally either shallow or slow-working.
2. Temporarily share your language with someone who wants to understand you. Instill emotions or send a few short words without speaking. Send subtle moods to allies at a distance. Speak with spirits in their own tongues. Fit in with other cultures without friction. Quickly heal Trivial Complications such as brief headaches and stubbed toes (see page xx for more on healing). Watch the dreams of nearby individuals.
3. Share your soul with another character to form a Rapport (see page xx). Read Core Values during Rapport or with a few minutes of interaction. Enter a Dream World connected to a nearby person. Release knowledge into a universal repository (see page xx), or read it from one. Fit into other cultures without being noticed. Quickly heal Minor Complications such as bruises, cuts, and abrasions. Speak to allies at a distance.
4. Enter Rapport with sworn allies at any distance. Share skills during Rapport that do not fade quickly. Multi-person Rapport. Enter a Dream World (see page xx) related to a particular concept or ideal. Fit in with those who look and act alien without friction. Quickly heal Moderate Complications like sprains, minor concussions, and the flu.
5. Single-handedly create a Rapport that links dozens. Sift through scores of books at once in the universal repositories. Be accepted as a member of a completely alien species. Quickly heal Major Complications like broken bones, severe concussions, or deadly diseases. Know whether someone is dreaming about you and join in that dream.

Industry

Build • Direct • Maintain

The focus of the Industry-Nature is creation and productivity. Whether you're calling a cliff up from the ground, raising a castle in a day, tilling a hundred fields at once, or speeding the flow of money through a kingdom, you're using Industry.



Industry normally builds, but it can also destroy. When attacking an individual or a nation, use War. When seeking to tear down a shrine or chop down a forest, Industry is just as valid. At least when it comes to direct harm, War harms the sentient; Industry harms the non-sentient.

1. You build and work at ordinary speeds. If you're trained right, you can do it well; if not, your investments are going to be mediocre and your stairs are going to be crooked.
2. Replicate or conjure (see page xx) small objects. Enhance existing materials' physical properties, like clarity or durability. Create automated servants. Clean and repair most small objects if the pieces are still present. Tap ley lines (see page xx) for magical power. Move small objects without touching them.
3. Quickly create person-sized objects. Access the Travel lattice (see page xx). "Hang" a spell so that it will go off under a particular condition, if you have the power for it at that time. Store low amounts of mana. Repair human-sized objects with the pieces available, or small objects with missing pieces. Lift a person without touching them. Create a mystic servitor (see page xx) who stays nearby.
4. Plow a dozen fields in one day, grow them to maturity on the next, and harvest them on the third. Fly, or otherwise cross ground and sky, at about a hundred miles per hour. Quickly create larger objects: living beings up to horse-sized, or objects as large as a one-story house. Store moderate amounts of mana. Repair human-sized objects with missing pieces. Lock local portions of the Travel grid. Lift a wagon without touching it. Create a mystic servitor who does a simple task for a day, or a small group who come with you.
5. Quickly create large animals and multi-story structures. Store large amounts of mana. Reassemble small houses demolished by tornado. Keep Travel portals open for long periods unattended. Redirect ley lines. Lift a house without touching it. Create a small horde of mystic servitors who obey your every command, or a handful that work on a task unsupervised for a week.

((Sidebar needed on mana storage: the objects you store in are typically expensive, fragile, or bulky, and the stored mana is aspected according to the storage. All of it depends on your Tradition.))

Mystery

Discover • Conceal • Analyze

The Mystery-Nature covers and uncovers. It moves the veil aside or draws it across the eyes of observers. Those well-versed in Mystery excel at extracting information from people and situations without revealing anything about themselves.



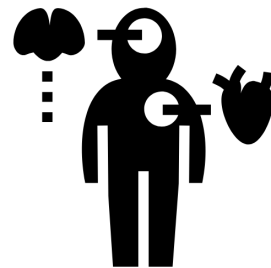
When concealing, Mystery passively deflects the eye and the attention. Trickery actively fools people.

1. Ordinary observational skill (and lack thereof). You're not great at riddles or logic unless you have training.
2. "Psychic flashes" when meeting someone or picking up something they just put down. Mental "tricks" for calculation or memory. Hide your visage. Allow a spirit to speak through your mouth. Muffle your footsteps and find shadows to hide in. Use mana analysis to witness the general flow of mana in the area, thus perceiving major recent magical effects.
3. Discern others' magical signatures, Traditions, strength of Natures, and all other game stats. Use psychometry (see page xx) to witness past events around an object or location, up to a week ago. Begin spirit-walking (see page xx) with a minute's ritual. Read strong aspects of mana. "Mansions of memory" that let you organize your thoughts and recall anything, given enough time. Feel when a door to the Travel lattice is about to open nearby.
4. Glimpses of the future. Hiding not just who you are, but what you are. Use psychometry to read aspects and signatures from a day ago, or other events from a month ago. Read ley lines (see page xx) to investigate the recent aspects of upstream towns and cities. Begin spirit-walking without a ritual, or using a minute's ritual in a place that would normally make it impossible for your Fount. Read even subtle aspects of mana. Perceive personal magical signatures left on ongoing effects. Feel when someone is moving toward your location in the Travel lattice. Near-instant perfect recall.
5. Hiding your past. Use psychometry to read aspects and signatures from a week ago, or other events from up to a year ago. Read the aspects imparted on mana by nations and cities upstream from a ley line and track influences to their source. Perceive personal magical signatures even after an effect has ended. Begin spirit-walking instantly in any surroundings.

Self

Protect • Change • Apprehend

The Self-Nature expresses itself in magic done for the sake of one's own being rather than for outside purposes. It is both defensive and definitional. It proclaims who and what you are, and then safeguards that statement. It protects one from direct attempts to kill or debilitate with sorcery, like death spells and petrification. The mid-levels extend this to grant immortality. Higher levels enable the alteration of the self, from shapeshifting to altering one's own beliefs. In addition, soul-work such as binding and exorcism fall under Self, though they might more properly be called "Other" than "Self."



The easiest things to change with Self are those things that you did not choose about yourself. The hardest things to change are those that you chose and reinforced through a lifetime of tiny decisions. If you choose to get a tattoo, for instance, the regeneration granted by Self will not wipe it away, and even shapeshifting will retain it in some form.

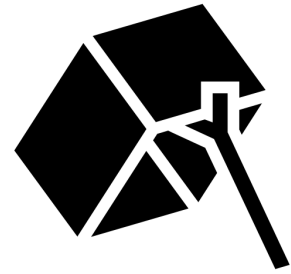
The regeneration granted by Self is identical to healing done with Communion, except that you can heal only your body, not your mind.

1. Minimal durability and immunity to magic. Resist your own instincts when you're rested.
2. Become that which you feel yourself to be. Alter your instincts. Shapeshift (see page xx) into a small range of forms that express your inner self and your Tradition. Fly at about thirty miles an hour. Ward off the most base and gross of assaults, like death magic. Shed curses and unwanted blessings. Pin shadows into place for soul-work.
3. Ignore day-to-day needs for indefinite periods of time. Sleep just a few hours a night. Bind souls (see page xx) to bodies, objects, and places. Trade in souls. Regenerate your body from grievous injury. Immortality (see page xx).
4. Remain yourself despite changes that are wrought on you. Shapeshift (see page xx) into a wider variety of more powerful forms. Steal souls. Invite a soul from the Worlds Beyond back to the Basin if you have a connection with them. Fly at hundreds of miles per hour. Sleep just an hour a night.
5. Alter your own core values at will. Sleep just twenty minutes a night. Detach your soul so that it can spirit-walk (including to the Worlds Beyond) while you rest in meditation. Send a departed soul to its next life. Live in a tiny part of your body while the rest appears to die, and regenerate yourself later from that fragment.

Trickery

Steal • Deceive • Escape

The Trickery-nature longs to get away with things. It is the part that says, "Let me do what I want and I'll just be on my way." Unlike Mystery, Trickery is no two-sided coin - it exists solely to mislead and acquire. Whether it deals with emotion, physical objects, or even mana itself, Trickery is happy to replace the real with the unreal, and even happier if someone else looks like a fool for it. Perhaps fortunately, Trickery does not help one avoid being fooled in return.



Trickery does not do well against magic that reads the soul, or that reads echoes left behind. In particular, psychometry cannot be fed false readings. You can disguise yourself when you act so that later psychometric readings may seem to show someone else, but you can't retroactively change what psychometry will show. Plan your heists in advance.

If you seek to conceal your Core Values, Nature, or other aspects of yourself, you must have a *higher* Trickery-nature than your observer's Mystery or Communion (as appropriate). This is not a conflict, just a simple comparison.

1. You're good at talking people into things. You can pull one over on the unaware and those who are willing to believe - which is more people than one might think.
2. The most expert of sleight-of-hand and long cons. Access the Red Space (see page xx). Slowly implant suggestions. Find loopholes in economies that will turn you a quick but small profit in a few hours. Look like someone specific of your species. Cast a single-sense illusion for a small object or minor sensation. Make mana of one aspect seem like mana of another.
3. Distract others without being noticed. Look like someone specific of a similar species. Falsify divinations that are done on you in person. Create two-sense illusions your own size, including duplicates that act like you. Play the Mana Shell Game (see page xx).
4. Attach a portion of the Red Space to oneself. Lock or unlock memories. Look like anyone at all. Create a new persona with its own Core Values that you can temporarily assume while you subsume your own. Create five-sense illusions of dozens of people or a large ship. Blur your mystical signature so that there is doubt as to whether it is yours.
5. Tell a story that traps the listener in a tiny Dream World. Cast an illusion as wide as the world on a hundred creatures before you, or weave one the size of a town that all can see. Create fake pieces of your soul to sell or trade that evaporate when left unwatched.

War

Harm • Defend • Dominate

The War-Nature encompasses all forms of violence, as well as many forms of physical or aggressive competition. Soldiers use War to gild their spears with lightning, move with unexpected speed, and defend their allies with wards. Generals use War to divine strategies for their armies and throw their enemies into disarray.



Before the Gift, knowledgeable magi referred to a Nature they called "Dominion." This included not just the current War-Nature, but also techniques for mind control, summoning, and binding. After the Gift, the term "Dominion" became inaccurate, and "War" became the common term. Only the oldest of magi, still stuck in their ways from an eon long past, continue to use the term.

1. A typical human skill in war and capacity for violence. Building spears for offense and walls for defense. Make guesses as to an opponent's strategy.
2. Enhance short-range attacks with magical force (e.g. flaming swords). Frighten and demoralize. Move fast, strike hard, turn blows. Ward (see page xx) nearby areas from the approach of outsiders.
3. Hurl magical assaults that express your personal signature (see page xx). Strike short-range through physical barriers. Enhance long-range attacks with magic (e.g. lightning arrows). Trigger instinctual reactions like fight-or-flight. Ward areas from magical assault. Create a mystic defender (see page xx) who stays nearby.
4. Long-range magical assaults that pass through normal materials or damage whole buildings. Ward areas from natural phenomena. Create a mystic defender who stands guard for a month, or a small group who come with you. Force others into Rapport (see page xx).
5. Ward even air, gravity, or mana from an area. Create an army of mystic defenders who come with you, or a squad that guards an area for a month. Devastate an area the size of a city block with magical energy.

Disconnection

Some people decide to "disconnect" from part of their Nature, abandoning that part of themselves. This drastic step is typically taken in reaction to trauma or fear. Disconnecting prevents people from harming you, but also severely limits the actions that you can take.

The effects of disconnection require GM interpretation. Disconnection is not a purely mechanical action, it is also a curse, and attempts to weasel around its restrictions end in anguish and despair. Use the descriptions below as starting points and guidelines.

- **Communion:** You cannot communicate with others in any way that allows you to get your point across. No one has any idea what you want, what you need, or what you're thinking - unless you attempt to mislead them, in which case they immediately see through your flimsy deceptions. You are incapable of art. In return, no one can change your mind in any way. Your emotions and intellect are barred to outside influence of any kind. So long as you do not try to lie, no one can determine what your motivations are.
- **Industry:** You cannot create, build, craft, or design in any way. You can undertake artistic endeavors, but not practical ones, and your attempts to beautify the works of others introduces disastrous flaws. You lose things easily. In return, you need nothing from your surroundings. You always find shelter, food, and water. If you need to cross an ocean, you can walk across the waves. You cannot provide for others, but your own needs are always met. Aum is not generous when considering your needs.
- **Mystery:** You cannot learn or remember coherent information. You eat when hungry, sleep when tired, and do not ask questions or exercise your will. You almost certainly become a hermit or a beggar. In return, no one can find you or learn about you. Your enemies will only find you if they literally stumble across you, and even then they may not realize who you are until you have already disappeared. You are much more likely to accidentally fall between worlds, and no one will hire you.
- **Self:** You feel that you are not real, and thus may have no true value or meaning. Your thoughts and feelings seem detached from you, and you find this very disturbing. In addition, these detached thought processes are often not aware of each other. For example, you might take actions based on one Core Value that you would normally avoid because it conflicts with another, and then simply ignore that you ever did so. When you are in this state all the pieces of your soul, no matter where they are, fold in on themselves and become inert. You can still use the Gift (except for expressions of Self), but others who have obtained pieces of your soul cannot use them in any way.

- **Trickery:** You cannot tell a lie. You become honest to a fault, but also tactless and crude, blurting out secrets that you would rather keep. You may even find yourself bringing up things you've done in the past - likely quite incriminating for a master of Trickery. When you are in this state, you see through illusions and dishonesty as if they were a child's scribbles. Any Trickery done in your immediate presence is powerless against you.
- **War:** You cannot intentionally harm others. You cannot cause violence, encourage people to violence, threaten and yell, or even make or interpret tactical plans. If you lift a heavy object, perhaps with Industry, you simply cannot drop it on someone. In return, no creature living or dead can harm you. Arrows turn before striking your body. Attempts to drain your power or set a curse on you abruptly fail. A net might catch you, but if it were weighted or painful, it might phase through you instead. Portals to the elemental plane of fire will refuse to admit you. War is probably the most common Nature from which people disconnect.

When determining your Power score, do not count a disconnected Nature as having a numerical value. Instead, reduce your Import by 1 while you are disconnected from any number of Natures. You cannot do any magic or engage in any rituals related to your disconnected Nature.

Reconnecting

To reconnect with your Nature, take the following steps:

1. Seek help. You must find someone you know to help you, or you must befriend someone over the course of a month or more.
2. Your helper must understand your state.
3. Your helper must give you or lead you to a physical object that is a token of your Fount, which you must carry or protect for at least a week. Examples include an enchanted crystal for Elementalism, a statue of a saint for Invocation, or a clock tower for Alchemy.
4. At the end of the week, if you wish to return to yourself, you reconnect with all of your Natures.

Someone can also restore you to wholeness by Enchanting you as if you had lost the Gift, but that process is typically slower. Regardless of the method, you must still be willing to reconnect.

Supernatural Natures

Inherently supernatural beings, such as dragons, ki-rin, mokele-mbembe, or adamantine automata, did not receive a full portion of the Gift. If you'd like to play one of these, you will create and rank a custom Nature, like Nature: Dragon 4 or Nature: Thunderbird 5. It should have about the same number of different expressions as any other Nature, but you are allowed to pick and choose thematically appropriate abilities from all the other Natures. Common

examples include flight, shapeshifting, armored skin, endless stamina, fiery breath, a hypnotic stare, not needing to breathe, or immortality.

This seventh Nature can rise as high as 5. It does *not* require mana to operate. Even in the Null Zones you will retain access to it. However, your other Natures are limited to (seven minus your Supernatural Nature), and count your Supernatural Nature as two Nature scores for the purpose of determining Power.

Expertise and Professions

The types of Expertise available in SsA are very similar to those in SA2. Some of the terminology has changed, so please read the options below carefully.

Mundane Expertise Options

- **Apprentice** - as per Amateur in SA2.
- **Journeyman** - as per Professional in SA2. This is the default option.
- **Sage** - as per Master in SA2.

A single level-2 Locality profession still comes standard for all characters.

Mystical Expertise Options

- **Polymath** - as per Omnicompetence in SA2. The requirements for Polymath are different; specific Founts grant access to Polymath with particular Natures rated 3+. Invocation and Necromancy open up access to Polymath with Mystery 3+. Arete, Necromancy, and Oneiromancy open up access to Polymath with Communion 3+.
- **Virtuoso** - as per Adept in SA2. Choose a particular Fount to focus in rather than a technology or Nature. You receive Scholar and Theurge for that Fount, plus the usual three related Professions, all at 3.
- **Satori** - Remains unchanged from SA2.

Profession List

- Adapt the listed appropriate Capability into an appropriate Nature as you see fit.
- Remove Spacer and Programmer.
- Add **Linguist** and **Historian**.
- Add **Medium**, which specializes in dealing with spirits and acting as a conduit to their power. Specialized tasks include calling to and speaking with nearby spirits, and opening oneself to possession without suffering emotional influence from the possessing spirit.
- Rename the following professions:
 - Police becomes **Magistrate**. This is a slight change in that you're assumed to be explicitly working between those with Law and those with Soldier, and you carry more legal authority.
 - Researcher becomes **Scholar**. Choose a Fount to specialize in.
 - Engineer becomes **Theurge**. Choose a Fount to specialize in.
 - Crisis Control becomes **Samaritan**.
 - Medical becomes **Healer**.

Chronotech Notes

If you have Chronotech and would like to pull in some Professions from that book, use the following replacements:

- **Kismet** stays the same.
- Synthesist becomes **Oracle**.
- Analyst becomes **Augur**. Augurs predict the future though they don't always know how it's going to happen. Oracles say what's going to be important though they don't necessarily know how.

Power and Import

For each Tradition...

- Find the average of your top two Nature scores. Round up.
- Subtract one point.
- This is your **Base Power** for that Tradition.

If you have one Tradition where every Nature is at least 1 point higher than the corresponding Nature in every other Tradition you have, then you have a **Primary Tradition**.

Calculate Power as follows:

- Use your highest Base Power as your Power score.
- If you have access to two or more Paths *and* access to two or more Founts, add one point.
 - If just one of those applies, see Import below.
 - If you have a Primary Tradition, skip this step.
- Add one point each for Polymath, Virtuoso, and/or Satori level Expertise.
- If you have Infrastructure, add one point. (Characters with Infrastructure are not covered in detail in this build of the game, but if you really want to play one you should be able to hack it with the rules from SA2.)
- You should end up with a number between 0 and 9.

Your Reserve is equal to your Power, with a minimum of 1.

Calculate Import as follows:

- Subtract your Power from 12.
- Subtract one point for Sage-level Expertise, or add one for Apprentice-level Expertise.
- Subtract at most one point if any of your Nature scores exceed your Tradition maximums.
- If you have access to two or more Paths *or* access to two or more Founts *but not both*, subtract one point.
 - For both, see also Power above.
 - If you have a Primary Tradition, skip this step.
- You should end up with a number between 0 and 12.

The number of Twists you start with each session is equal to your Import, with a minimum of 3.

Naming Conventions

((Eventually this will either get a spread-sized "sidebar" or will get folded into the individual civ descriptions. For right now we'll keep it all in one place.))

Names in the Basin (and other universes) are best represented by descriptive terms. Communion is a wise enough Nature to keep names as a set of strange syllables while it translates from another language, but Mystery will not let you forget what the name truly means.

Cult of the Empty Grave - Two words, separated by a space. Close friends might shorten them to one of the two words.

- History and time. Spun Hours, Proud Litany, Wise Tradition
- Compassion and charity. Kind Word, Surgeon's Heart, Warm Hand
- Beauty, often with light or darkness. Glorious Brightness, Shadow's Smile, Onyx Grace.
- Names are sometimes chosen later in life as people discover facets of themselves. Someone born as Bright Eye might later take the name Flowering Compassion.

Diadem - Diadem names can be made using any of the other conventions listed here, or any other convention at all (on the assumption that somewhere there is an Unruly Land that names their children thus). Name changes are regular but infrequent, perhaps every twenty to thirty years.

- Gentlemen residents typically take names involving money, allies, or worldly power.
- Ladies more often take names about strength, intelligence, and concrete innate attributes.
- Non-binary peers most often take on names about ephemeral attributes, like grace, luck, or fate.

Geometer's Guild - Names are habit-nouns of a word or two, but are given "of" a location. When they introduce themselves to those from more distant locales, the "of" becomes more specific. (e.g. "... of Seventh Street of the City of Flowers of the Fifth Guild.")

- Men typically have names of obedience, propriety, wisdom, or hierarchy. Prudence of High Canal. Ascendency of the First City. Duty of Eighteenth Boulevard. Justice of Blue Hamlet Eight.
- Women typically have names involving becoming, movement, building, or change. Revision of the Yellow House. Arrival of Mirth Cavern. Ascension of Broken Circle. Commencement of Club Avenue.
- Names in the Guild rarely change unless someone lives in a new place for over a decade. If someone does decide that they'd rather be called by another name, it rarely sticks. Most people would rather appreciate an ironic name than have to learn a new one.

Glimmermere - Flowery descriptions, shortened in conversational use.

- Colors and shapes with emotions. Bold Burgundy Arc of Completion (Arc). Excitement's Bright Green Spire (Spire). Building the Nonsense Notion of Blue (Blue).
- References to their present form. Unreasonable Beauty of the Umber Eyes (Beauty). Last Gleam of the Cerulean Skin (Gleam). Long-legs the Stilt Walker (Legs).
- Names change with forms in Glimmermere. Someone who makes a long-term shift from a human shape to a draconic shape would likely take on a new name, regardless of whether it's a reference to their form or not.

Golden Ægis - Most Shieldbearer names begin with a positive adjective, and then a fairly specific anatomical pose or reference. The pose is the short version. Some are different; see below.

- Terms of humility, respect, and duty. Radiant Bowed Head. Irrefutable Open Heart. Dedicated Hand-On-Brow.
- Terms of righteous action. Cheerful Giving Hand. Honorable Foot Forward. Meritorious Stretched Wing.
- Descriptions of their unusual forms or abilities. This is especially common amongst the gods of the Ægis, and these names are generally not shortened even in casual conversation. The All-Blue Eye. Seventeen Wings of Destiny. Burns-With-Truth. The Inversion of Despair.
- For those Shieldbearers who are not sprung full-grown, childhood names start with just the body part (Wing, Hand, Heart, etc.) and are expanded at a coming-of-age. A Shieldbearer who changes their name should expect to have many kind and curious kin asking about their new outlook on life. It's friendly and well-intentioned but can be a little exhausting after the tenth or eleventh time.

Hearth-kin - A family name followed by a personal name.

- Family names refer to places of origin in the Worlds Beyond, or to hometrees. Most of these refer to physical properties. Deepchasm. Foldsea. Skyrealm. Goldenleaf. Squirrelhome.
- Some personal names are an emotion or a habit. Stubbornness. Serenity. Affection. Elation.
- Other personal names come from an events when one was born. Thunderstorm. Sun-day. Eclipse. Arrival.
- Because most Hearth-kin change sex frequently, there are no general differences between niha, bachav, and ranan names. Personal names are often passed down from grandparents or great-great-grandparents, so name changes are rare unless one's ancestor has somehow disgraced themselves.

Nova - "Verb(er) of Noun(s)", or occasionally Noun-Verb(er). Different sects can sometimes be distinguished by a particular pattern, such as an added adjective or all of their nouns being from a particular class (like emotions or reagents).

- Action verbs. Traveler of Horizons. Collector of Truths. Seeker of Novelty. Breaker of Traditions. Oath-taker.
- Thought verbs. Watcher of Clouds. Solver of Puzzles. Judger of Wishes. Song-writer.
- Most Commonwealth citizens change their name when it becomes clear that the old one is inappropriate. Sometimes it's hard for individuals to see when they've changed, and their friends have to throw them a new-name party.

Sovereigns - Nouns with farcical noble titles appended. Remember that most Sovereigns take great care to hide their genders, so titles should be kept as gender-neutral as possible.

- Gruesome or dangerous things. Marrow, the Seven Stars Autocrat. Broken Bone, First Among Firsts of the Blood Moon. Consumption, Tsar of the Thousand Topaz Demons. Razor, Consul to the Ice Fiend.
- Harmless things. Marigold, Khan of Shudder Chasm. Butterfly, Pharaoh of the Unwanted Dead. Fern, Minister of the Underlands. Puppy, Monarch of the Dozen Dooms.
- It's not uncommon for someone to take a new title. It's also not uncommon for two people to have similar or identical titles (there's no central registry of them), and Sovereigns will laughingly engage in mock battle to determine who gets to be "the real Obsidian Judge of Stardock". Sometimes names change afterwards, sometimes not.

Those Above - Two to four nouns in succession, hyphenated.

- Nouns of prosperity. Coin. Wealth. Home. Owner.
- Nouns of the sky or space. Sky. Star. Void.
- Nouns of power or magic. Mana. Leyline. Spell. Caster.
- Nouns of authority, ambition, or power. King. Queen. Coup. Need. Seeker.
- Combined, these produce names like Star-Coin, Void-Mana-Prince or Cloud-Need.
- Children have no names. When adults speak to children, they say "come here, child" or "eldest, take this downstairs" or "sleep well, little one." Children are so rare amongst Those Above that few households have more than two children at a time, and most couples go decades between births. Children choose a name with their parents' help around age fifteen, but are not completely considered adults until age twenty-five.

Unroyal - (Word), who (deed)

- Words of freedom. Release. Liberty. Deliverance. Independence.
- Words of happiness. Joy. Delight. Thrill. Bliss.
- Words of discovery. Truth. Invention. Seeker. Verity.
- Deeds are typically short and to the point. ...who pierced the mists. ...who found the Iron Flame. ...who built the Grand Tower. ...who journeyed ever starward.
- Names typically change only when a deed is great enough, or when an old deed becomes irrelevant. Unroyals rarely change their own names; instead, others start referring to them in a new way.

Worldbuilders - The (word) that (description of action). Often shortened to just the initial word, or even just its first syllable.

- The words for men typically revolve around building, artistry, death, or the past.
- The words for women typically revolve around scribing, discovery, nature, or the future.
- Actions are typically related to people's jobs, but many are poetic and evocative. There's often a bit of a riddle or joke as to how exactly it describes their work.
- A few examples: The Hunter who Finds the Truth (Hunt). The Circle that Draws Itself (Circ). The Ghost that Wakes the Land (Ghost). The Tower that Rises Again (Tow).
- People who change jobs often change their entire name rather than just part of it. One's employment is a part of one's identity amongst the Worldbuilders.

When making names for Unruly Lands or Returner cults, or when creating your own civilization, you'll need to come up with a new convention. You don't need a lot of detail, but it will help to make something unique. Remember to draw the words in their names from what that culture values, or what they valued in the past.

Sample Characters

Giftbringer, of the Haven of Irriata

Irriata is a seaside land in a deep null zone, and Giftbringer was a surgeon there. When their ship was wrecked on a dangerous journey to the outside world, Giftbringer was saved by the Geometers, and they began to realize how much larger the world really was.

Civilization: Returner Cult

Society: Hospitalers

Earthly Form: Conventional

Core Values: Magic is Dangerous 1, Hold to One Another 3, Charity 4, (blank slot), Self-Preservation 4

Themes: *Action:* Battlefield Surgeon, *Intrigue:* Caught up in webs, *Wonder:* New eyes on the world

Tradition: None

Comm 1, Ind 1, Myst 1, Self 1, Trick 1, War 1

Expertise: Journeyman

Professions: Healer 3, Outdoorsman 2, Historian 1, Locality (Irriata) 2

Power: 0 / **Import:** 12

Sower of Wishes

Sower escaped from The Mists about a year ago - or, at least, some part of her did. She has been seeking someone who's willing to help her lift the curse from her homelands.

Civilization: Unruly Lands (The Mists)

Society: None

Earthly Form: Conventional, Aspected (shadow)

Core Values: Watch Your Back 3, Hope is an Anchor 1, None Deserve to Suffer 4, (blank slot), Self-Preservation 4

Themes: *Action:* Untouchable shadow, *Magnetism:* Follow me to glory, *Wonder:* Everyday world

Tradition:

The Foul Art (Blood Magic -> Necromancy)

Comm 4, Ind 3, Myst 5, Self 5, Trick 5, War 3

Expertise: Sage

Professions: Explorer 3, Theurge (Necromancy) 3, Teacher 2, Criminal 2, Locality (the Mists) 2

Power: 4 / **Import:** 7

Rank-order of Central Circle

Rank-order is an Archivist's Archivist, a real champion of the cause. He's stuffy and punctilious, but also very protective of new members of the Archive. He's been around long enough that he's got a number of ex-Archive connections around the world in high places.

Civilization: Geometer's Guild

Society: Archivist

Earthly Form: Conventional

Core Values: Knowledge for the sake of knowledge 4, Order Above All 2, Transcend Your Limits 3, (blank slot), Self-Preservation 4

Themes: *Comprehension:* Ancient secrets, *Intrigue:* Deep connections, *Terror:* Creeping realizations

Tradition:

Sacred Geometry (Geometry -> Alchemy)

Comm 3, Ind 3, Myst 5, Self 3, Trick 3, War 3

Expertise: Journeyman

Professions: Magical Archaeology 3, Scholar (Alchemy) 2, Samaritan 1, Locality (Geometer's Guild) 2

Power: 3 / Import: 9

Unfearing, who Fell to Fly

Unfearing is famous for mapping new paths in the Travel Lattice. She's convinced that there are ancient colonies from the Basin beyond its edge, and wants to find them for the sake of those who might be trapped there - and for the sake of sheer discovery.

Civilization: Unroyal

Society: Explorers

Earthly Form: Conventional

Core Values: Let None Rule You 2, Shine Brightly 3, Exploration 5, (blank slot), Self-Preservation 4

Themes: *Comprehension:* Networks, *Romance:* Unexpected Places, *Wonder:* New Vistas

Tradition:

The Key of Freedom (Wild Magic -> Earthpower)

Comm 4, Ind 3, Myst 3, Self 4, Trick 3, War 4

Expertise: Professional, Virtuoso (Earthpower)

Professions: Explorer 3, Theurge (Earthpower) 3, Scholar (Earthpower) 3, Medium 3, Healer 3, Outdoorsman 3, Religious 2, Crisis Control 1, Locality (Unroyal) 2

Power: 4 / Import: 8

Prismatic Wash of Joy in Saffron

Wash was a painting brought to life. They seek to engender more creations like themselves, hoping that humanity will create a new race of joyous creatures in the universe.

Civilization: Glimmermere

Society: None

Earthly Form: Energy Being (light), Aspected (art), Single, Sprung Full-Grown, Embodied

Core Values: Live your Truth 5, Carry the Thread 2, , (blank slot), Self-Preservation 4

Themes: *Empathy:* Find your joy, *Magnetism:* Be the Muse, *Romance:* Opposites attract

Traditions:

The Higher Talent (Artistry -> Oneiromancy)

Comm 5, Ind 3, Myst 5, Self 5, Trick 3, War 3

The Mad Power (Wild Magic -> Arete)

Comm 4, Ind 2, Myst 3, Self 4, Trick 2, War 2

Expertise: Journeyman

Professions: Religious 3, Scholar (Oneiromancy) 2, Media 1, Locality (Glimmermere) 2

Power: 4 / **Import:** 8

The All-Blue Eye

Sometimes one of the Ægis' gods leave their heaven. The All-Blue Eye came to the Basin to refine its understanding of the people there and their needs. It is a ghostly, lidded blue eye with no white, about the size of an elephant.

Special note: The All-Blue Eye is rated at Infrastructure I.

Civilization: The Golden Ægis

Society: None

Earthly Form: Conventional, phased out

Core Values: Bring the Light 4, Answer the Call 4, Build with Style 2, (blank slot), Self-Preservation 4

Themes: *Comprehension:* Metaphysics, *Empathy:* Hidden emotions, *Magnetism:* Famous patron

Tradition:

The Calling (Belief -> Invocation). Tied to *Bring the Light*.

Comm 5, Ind 5, Myst 5, Self 5, Trick 5, War 5

Expertise: Journeyman, Polymath

Professions: Samaritan 3, all other professions 2.

Power: 5 / **Import:** 6

Marker of Fire

Marker is a fire elemental that can take on a variety of forms, sometimes several at once. She is originally from one of the Worlds Beyond, an elemental plane, and joined Nova after she found their intrepid explorers near her home.

Civilization: Nova Commonwealth

Society: None

Earthly Form: Energy Being (fire), Aspected (fire), Swarm, Born, Embodied

Core Values: Cause No Harm 4, Do What Thou Wilt 2, Teamwork Makes the Dream Work 3, (blank slot), Self-Preservation 4

Themes: *Action:* Fire elemental, *Empathy:* I've been there too, *Magnetism:* Dangerous situations

Traditions:

The Flow of Forms (Patrons -> Elementalism)

Comm 3, Ind 5, Myst 3, Self 5, Trick 3, War 5

The Dream Incandescent (Wild Magic -> Oneiromancy)

Comm 5, Ind 3, Myst 5, Self 5, Trick 5, War 3

Expertise: Journeyman, Virtuoso (Elementalism)

Professions: Scholar (Elem.) 3, Theurge (Elem.) 3, Samaritan 3, Explorer 3, Athlete 3, Artist 3, Magistrate 2, Legal 1, Locality (Nova) 2

Power: 6 / Import: 6

Songbird, the Tzar of Jagged Glass

Songbird is a Sovereign born long after their takeover of Hell. She'd like to know why they're not doing more for the souls they find there, and she'd like to know right now.

Civilization: Sovereigns of Hell

Society: Soulpack

Earthly Form: Conventional

Core Values: Transgression 3, You Need Prove Nothing 4, Redemption 3, (blank slot), Self-Preservation 4

Themes: *Empathy:* Stories of the dead, *Intrigue:* Spymaster of the redeemed, *Terror:* Minions from hell

Traditions:

The Diamond of the Soul (Discipline (body) -> Necromancy, C4 I3 M5 S5 T5 W4)

Comm 4, Ind 3, Myst 5, Self 5, Trick 5, War 4

Devilpower (Patrons -> Invocation), C3 I5 M3 S3 T5 W5)

Comm 3, Ind 5, Myst 3, Self 3, Trick 5, War 5

Expertise: Journeyman, Polymath

Professions: Spy 3, Theurge (Necromancy) 3, all other professions at 2

Power: 6 / Import: 6

Game Play

When it comes to game mechanics, you can treat this book as a supplement to SA2. The following rules can be used unchanged: Complications (SA2 page 44), Advantages (SA2 page 44), Basic Actions (SA2 page 46), Conflict (SA2 page 51), Themes (SA2 page 67), Twists (SA2 page 67), Plots (SA2 page 82), Infrastructure (SA2 page 86), and Existentialism (SA2 page 85).

So far only one rule is changed: the revised version of the Bad Luck Rule is listed below.

Projects (SA2 page 63) use the same rules as before, but they're called **Rituals** in this game.

Infrastructure will need some expansion in the Beta build to cover large-scale Natures, but it works in basically the same way.

See below for more details on magic and how it works in this setting, including Paths and Founts.

Rules Alterations

The Bad Luck rule (SA2 page 48) is split into two pieces:

- If the GM keeps a character from doing something *despite* their technology, they get a reduced number of Twists for that. Complication refunds are reduced by Power score as they are with Tech score in SA2. Their tech *mitigates* the effects in this situation. This is still named the **Bad Luck Rule**.
- If the GM keeps a character from doing something *because of* their technology, such as because of magical side-effects (see page xx), they get the full Twist refund for that regardless of their Power score. Their tech *exacerbates* things - it's the technology itself that is causing problems, and they can't use high Nature scores to get out of this bind. This is called the **Worst Enemy Rule**, from the phrase, "You are your own worst enemy."

Placeholders for rules additions

- Harder-to-heal wounds via War
-

Magic Primer

There are exceptions to every rule.

Terminology

- *Mystical* is a generalized adjective for things that have to do with magic.
- *Mana* is the stuff you use to create mystical effects - part intangible fluid and part energy carrier.
- *Magic* is the act of accomplishing things using intent and mana. When you use magic, you might call an angel from the Worlds Beyond, throw a lightning bolt, or enter Rapport with your allies. You take actions.
- *Paths* are how you make magic happen, *Founts* are the kind of magic you do, and your *Nature* determines what you can accomplish with that magic.
- Each act of magic is an *Expression* of a Nature, also called a *Spell*.
- *Metaphysics* is the set of principles on which mana operates. When you use metaphysics, you might observe the Founts, learn how mana flows and reacts, or experiment with strongly aspected mana and various complex intents. You study.
- *Theurgy* is the art of constructing sophisticated, reliable generators of expressions from metaphysical principles. Think of it as mystical engineering.
- *Technology* is the tangible, sustained result of theurgy - the devices or procedures that create magical expressions.

Mana and its Aspects

Mana is a constantly self-renewing resource that is the raw, unshaped potential to act. It is the basis of all existence, both natural and supernatural.

Mana rains down (some would say "wells up") invisibly into the Basin at all times from eternal and untouchable fountains that exist beyond all worlds. It flows into the world through all people, all things, and all thoughts. There are places where Mana pools, streams through which it flows, and places that are nearly devoid of it (null zones) as a desert is devoid of water. Streams of mana join to become rivers (ley lines), which carry it toward the edge of the Basin and into the endless void.

Mana is given character and aspect by the ways in which it enters the world. Mana that enters the world in a cemetery obtains the aspect of death. Mana that flows through a bonfire becomes fire-aspected. There are as many aspects as there are adjectives in all the languages of the Basin.

For weak magic, as in a sloppy sentence, a "close enough" aspect is good enough. To construct powerful expressions, the aspect of the mana must be just right. ((Sidebar: a long list of sample aspects))

Objects and people have aspects as well, which adhere to the mana that wells up through them. Some of these aspects are *inherent*, based on their composition, like a stone's elemental aspect or a feather's lightness. Other aspects are *imbued*, attached by use. A staff used for walking will have the aspect of travel; one used for fighting will have aspects suitable for war. Imbued aspects are generally more valuable in spellcasting, though there are exceptions.

Imbalance is dangerous. Too much mana of one aspect flowing through a part of the Basin will change it to fit, and that part will generate more heavily aspected mana. You can see more about this kind of magical pollution on page xx. Individuals who use too much of one kind of mana may become aspected themselves, and find their personalities or their bodies drifting in that direction.

((Include sidebar on "foraging" aspected mana from nearby sources, like growth from plants and solidity from rocks and concern from your friends))

Measuring Mana

We use a narrative scale to roughly describe the amount of mana a particular act requires. The scale is: Tremendous, Large, Moderate, Low, Minimal, None. In a typical area there's a large amount of mana available to everyone, and it replenishes very quickly - even if someone constantly uses moderate amounts there's enough to go around. Obtaining tremendous (or larger) amounts of mana is typically done at ley lines.

Storing Mana

Human bodies can store up to a moderate amount of mana; all it requires is a bit of concentration. Higher levels of Industry develop methods to store it in the body without the need for concentration, or even in "jars" outside the body - crystals, patterns, snippets of songs, ties with other people, even actual jars, depending on the user's path. So long as the container is unharmed, the mana is accessible. Those from one tradition will have difficulty accessing mana stored by another tradition unless the "jar" fits their path.

Transferring mana across long distances is done via Rapport (for one-on-one transfer) or through ley lines (for works of infrastructure).

Null Zones

When characters enter null zones, reduce their effective Nature scores as follows, to a minimum score of 1.

- 1 An area with notably less mana than usual.
Spells requiring large amount of mana are impossible.
- 2 A typical null zone with very little mana.
Spells requiring moderate mana are impossible.
- 3 A region completely devoid of mana, like the depths of space.
Spells requiring low mana are impossible. Only one's personal mana is available.
- 4 That's not a null zone, it's a sentient land that has awoken as a manavore.

The same penalties from SA that apply to using Professions in low-tech areas (SA2 page 32) apply to Profession use in in null zones.

Null Zones rarely kill, but characters with exotic Earthly Forms should prepare carefully before entering a deep null zone.

Intent, Meaning, and Symbols

Intents and meanings shape mana to generate effects. The more one's intent matches the character of the available mana, the faster and easier it is to shape an effect.

Intent is the only thing that can perform magic. Intent is, in fact, the only thing strictly needed to perform magic. However, with intent alone, one can only summon forth the crudest expressions of one's Nature. All the trappings of magical Traditions serve to focus intent, to make it more reliable, to help it endure, or to clothe it so that one's true intent is not so easily discerned.

Symbols convey intents and meanings. Therefore, symbols also shape mana. They can focus it, redirect it, or change its character. Symbols need not be written - a rose can be a symbol, as can a gesture. Archetypes, too, are a kind of symbol.

Because meaning, passion, and nuance shape mystical expressions, spells cannot easily be translated from one intent to another. Swords cannot easily be beat into plowshares. The major exception is magic based on the Trickery-Nature. It is in the very nature of Trickery to subvert all things to other purposes, even itself.

It's also difficult to use spells that were created with someone else's understanding of the world and how it works. Symbols change from place to place, but the interpretation is made by the one whose intent they focus. One cannot truly understand a spell or ritual without understanding

the goals of the one who created it. A large part of mystic scholarship is the study of history and anthropology.

Intent does not provide skill. Without expertise in civil engineering, intending to create a bridge over a mighty river will make nothing but a shambles that will probably collapse before anyone even tries to cross it. Regardless of whether you are acting with mundane or magical abilities, having the appropriate Profession is still required.

Canonical Forms are symbols that are an inherent part of a person or a culture. They can be conjured into existence from pure mana, and some Traditions can even temporarily or permanently alter the canonical forms that are present in a particular region. See page xx for more detail on the Canon of Form.

Casting Magic

To create a particular mystical effect (an "expression" or "spell"), one uses a particular Path to shape mana following the symbols and archetypes of a Fount. Unless one's Path states otherwise, this requires technological tools appropriate to your Path, and the ability to reach those tools. Typically you carry a kit of these with you at all times. You do not necessarily need to speak or to make wide gestures.

Each Tradition has a unique set of approaches to magic, honed over decades or centuries. They acknowledge that a dangerous life in the Basin may require flexibility in spellcasting. Someone following the Path of Language might write their spells, speak them aloud, or burn a scroll. An Artisan might prefer to work in pastels, but can spout poetry in a pinch. Taking away a single tool is rarely enough to stop someone from using magic, and for those who can operate *without* tools, binding or gagging alone is rarely sufficient.

Noticing active spellcasting or magical effects works under the "Detecting Technology" rules (SA2, page 95). The cutoff is Mystery 3+, or Mystery 4+ for procedures. The usual Loud/Silent rules apply. In addition, for effects that are not Loud, someone with a higher Trickery score than you can conceal their casting. If you are in Rapport with someone, they cannot cast even Silent spells without you noticing.

Mystical Signatures

Because magic works through intent, it can reveal intent as well. Because it flows through all things, it connects people with one another and with the world. This manifests in individuals and their surroundings, creating a personal "signature" each time someone uses magic. This signature is unique to the individual, and can be detected using expressions of Mystery such as Psychometry. It can be felt during Rapport.

Mystical Connections

Some technologies, like healing, soulbinding, or long-distance Rapport, require a mystical connection in order to operate. This can be achieved via any of the following methods:

- You are currently touching the subject
- You share a Core Value with the subject (only works to a distance of about 10 koss)
- The subject has a positive Core Value that involves you personally
- The subject has a positive Core Value involving someone near you who is willing to help
- The subject has a positive Core Value involving an object or location that you touch
- You touch an object or location that the subject built themselves with care
- You own a piece of the subject's soul
- The subject inflicted you with a curse or enchantment that is still active

You can't use Civilization-derived CVs for this - they're too broad. You need something personal. CVs with a negative emotional weight also don't count. If someone hates you, that doesn't make it easier for you to curse them at a distance or harass them with unwanted dreams.

The Soul

Your shadow is your soul.

Just because it's noon doesn't mean your soul goes away. Even if you're in a room that is magically lit from all sides so there's no shadow, there's still shadow inside you. You can close your eyes and summon your power and it will call up the protections written on your soul so that you can see them, inspect them, activate them.

If you want to inscribe magical wards and protections on your soul, you can do it. You need a steady light source or some way to pin your shadow in place, and a steady hand with some fancy inks or reagents. Soul-drawn wards are fairly standard at Self 2+. Most people whose Traditions involve runes, geometry, written spells, etc. will have things inscribed on their soul and visible when their shadow is visible.

The soul is imperishable, but not indestructible. That is, it can never be completely destroyed, but you can split it up, sell it, steal it, trade it, damage it, or tear it. Something can gnaw on it, or you can have it stretched thin like butter over too much bread. If it's damaged, but you haven't given any of it away or had any of it sorcerously stolen and preserved, it will eventually regrow, though it may take a year if it's almost entirely gnawed away.

If someone steals your soul, it's still your soul and not theirs. If it's destroyed in their possession, it regrows on you, not them. If you sell or trade a piece, however, that's theirs now, and it regrows in their possession.

If you die, your soul goes to an afterlife in the Worlds Beyond, sometimes with an option for reincarnation. If you sold part of your soul, it's still part-sold when you reincarnate. If someone stole it, it's still stolen in your next life.

If someone has a piece of your soul, they can use it to do magic in the same way that you can. This was a bigger deal before the Gift, when demons would buy souls from wizards and sell them to those who wanted power. However, it's still important now, because it does two things:

1. Supernatural beings who did not receive a full portion of the Gift can obtain it by obtaining a full enough soul.
2. When someone uses your soul to do magic, they do it in your way, with your personal magical signature.

As the amount of soul attached to your body decreases (through trade, theft, or damage) there are three common effects:

- Their Earthly Form (see page xx) takes on the same aspect as the most prevalent local mana. This should be handled via the Worst Enemy rule (page xx).
- They heal more slowly when their bodies have been destroyed. (See Immortality on page xx.) This should be handled via the Bad Luck rule (page xx).
- Those who are *entirely* without a soul are only immune to possession and mind control as long as they are conscious. If they sleep or faint, various spirits might attempt to take control. In addition, this can cause issues for resurrection (see Healing, page xx), as it requires at least a fragment of the soul. This effect is not eligible for the Worst Enemy or Bad Luck rules.

Remember that soul damage is much like any other sort of damage, and should be handled through the regular conflict/complication system. Stealing (or severing) a piece of someone's soul should be a major complication, usually inflicted via Trickery (or War) and resisted with Self.

Spirits

((Placeholder for a whole section on spirits in the Beta.))

((Start from <http://suffadv.wikidot.com/forum/t-5189020/sorcerously-advanced-nature-spirits>))

All Things Have A Cost

Magic has a cost. The easiest way to pay this cost is by consuming mana or by running it through a sort of mystical generator that extracts energy and leaves the mana somehow changed. When there is not enough mana available, there are other ways to pay, with one's mind, body, and soul, but eventually these run out as well. Just as there are stories of people running themselves to death, there are people who have used so much magic that it killed them, immortality notwithstanding. ((More about this in the Beta.))

It used to be that *learning* magic had a cost, with greater learning and power exacting a heavier price. This is no longer true: Aum has paid this cost for all who have the Gift.

There are exceptions to every rule.

Paths

A Path is a set of mechanisms that use mana to create or activate mystical effects. Each one includes some "hallmarks" that people typically associate with that sort of magic, and some "technologies" that are commonly used to make this path's magic more reliable, more powerful, and more accessible. Some Paths also provide a particular advantage (usually the ability to work magic without tools), but at a cost.

The Paths below are not the only ones possible, just a large set of examples. It should be comparatively easy for players or GMs to invent new Paths or adapt existing ones.

Artistry

Hallmarks: Music, song, painting, poetry, tarot cards, architecture, tattoos, rare pigments, colors no mortal eye can see, perfect pitch.

Technologies: Specially-stacked decks of cards, nation-sized mosaics, morals that paint more of themselves, choruses of automata, paintings of the Canon Forms, lutes with strings of silver or of braided mystical metals, gemstone xylophones, sheet music that plays symphonies, body modification to make one more archetypal, voice amplification, arcane blueprints, burnt images, graven idols.

Special Benefit: When art-magi conjure things from the Canon of Form, they can create works of art (to the extent of their skills) and embellish ordinary objects with artistic flourishes as they desire.

Belief

Hallmarks: Love, hate, discipline, adherence, passion, faith, meditation.

Advantage: Those who walk the path of Belief have no need for physical tools, and thus no one can take those tools from them.

Disadvantage: Each Tradition must be tied to a single Core Value. The believer's maximum Natures are equal to the CV + 2. If the CV drops, any Natures higher than the new value + 2 will drop to that rating. In addition, Traditions tied to Belief cannot produce magical expressions that are counter to that CV. They can still be used for neutral purposes, but a pacifist could not use this path to kill, and a believer in freedom could not confine someone with their magic.

Technologies: Mental self-conditioning, mind mazes that trap mental curses, hypnotic contingencies, reminders of key moments or people, relics created at moments of peak zeal, books of philosophy, mantras that fortify devotion, mutually reinforcing belief structures.

Blood Magic

Hallmarks: Blood and flesh, spittle, symbols drawn or carved, scarification, exhaustion,

Advantage: Those who walk the path of Blood Magic have no need for physical tools, and thus no one can take those tools from them.

Disadvantage: You've only got so much blood. Simple magic doesn't use it up, but complex magic does, and it can exhaust you more quickly than other paths. If you want more power, you need more people.

Technologies: Cloth woven from or stained with blood, accessories made from hardened "bloodstone" gems, different creatures' blood for specific purposes, refining the components of the blood, stasis fields to preserve flesh, the movement of trade along roads mimicking arteries, knives that don't just cut but also store.

Discipline

Hallmarks: Calisthenics, martial arts, yoga, breathing exercises, muscle control, balance, mathematical tricks, mnemonics, concentration, focused minds.

Advantage: Those who walk the path of Discipline have no need for physical tools, and thus no one can take those tools from them.

Disadvantage: Without maintenance, perfection fades. Choose *body* or *mind* when you start to walk this path. Those who walk this path must be able to dedicate an hour each day to practice of the appropriate type, or they will see their Nature scores fade at the rate of one level per week. To exercise the body, one must be unrestrained. To exercise the mind, one must have few distractions. In both cases, one must have appropriate rest, which in some cases may be just a few minutes per day. Atrophied Natures return at the rate of one point every three days of proper exercise.

Technologies: Weighted clothing, singing meditation bowls, massage techniques, exercise manuals, books of challenging mental problems, carefully designed regimens, time accelerators (to practice more quickly), teamwork techniques, sympathetic motion to stir nearby elements, splitting the mind, training automata, incense that clears the mind, foods that purify the body.

Geometry

Hallmarks: Patterns, diagrams, architecture, inscriptions, tattoos, geometric shapes, inlaid stones.

Technologies: Tattoos, etchings on the bones and teeth, mystical paintings on one's shadow, strangely-shaped towers and basements, unexpectedly efficient road patterns, the rearranging of rivers and ley lines, clothing embroidered with patterns or equations, ropes knotted in mystical patterns, fractal shapes with thousands of tricks hidden deep within.

Special Benefit: When conjuring objects from the Canon of Form, geometer-mages can create them to a larger or smaller scale, within the restrictions of their Industry-nature. For instance, if

they conjure an ordinary wagon but need a larger one fitted for godly steeds, they can scale up the wagon.

Language

Hallmarks: Spoken and written spells, chants and songs, hand-signs, runes, repetition, presentation, retracing the holy paths in word and deed.

Advantage: Those who walk the path of Language can create expressions of their Natures with voice or gesture alone, even if separated from their tools. Language practitioners can cast spells without tools as if their Natures were one point lower.

Disadvantage: Words and gestures of power call attention to the caster. All magic done without tools becomes Loud (see descriptors on page xx) during its casting.

Technologies: Mystic automata that chant hosannas, spell scripts tattooed on the body, hair braided into hieroglyphs, fingernails that grow "spell sentences" that you can combine, coded freckles.

Patrons

Hallmarks: Eyes from the shadows, materials pleasing to the patron, horns and shells that carry their voice.

Advantage: When called, Patrons can act through their petitioners without the need for channeling devices. Those who walk the path of the Patron can cast spells without tools as if their Natures were one point lower.

Disadvantage: Reverence is connection. Creatures from the Worlds Beyond can touch the Kaleidoscope in places where they are treated as powerful. In places where the patron is unknown or unrespected by locals, practitioners do not regain the usual one point of Reserve each night while sleeping (though they still do if engaged in a Project).

Technologies: Holy markings on objects or on the body, fragments of the patron as possessing spirits, multiple spirits overlapping to provide complex power patterns, networks of patrons to cover more area, endless chains of worship.

Reagents

Hallmarks: Herbs, powders, pastilles, dusts, gemstones, potions, solutions, precious metals, compounds, jars, purity, rarity.

Technologies: Enhanced hair, sweat, and spit, rituals that transmute reagents as you harvest them, hollow bones and teeth, pockets in the body, "everlasting" reagents embedded in bone, micropatterns of common reagents that emulate a rare one, transmuting stable reagents into volatile forms just before use.

Special Benefit: When conjuring objects from the Canon of Form, reagent-using magi can substitute a symbolically-related type of mana for the kind that would normally be needed. One

would ordinarily use fire-mana to create a burning torch, but they could also create one from a companion's rage, or from the vision-aspect of a lens.

Wild Magic

Hallmarks: Wild mages collect bits of extraneous power from the world, and do magic using the conflicts and confluences between that ephemera, the aspects of nearby mana, and their own Natures. Things both appropriate and ironic can arise in these situations.

Advantage: Those who walk the path of Wild Magic manifest their power in cascades of harmony and dissonance with the local environment. They can cast spells without tools as if their Natures were one point lower.

Disadvantage: Odd effects abound near a practitioner of wild magic each time they express their Natures. Most of these are equivalent to Trivial or Minor Complications, but it makes them easy to identify and follow.

Technologies: Probability deregulators, randomness enhancers, brownian motion engines, aspect enhancers, jars that capture snippets of strongly aspected mana, aspect prisms to separate mana into finer-grained concepts.

Universal Tools

Some things are universal magical tools rather than being Paths.

- **Calendar magic**, using events related to the sun / moon / stars / holidays, can generate aspected mana and can also be used to do magic. However, waiting until a particular day to create a particular magical effect is too limiting in this day and age. These events are typically more useful as an occasional boost of power.
- **Sympathetic magic** is extremely common, thanks to the Gift's metaphysical preference for poetic events. Sympathy is essentially parallel construction in mystical form. A Necromancer piercing a doll would harm the person the doll was built after, if they are similar enough. An adept of Earthpower moving rock and stone will likely be making motions in matching directions. An Elementalist placing a model of a building into an ice bath would expect the building to cool down if they directed their power so.
- **Relics** are magical items that are linked to a particular individual, to help them channel mana. They are used by many different Paths, from an artist's favored paintbrush to a geometer's perfect t-square to the ritual knives of blood magic. Relics are not expended after use but are hard to replace, as opposed to reagents, which are replaceable and expendable.
- **Rituals** are used by every Path.

Founts

Founts are the sources of magic, from which pour infinite expressions of power. Each one provides a broad category of mystical effects, some of which overlap with other Founts, and some of which are unique. Most Founts also have a particular set of technologies that are unsuitable for them. These are listed in their descriptions.

Founts and Paths can be mix-and-matched without restriction. Each Fount lists some Paths that are particularly common and some that are uncommon, but there is no game effect from this.

As with Paths, it is possible for players and GMs to create new Founts. The most important thing to consider when creating a new Fount is the principles by which it operates. A Fount with just one or two principles will be very simple, making it either too limited or too powerful. A Fount with a dozen principles will typically lack any conceptual cohesion.

Exceptional Expressions

Certain expressions of Nature can only be created by specific Founts. These are listed as Unique Abilities in the descriptions of those Founts (starting on page xx), and repeated here for reference.

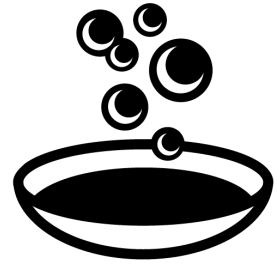
New Founts created by players or GMs should have access to just a handful of these, and perhaps some new options. A Fount with access to everything on this list would be somewhat overpowered.

- **Expanded Rapport:** The ability to use additional powers through Rapport. Oneiromancy.
- **Expanded Canon:** Various abilities that impact the Canon of Form or its manifestations. Alchemy, Earthpower, and Elementalism.
- **Hypnopraxis:** The ability to take actions in one's sleep. Arete, Invocation, and especially Oneiromancy.
- **Mana Endurance:** Retaining an extra point of Nature in Null Zones. Arete and Necromancy.
- **Multitasking:** Conducting additional simultaneous Rituals. Earthpower.
- **Polymath:** Access to the Polymath expertise (see page xx). Arete, Invocation, Necromancy, and Oneiromancy.
- **Soulcalling:** Speaking with souls that have flowed to the Worlds Beyond without a connection. Invocation and Necromancy.
- **Transmutation:** The non-destructive change of one element to another. Alchemy and Elementalism.

Alchemy

Principles

- **Matter/Spirit Dualism.** The physical can reflect and move the spiritual. They can be connected and disconnected; both can be distilled and refined; both can be transmuted.
- **Inherent Symbolism.** Materials and forms have reliable meanings regardless of their use. Using or transmuting those materials, and manipulating those shapes, works magic.
- **Harmony.** Harmonious combination is the path to power and enlightenment. Sometimes when two things cannot be combined, introducing a third will allow harmony. Dissonance destroys magical effects.
- **Mathematics.** Formulae can describe our world and its processes.



Manifestations

Formulae, amulets, golems, clockworks, miniaturization, alterations of matter, changes in the self, changing one's flesh into inorganic matter, machines that alter or affect spirits, spiritual changes that affect the physical world, rebalancing the humors, reaching in and out of the Canon of Form, shared transformation, forensics, calculation engines, mana condensers, transmutation, explosions, gasses, toughened bodies and skins, antivenom, hallucinogens.

Unique abilities

- **Canonize.** At Nature 3 you can ritually destroy any object you can hold as a special ritual taking one minute. This adds it to the list of Canonical Forms that are available to you and those near you. This Form is attached to you rather than to the local area, so if you move you may change who has access to it. Typically the Nature used is Industry, but not always. For instance, using Self, if you feed a small automaton into the Canon of Form, you and those around you can take on that form using shapeshifting.
- **Revise the Canon.** Alchemists can alter the Canon of Form on a local level - for themselves at Nature 4, and out to a koss or so at 5. The quality of the alterations depend on your skill in the appropriate area. Objects that currently exist in the world typically do not typically, but new things that are created and things that are brought into alignment with the Canonical Forms adhere to the new definition.

Limited Techniques

- **Spirit-walking.** Alchemy is too physically grounded an art, and too proud of its spiritual manifestations. Its spirits shine with inner radiance. Alchemists can go unnoticed or go in an immaterial form, but not both.

Paths

- **Typical paths:** Reagents, Blood Magic, Language
- **Unusual paths:** Belief, Patrons

Arete

Principles

- **Self-Control.** One can control only the self, not others or the world.
- **All are One.** All who received the Gift are a single being realizing its unity.
- **Seeking Perfection.** Perfection is unattainable, but seeking it continuously empowers the seeker.
- **Action Without Effort.** The harder one tries in the moment, the more one stands in one's own way. Effort is good for training; execution should be effortless. Calm is the key to effectiveness.



Manifestations

Martial technique, meditative states, mathematical skill, extending the mind via eye contact or skin-to-skin contact, physical strength, impossible acrobatics, mnemonic techniques, wound absorption, massage, hypercognition and focused mental states, walking in silence, giving no tell, forensics, reading body language, fortune and misfortune, leverage, pressure points, method acting, striking, archaic weapons.

Unique abilities

- **Live the Akashic Record:** Arete practitioners can access their Universal Repository very quickly to learn nearly any profession. Those with Communion 3+ are eligible for Polymath. Even those with lower Natures can ask for any piece of information that might ordinarily be considered specialized, though they will not internalize it to the extent that it would be useful in practice. They cannot discover information that is hidden or secret.
- **Photographic Experience:** Arete practitioners with Mystery 3+ can assist any character in any Ritual, conflict, or basic action as if they had the same Professions as the character they assist. Those who are also at least 100 years old are also eligible for Polymath.
- **Hypnopraxis:** Arete practitioners can take the following actions while asleep:
 - Consider and possibly solve problems using Mystery
- **Mana Endurance:** Arete practitioners are trained to efficiently use the mana that wells up within themselves. This makes them much more resistant than others to the loss of local mana resources. When others lose points of Nature in Null Zones, Arete practitioners lose one less point.

Limited Techniques

- **The Mana Shell Game.** Mana outside the body is difficult for Arete masters to affect. They can alter its flow, but not disguise it the way that the shell game requires. This technique is off-limits to practitioners of Arete.
- **Curses.** Arete masters can curse those who are in conflict with them, but not those who leave their sight or who can avoid engaging with them.
- **Shapeshifting.** Arete masters can use many of the effects of shapeshifting to emulate the abilities of various creatures, but cannot actually turn into them.

Unique limitation

You cannot affect things outside of yourself and your immediate gaze. When engaging in combat, you use your own body and your ki, not elemental floods, golem warriors, or summoned demons. Your "curses" are actually advanced martial techniques, which you might deliver through pressure point strikes or gaze locks. This is mostly a change to the types of Complications you can give or take in a conflict, but it also prevents you from creating long-term autonomous effects that can leave your line of sight. You can use long-distance technologies when you have an appropriate connection, but it must be formed through Core Values with yourself or with a person, not with an object or location.

Paths

- **Typical paths:** Discipline (body), Discipline (mind), Belief, Reagents
- **Unusual paths:** Artistry, Wild Magic

Earthpower

Principles

- **Seek Respect Over Power.** Living in harmony with spirits and with the Basin itself is the path to enlightenment. Seeking power is the path to destruction.
- **The Greatest Path is Life's.** Many of Earthpower's abilities mimic natural events and cycles, but in ways that are faster, stronger, harsher, or carefully controlled.
- **Inherent Symbolism.** Plants, animals, and minerals have reliable meanings regardless of their use. Using them works magic.
- **You Reap What You Sow (Positive Feedback Loops).** Those who are kind will have a life of kindness. Those who are warlike will have a life of war.



Manifestations

Plants, animals, weather, volcanism, spirit guides and tutors, animal forms, heal from the spirit outward, speaking to the world, shared experience, healing clay, seeing balance and imbalance, ground swallowing or disgorging evidence, walking without trace, seeds and fruit, mimicking nature, inner strength, shared strength, parental authority, regeneration, lightning, meteors

Unique abilities

- **Spirit Allies:** Bearers of the Earthpower have treated well with the spirits of the land, sea, and sky for billions of years. They have competitive advantage in any social interaction with a well-established nature spirit.
- **Seeds of Power:** Earthpower bearers can conduct one additional Ritual at a time, as long as it is one that they can accomplish by planting and watering a seed. This seed might grow vines covered in potion-fruit, a tree full of swords, a house made of giant ferns, or any number of unlikely things.
- **Grow the Canon:** When you maintain or repair something using Earthpower (in a craft Ritual), rather than restoring it to its Canonical Form you can bring it farther along its "natural" progression towards a strong, mature form, and even beyond into archetypal attributes and power. A repaired building might become sturdier than its materials allow. A sheep nursed back to health might give magical wool or become a glorious war-ram. Treat the subject as a creature or tool with Nature score equal to the caster's.

Limited Techniques

- **The Red Space.** Perhaps the Red Space is too otherworldly. Perhaps it is too abstract, or too dangerous. Certainly it is poisonous to the individual and to the environment. Whatever the reason, Earthpower cannot open the Red Space.

Paths

- **Typical paths:** Reagents, Belief, Patrons
- **Unusual paths:** Geometry, Discipline (either)

Elementalism

Principles

- **The Foundations of All.** Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and Void are the things from which everything is made. Some places in the Basin refer to Void as Darkness, Shadow, or Soul instead, but it is the same element in all places.
- **Inherent Symbolism.** Materials and forms have reliable meanings regardless of their use. Using or transmuting those materials, and manipulating those shapes, works magic.
 - Earth is solidity, but also sleep, strength, and resilience
 - Water is fluid, but also wise, thoughtful, and social.
 - Fire is dangerous, but also active, fast, and aggressive.
 - Air is untouchable, but also intelligent, graceful, and quick-witted.
 - Void is absence, but also calm and awareness.
- **All Things Change.** Nothing remains what it is forever. Everything flows through the myriad cycles of the Ten Thousand Forms. Magic can forestall or accelerate that change.
- **All Things are Physical.** There is no true division between the body, the world, the mind, and the soul. Altering the physical world can evoke changes the mental world, and vice versa.



Manifestations

Elementals, elementally-aspected beasts, genies, hypnotic flames, vapors that grant visions, crystals that heal, ice that never melts, elemental forms, rarified air, seeing elemental balance, transmutation, essence flows, telekinesis, conjuration, shunting assaults into the void, fireballs, ice storms, poison gas, walls of rock or wind

Unique abilities

- **Adapt the Canon:** When you conjure an object you can construct that object out of any element or combination thereof (including its original makeup). You will need to have an appropriate source of aspect.
- **Transmutation:** You can use properly aspected mana to alter the composition of existing objects. This is typically used with Industry for construction, but can also be used with War for offensive purposes. Whether the object's phase changes is up to the caster - creating flaming swords for your troops or dissolving an opposing force's blades into fire that then evaporates are equally valid uses. Treat the subject as a tool with Nature score equal to the caster's.

Limited Techniques

Elementalism is the least spiritual of the Founts. While each element has emotional associations, disciples of elementalism have difficulty with anything that lacks a connection to the physical world. When they go spirit-walking, they do so as wind, not as a dream or shadow. When they seek Rapport with someone, they must have a physical (not just emotional) connection with that someone, such as carrying fragments of the same crystal or being related by blood.

Paths

- **Typical paths:** Language, Geometry, Reagents, Patrons, Wild Magic
- **Unusual paths:** Blood Magic

Invocation

Principles

- **Power is Beyond Us.** It is by surrendering to a greater power that we ourselves receive its grace.
- **Follow the Mighty.** It is by emulating those who came before that we understand ourselves and our power. Acting in the manner of an archetype gives you strength and guidance.
- **All are One.** All who received the Gift are a single being realizing its unity. Your soul can speak to the souls of others in a way they cannot ignore.
- **Imbued Symbolism.** Materials, shapes, and phenomena have meanings as assigned by their use. Working within that symbolism reinforces it, which both works magic and enhances future magic. Working against the symbolism causes dangerous accidents and weakens future magic.
- **There Is A Plan.** Aum's plan for the universe can be seen, heard, and acted on.



Manifestations

Light, darkness, auras, bells and chimes, singing, chanting, faith healing, laying on hands, talking to gods and devils, epiphany, guidance, blessings, dark gifts, commands, mystic servitors, speaking to the soul, igniting power, spiritual shields that defend the soul, glowing shields, flaming swords, damaging shouts, awe and authority.

Unique abilities

- **Hypnopraxis:** Invokers can take the following actions while asleep:
 - Travel to the Dream Worlds (using Communion or Mystery) and bring others with them. Those others must be within a few meters of the sleeping Invoker, or in contact via Rapport.
 - Consider and possibly solve problems using Mystery
 - Work on purely mental Rituals
- **Immediate Instruction:** The voices and spirits with which Invocation interacts can speak directly to the ear, and even the mind. They are knowledgeable beyond the dreams of the wise. Invokers with Mystery 3+ have access to the Polymath Expertise.
- **More than Ideal:** When Invokers call forth something based on a Canonical Form, it is better than one might normally anticipate. Structures are more durable, creatures are stronger and faster, foods are more delicious and nutritious. Treat the subject as a tool with Nature score equal to the caster's.

- **Soulcalling:** Invokers can use Rapport to speak with souls that have flowed to the Worlds Beyond, and call them back to the Kaleidoscope if they are willing. This does not require a mystic connection, just the ability to identify your target.

Limited Techniques

- **Conjuration.** Invocation does not create permanent objects. Its users can conjure shapes, but they fade when their task is done - typically within a minute or two, certainly within a day. These shapes are manifestly supernatural, glowing or absorbing light as appropriate to the caster's tradition.

Paths

- **Typical paths:** Belief, Patrons, Language
- **Unusual paths:** Reagents, Geometry

Necromancy

Principles

- **All Souls are One.** Every soul can speak to the souls of others in a way they cannot ignore.
- **Death is Universal.** Once you accept the death within you, you can influence all things through the death that is within them.
- **Matter/Spirit Dualism.** The spiritual can reflect and move the physical. They can be connected and disconnected; both can be distilled and refined. While matter can change, the spirit remains eternal.
- **Imbued Symbolism.** Materials, shapes, and phenomena have meanings as assigned by their use. Working within that symbolism reinforces it, which both works magic and enhances future magic. Working against the symbolism causes dangerous accidents and weakens future magic.



Manifestations

Ghosts, skeletons, zombies, shadows, bones, disease, poison, trances, spirit advisors, tragedy, fear, sadness, pulling death, ghost stories, soul-melding, ghostly experts, money as mana and vice versa, soul nets, surgery, anchoring the soul, lethargy, regeneration, necrosis

Unique abilities

- **Invited Possession:** Necromancers with Mystery or Communion 3+ are eligible for Polymath.
- **Soulcalling:** Necromancers can use Rapport to speak with souls that have flowed to the Worlds Beyond, and call them back to the Kaleidoscope if they are willing. This does not require a mystic connection, just the ability to identify your target.
- **Mana Endurance:** Necromancers already draw from the frail essence of death and decay. When others lose points of Nature in Null Zones, necromancers lose one less point.

Limited Techniques

- **Healing.** Necromancers do not truly heal. They instill their patients with unnatural vigor or a fragile mental stability, which lasts only so long as there is mana available. Individuals healed by necromancy use all of their internal mana powering this vigor, and have none left to genuinely regenerate themselves. Until they are healed by another or have time to heal by mundane means, they are merely stitched together (literally or figuratively). Regeneration as done with the Self-nature operates without this limitation.

Paths

Typical paths: Blood Magic, Language, Reagents, Geometry

Unusual paths: Belief, Discipline (body)

Oneiromancy

Principles

- **The Mind is More Real.** The physical world of the Basin is only where life began. The Dream Worlds are the true source of power and meaning in the universe.
- **Power Arises from Story.** Archetypes, motifs, rising action, dramatic reversals - these things are the root of meaning. Using them or subverting them does magic.
- **Matter/Spirit Dualism.** The spiritual can reflect and move the physical. They can be connected and disconnected; both can be distilled and refined; both can be transmuted.
- **All Things Change.** Nothing remains what it is forever. The world and its stories change us all. Magic can influence those changes.



Manifestations

Dreams, hallucinations, surprises, distraction, transition, dreaming the ideal self, shared dreams, illusions, inspiration, evaporation, imagination, dream-world factories, subliminal messages, exhaustion, misdirection, nightmares, mental conditioning, calling to the distracted mind.

Unique abilities

- **Hypnopraxis:** Oneiromancers can take the following actions while asleep:
 - Travel to the Dream Worlds (using Communion or Mystery) and bring other sleepers with them. Those others must be mystically connected (see page xx) to the oneiromancer.
 - Consider and possibly solve problems using Mystery
 - Connect with other dreamers via Rapport
 - Work on purely mental rituals
 - Conjure small objects that appear in your hands when you wake
 - Work on rituals that create small objects or result in purely internal changes (whether mental or physical)
- **Invited Possession:** Oneiromancers with Communion 3+ are eligible for Polymath.
- **Hang the Dream:** You can create a dream that you send toward someone. It will take effect when they next sleep. Requires a connection as per long-distance Rapport.
- **The Burning Dream:** Oneiromancers can take the following actions when in long-distance Rapport:
 - Draw sleeping participants into a Dream World with their consent
 - Attack other participants with War; they resist with Mystery.

- **The Waking Dream:** Starting at Nature 4, Oneiromancers do not need to worry about whether the subjects of their unique abilities are asleep.

Limited Techniques

Oneiromancy is very limited its ability to affect the physical world. Its assaults are psychic, its mystic defenders more phantasm than force. In order to have large-scale effects on the physical world, an Oneiromancer must call creatures from the dream worlds to do this work for them, which can be somewhat more time-consuming, less precise, and more frightening for bystanders than other Founts' methods. In addition, expressions of Industry create illusions or call shimmering shapes and simulacra from dream worlds. These could never be mistaken for natural objects. (Illusions created via Trickery can still fool others.)

Paths

- **Typical paths:** Artistry, Belief, Wild Magic
- **Unusual paths:** Blood Magic, Geometry, Discipline (either)

Technology

((placeholder technology intro for the beta - something something mana-driven technology))

The technologies listed below can manifest in a wide variety of different ways. Each Tradition will have its own particular methods of healing, shapeshifting, analyzing mana, etc. Examples are given in several cases. Few of them are the kind of thing that one does simply by closing the eyes and concentrating. Incense must be burned, oracle bones must be consulted, one must work oneself into the proper mental state, and *then* (and only then) can a necromancer do psychometry. Even wild magic and Arete require a *process* by which they work.

After the proper approach has been employed, the process is not yet over. Emotionally aspected mana impacts one's emotional state. Technologies that are well-tested and carefully-designed will restore their user's emotional state to what it was before use, but experimental devices and techniques will leave a resonance in their user that takes a bit of time to clear. Improvised techniques are the most likely to leave side-effects behind, and might trigger the Worst Enemy Rule (page xx).

((Sidebar: Tools with Nature scores. Crib verbiage from the "weapons" section of SA2.))

The Side Effects of Technology

In the same way that science-based technology (at a minimum) requires energy and creates heat, magical technology has its own issues. Many of these are more acute and widespread than pollution is in SA, because magic is a newer phenomenon here than science is there. The dangers listed below are only just being recognized in some places.

- **Mana Depletion.** High-tech nations and cities sometimes use up large amounts of mana. This leads to Null Zones "downstream" from that location. Individuals rarely use enough mana to deplete their local area, but it can happen in Null Zones or when dealing with the Red Space.
- **Chaotic Mana.** Sometimes mana picks up a complex mix of differing, possibly contradictory aspects that make it dangerous to use. Practitioners of wild magic seek this out; others carefully avoid it. Chaotic mana can be used in place of nearly any aspect (except ones like "calm" or "well-ordered"), but the results will be unpredictable and difficult to manage.
- **Warped Mana.** When a country or city needs vast quantities of specifically-aspected mana, that mana still flows rimward afterward, holding its new aspect. The next people toward the edge of the Basin may not want their mana aspected that way. Individuals

rarely warp enough mana to inconvenience others, but it may cling to them and result in a change of Earthly Form (page xx) from Balanced to Aspected.

- **Emotional Fatigue.** High technology needs to align Natures and Core Values when creating powerful effects. When done properly, the device returns these to their original states, but the mental strain can be severe.
- **Emotional Burn-in.** Many people who overuse their personal technology feel uncomfortably "stuck" in a particular Nature and its corresponding emotional states, and have trouble getting out of it. There is some disconcerting evidence that this also happens on the national level.
- **Chakra occlusion.** Certain techniques that alter the self temporarily, like shapeshifting and enchantment, prioritize one effect over all others. Personal mana is diverted to maintaining that effect alone, making it difficult to use other sophisticated technologies or procedures.

These issues come up during game play when the GM or players decide to invoke them. They make excellent fodder for Complications, Advantages, and use of the Worst Enemy Rule. The only issue that has explicit game effects is chakra occlusion, the effects of which are described in each individual technology with that side effect.

((sidebar: Signaling Side Effects))

The buildup of technological side-effects rarely happens invisibly. Before they reach the level where they trigger Complications, players should be made aware that something is going on. Here are some good phrases for GMs to use when warning their players that side effects are starting to build up:

- "You're feeling (emotion) but you can ignore it. Do you want to?"
- "You're feeling (emotion) but you can fight through it. Do you want to?"
- "It's hard to care about (event). Are you going to let that bother you?"
- "You feel (element) seeping through your spells, but you're able to keep it clear for now, if you want to."
- "Your spells are taking on an (aspect) character to them; do you want to fix that?"

As is often the case, chakra occlusion is an exception. It's a built-in cost to activating a particular technology, and GMs are not obliged to warn players about it.

New Descriptors

Access - This technique does not truly use the caster's own mana or expertise. Instead, it uses those only to grant access to a piece of omnipresent technology. Most of these described below are ancient technologies that have survived into the present day, but many civilizations are building their own public goods to rival these.

Connection - This expression require a mystical connection (see page xx) to use. Without the connection, it fails.

Ex Nihilo - This expression creates physical material or tangible things from mana or from nothing at all.

((See SA2 page 96 for existing tech descriptors, most of which will get folded in here eventually.))

A note on the Procedure descriptor

Technologies with the Procedure descriptor can be activated without the need for any external support, including specially-aspected mana, magical connections, or supporting technology. As with procedures in SA, there is no way to keep a conscious person from using them.

Inventing New Technologies

((Just leaving this as a placeholder for future development so I don't forget it. In short, this is going to be a little easier here than in SA, because the timeline is shorter and there are so many implications of existing devices that haven't been thought out yet.))

((Might be good to include some examples of things that have been tried so far and how they're worse or more dangerous than the techs listed below. Maybe use teleportation as an example?))

((Remember to give notes about *not* granting bonuses.))

Key Technologies

The devices and techniques below are the most important and widespread technologies in the Great Basin. Understanding life there requires at least a passing familiarity with each of them.

Conjuration

Nature: Industry 2

Descriptors: Ex Nihilo

Mana: Moderate

Common side effects: Warped Mana

Conjuration creates physical things out of nothing, using templates from the Canon of Forms (see below). There are Canonical Forms for all classes of physical objects, from plants and animals to mountains and lakes to buildings and autogyros. Low levels of Industry create small nonmagical objects that one could hold in one hand. Higher levels use arrays of mystical devices or intricately repeated techniques to create large animals, powerful magical artifacts, or even small palaces. Small objects are called almost instantly; larger ones can take a few minutes.

Objects resulting from conjuration are void of history, having no imbued aspects. They still have inherent aspects based on their composition and function. For instance, a wooden chair would have aspects of growth (for the wood) and comfort (for its shape), but could not be made with aspects of love or care. Because of this, there is a large but constrained list of enchanted objects that can be conjured. They are generally less powerful and less personalized than those created "by hand" (i.e. via ritual). There's still a demand for higher-end objects made by the old-school hand-and-heart method. Nevertheless, mass-production has its advantages, and while you can't conjure every sort of magical object, you can basically always conjure something that will get the job done.

The process of conjuration requires moderate amounts of mana, with an aspect matching the conjured object. If the right aspect is unavailable, it may be necessary to conjure many smaller-but-similar objects to imbue the local mana with those aspects - a "bootstrapping" process that will allow the caster to create larger and more powerful items. The process also strengthens those aspects in the nearby mana, which can lead to warped mana conditions.

"Un-conjuring" is allowed. It does not, by default, place things into the Canon of Form or into a Universal Repository - that requires a short ritual (see page xx).

Mana itself cannot be conjured, nor does unconjuring provide a refund.

The Canon of Form

Conjuration does not create objects made to order. Instead, it pulls from a catalog known as the Canon of Form. This selection of objects, creatures, and archetypes comes in two parts: a personal collection called the Signature Canon, and a regional collection known as the Consensus Canon.

Each person's unique Signature Canon is formed from their own experiences, including the culture and family in which they were raised. Your grandmother's favorite sweets, the tree you climbed in as a child, and the model autogyro you built by hand while learning alchemy all might be in your Signature Canon. This Canon is formed most strongly when you are young, though it can continue to evolve over your life. It is made of things *internalized* rather than memorized. Adding to the Canon of Form is less like reading a cookbook and more like learning to cook via hand-holding and practice. Most people have a few hundred items in their Signature, some of which are more technical items gained from a Profession.

Each physical region also has a Consensus Canon, formed in the collective unconscious of those who live there. It contains those things that locals associate with their particular region: the rich zzonga-fruit of the Hearth-Kin, the compass and cord that every Geometer student knows, the glass-helmed vacuum suits of Those Above. The Consensus Canon holds forms for every object and animal for which a civilization has words, but it only a generic idea of them, not an expert's understanding. If you can't say it in just a word or two, you probably can't conjure it. You can get "medium wrench", but it might not be exactly "two and a half centimeter wrench".

You bring your Signature Canon with you wherever you go. Others generally cannot access it, though there are exceptions and you can share it via Rapport. If you travel to a new region, you gain access to the local Consensus. If the Consensus changes (perhaps due to an influx of people or a shift in the culture), the things you can conjure changes. Sometimes you won't even realize that the world changed around you until you find yourself calling forth something other than what you expected.

Your Signature Canon overrules the Consensus Canon when you conjure, so long as there is actually something appropriate in your personal Canon. If you don't remember the taste and smell of your the food from your home well enough, you can't conjure it. If there's a judgment call needed as to whether you can create something, your CVs and Professions will help the GM answer that question.

The Consensus is typically uniform across each city-state. Between city-states it can change substantially, with dramatic changes between civilizations.

Applications

Conjured food is perfectly edible and provides the usual nutrition. The only drawback is that each Canon (whether personal or communal) contains a limited repertoire food items, so it's easy to get bored with them. It's much less common for people to trade spices than it is for someone to hire out their services as a spice conjurer.

When in airtight situations like cave-ins, it's possible to **conjure clean air** and deconjure excess air, so that there's always enough good air to breathe. You could deconjure rocks to tunnel your way out, but without some sort of Theurgy or architecture-related Artisan skill you risk further collapse.

You can conjure and deconjure **parts of objects**, either to get at a specific piece or to build something one part at a time that you aren't capable of conjuring whole. Don't forget that the Industry-nature can move objects or hold them in place while you work.

You can conjure living animals. You can also attempt to **deconjure living beings**, including humans, but it's only going to work if they're already incapacitated, so it's not any more dangerous than just having a knife.

You can **conjure living things from samples**, such as growing a pine tree from a cone or making a deer from shed antlers. You can do this even if the creature isn't in your Canon, but you can't do this with non-living things.

Conjuring things outside the Canon is impossible. The first example of a device, and all works of art, must be **created by hand**. Many artists and engineers use conjuration-like methods to slowly sculpt or paint their creations out of nothing. The process is not faster than it might otherwise be, it just requires no raw materials.

Conjured reagents are useless for trade. They are universally weaker than those gathered in the wild, and the very process of concentrating and distilling reagents by hand adds useful qualities to them. Using conjured reagents is a good reason to trigger the Worst Enemy rule (see page xx).

Curses

Nature: War 2

Descriptors: Silent, Connection

Mana: Minimal from caster, low from environment

Common side effects: Warped mana, Emotional burn-in

With direct mind control made impossible, characters who want to exercise control over others without stooping to the level of physical assaults often turn to curses: complex twists of fate with a mind of their own that seek to harm others and befoul their days.

Most devotees of the War-nature know dozens of curses for any situation. There is the Curse of the Ruptured Purse, which makes people mislay their valuables. There is the Butterfoot Curse that makes people slip and fall at painful moments. The Kind Stranger's Curse causes one to forget or forgive slights against oneself. The Curse of the Invisible Ants causes itching.

Applying a curse is a Conflict that pits the curse-caster's War against the target's War or Self. If the target is aware of the curse (for instance, if they see it cast), they can choose to contest it with War instead... but the nature of most curses is to hide themselves. No one will fail to notice the Curse of the White Eye that makes them go blind, but the Hidden Curtain Curse conceals one thing or person from the target until they strike, and that is a difficult thing to realize. Because of this, most Curses are applied as a Subtle Conflict (see SA2 page 55). They can often hide themselves from the target until they run their course completely, as determined by the Complication inflicted. Other observers may notice a curse using Mystery, following the normal rules for a Silent technology. Curses can be levied at line of sight, or at any distance within the same realm of existence if one has a mystic connection to the target. Cursing a larger group can be done via ritual, or by using the rules for conflict against groups and those with Infrastructure.

Curses created with War 4 or 5 are not necessarily more powerful than those created at War 2 or 3. Brute force is comparatively easy to deflect. Instead, high-powered curses are deeper, more devious, and more insidious. Those with powerful War-Nature technologies cast curses that are more likely to succeed due to repetition, lateral strategies, double-pronged assaults, novel approaches, and more.

Curses require very little mana to bestow, but they do eat up some local mana when they come into effect. Living in a null zone is an effective (if arduous) way to wait out your curse. It is all but impossible to gain any benefits from a curse's effect. Remember: they are living, intelligent, malevolent things. They are a portion of the caster's vengeful psyche. They will disappear or bide their time if they seem to be doing more good than harm.

Applications

Curses *must* be malignant. You can't apply a curse that's actually a blessing in disguise. They generally don't grant Advantages.

Within that broad guideline, however, **curses can achieve nearly any baleful effect.** A general wish of "bad luck" is fine if you're not feeling inventive. If you want to get creative, anything that fits the level of the Complication is appropriate.

It's possible to bestow a **Curse That Creeps** from someone to their associates, virally infecting those closest to them. Treat this as a typical teamwork situation, or a large-scale conflict if that's more appropriate. It's incredibly difficult to do this while keeping the curse a secret.

Time-delayed curses are common, but they work best against someone who doesn't enter Rapport often. The curse needs to hide itself from everyone who shares the target's mind, and someone more perceptive (with a high Mystery-nature) might notice it. The same goes for curses set to **activate via a specific trigger.**

Enchantment

Nature: Any

Descriptors: Connection, Loud

Mana: Large

Common side effects: Chakra occlusion

Enchantment is a special kind of Ritual (Project) where you share your magic with someone else for a time. Examples include:

- You're teaching someone else to shapeshift. You change into a hawk and bring them with you so that they can see what it feels like.
- You, with Mystery 5, can see what happened here in the past, but you don't have the skill to interpret what you see. Your ally has the necessary training, but has a Mystery of 1. You enchant them with your power so they can see it with their own eyes.
- Your elemental form shields yourself from the fiery caldera you must cross. You infuse your allies with fire mana in order to shield them from it even if you get separated.

To enchant someone, start by entering Rapport with them. It doesn't need to be a deep sharing, but they need to be willing. You then cast a spell that shares your power.

As you enchant more people, the effects of chakra occlusion become more pronounced. You can always enchant a single person. If you enchant more people, your Nature drops: one point for every ten times more people (-1 from 3 to 10 people, -2 from 11 to 100 people, etc.) Once it drops *below* the level required to use the power in question, you cannot enchant any more people. You can still use that power yourself, but not other powers from the Nature unless your score is still high enough to access them.

For instance, if you have Self 4, you can grant temporary immortality to 20 people. This would reduce your Self-Nature 4 to 2. You would still be able to access immortality, but not other Self 3 abilities.

For the purpose of the time ladder, enchantments are considered craft Rituals, with a base time of 12 hours, a minimum Nature that matches the effect you're granting, and requiring an appropriate Profession at 2.

Enchantments hold until you revoke them or their users release them. The enchanted one may hold onto the power for a short time (longer with higher Self) to reach a place of safety, and you regain your lost Natures when they relinquish the power or it fades from them.

Enchantment requires large amounts of properly-aspected mana.

Applications

It is possible to enchant someone with **access to a Fount** rather than with a specific magical effect. This is an enchantment of the Self, wherein the enchanted can use magic up to the level of the enchantment as if they were using the enchanter's Fount. It is effectively a filter upon one's Nature. Theurge and Scholar are appropriate Professions.

However, Enchantment **cannot grant access to a Path**. Paths are skills and understandings. They can be relayed via Rapport but not via Enchantment.

Giving the Gift

The ultimate enchantment is granting the Gift to someone or something that did not receive it from Aum. This differs from ordinary enchantment in the following ways:

1. The recipient, if they are capable of free will, must be willing.
2. It is a major Ritual (base time 5 years), requiring Scholar (any) 2 and a rating of 1 in all six Natures. Use your weakest Nature in your strongest Tradition to determine time steps.
3. It is considered comparatively simple for a major Ritual, reducing the time by one step.
4. It does not reduce your own Natures, either during or afterward.
5. It grants intelligence and free will to things without them.
6. The effect is permanent and irrevocable.

This is most typically used to empower beings like uplifted animals or clockwork automata. You normally follow up by initiating this lucky individual into your own Tradition, but it's not required or automatic.

The enchantment that gives the Gift can be used to reconnect disconnected individuals (see page xx).

Energy Wave

Nature: War 3

Descriptors: Loud, Energy (usually), Supersymmetric (at War 4+)

Mana: Moderate

Common side effects: Warped mana, Chaotic mana, Mana depletion, Emotional burn-in

Before the Gift, powerful magi were known for their wisdom and cunning, for flight, for shapeshifting, for telepathy, for the ability to travel across the world in a single day... but also for blowing things up. Magicians use fire, lightning, and even bolts of pure darkness to drive off their enemies. Some traditions deploy physical assaults rather than energy (Earthpower is known to call down meteors), but the effect is essentially the same: raw mana is inefficiently converted into destructive force.

Each Tradition has its own style of energy wave. More than that, each magus has their own, distinctively marked with their mystic signature (see page xx). One Arete practitioner might release a blast of glowing chi, while another might send shockwaves through the ground. Some alchemists use explosives while others hurl waves of chaos that turn everything to salt. An experienced War-mage knows multiple styles of wave, but an investigator who knows someone's signature will find it easy to identify their handiwork regardless.

More powerful War-mages deploy devices or use complex procedures to create larger and more powerful waves. With technological support, they can create waves that pass through one sort of material and affect another, earning them the Supersymmetric descriptor at War 4+. They also know the appropriate techniques to defend against that sort of assault, such as counter-waves, the conjuration of barriers, or even brief bouts of Spirit-Walking.

Large and well-organized settlements are often protected from such assaults by a technique known as The Threefold Gates of Retribution. ((Eventually move this to the Infrastructure section but keep a note here.)) A set of emplacements (often menhir or large symbols) are used to absorb or reflect War-driven energy. Attackers are well-advised to destroy the emplacements first, as they must be stationed outside the area they protect. Otherwise the amount of energy required to destroy a city may be reflected against the assailant - from the inside.

Energy waves use raw mana in moderate amounts. The mana's aspect might tinge the wave with certain side-effects or reduce its effectiveness, but unless the aspect clashes badly with the caster's natural aspects, the wave will still be emitted and function normally. Areas filled with energy-wave battles often pick up a bit of chaotic mana, making them even more dangerous.

Applications

It's impossible to do any good building or excavation with energy waves, but you can **excavate or demolish** just fine, and sometimes that's necessary during the construction process.

You always have the option of **pulling your punch**. It's possible to tone down an energy wave in order to destroy a small object, or just create a crackling field of power around one's hand.

Many waves have **useful side-effects**, such as creating light (fire, lightning), producing a raw material (transmutation waves), pushing objects around (wind, force bolts), etc. The destructive power of the War-nature can sometimes make it difficult to take full advantage of these side effects. It's easy to light up a small room with a lightning bolt between your hands. Lighting up a giant cavern is going to be very, very loud, and might lead to a collapse.

Healing

Nature: Communion 2

Descriptors: Connection

Mana: Varies, see below

Common side effects: Warped mana, Emotional burn-in

Communion can be used to heal physical and mental injuries. Injuries corresponding to the Nature ranks listed below can be healed within a few minutes - not so fast as to be effective during a fight, but certainly more quickly than the body's natural healing. This time is spent in actions appropriate to the healer's Tradition, such as applying healing mud, aligning chakras, drawing negative energy away with crystals, and so forth. The table below summarizes what sort of healing is available with various levels of Communion.

1. No magical healing available.
2. Trivial Complications such as brief headaches and stubbed toes. Uses minimal mana.
3. Minor Complications such as bruises, cuts, abrasions, and confusion. Uses low amounts of mana.
4. Moderate Complications like sprains, inebriation, minor concussions, panic attacks, disorientation, and the flu. Uses moderate amounts of mana.
5. Major Complications like broken bones, severe concussions, emotional shock, minor psychological trauma, or deadly diseases. Uses large amounts of mana.

Communion can heal a Complication that is one level more severe than the one listed by spending most of a day, or two levels more severe by spending a whole week. Critical Complications can be dealt with this way as well, as if they required Communion 6. Even bringing someone back from the dead is possible (but see below for additional complications). Characters whose earthly forms are aspected or constructed may require additional Natures to heal them, typically Industry.

There are a few restrictions on Healing. First, only Complications that represent injury can be healed in this way. Being tricked or kidnapped is not an injury, though mental or emotional injuries count. Second, self-inflicted Complications are resistant to Healing, as they are reinforced by fate or magic. Third, War has techniques that prevent wounds from closing and minds from clearing. Finally, healing oneself is done with the Self-nature rather than Communion.

Mana used for healing must be aspected with a benevolent character, which is typically not difficult for a healer to obtain - they can draw it from within themselves. However, it's pretty difficult to heal someone you dislike without an outside source of benevolent mana. Times are slowed as if the Complication were one level worse. Similarly, healing someone who is themselves aspected in some way will require some mana of the appropriate kind.

Applications

Resurrection is the same as fixing a Critical Complication. There are some potential issues that would slow you down:

- If the soul is missing, you need to find it and reattach it. Self 3.
- If the body is missing, you can regrow one from a sample, or from the soul, or you can build a new one as an automaton or other magical construct. Industry 3.
- If the soul has moved on to its next life, it may not particularly want to return. Healing requires the approval of the healed.
- If the body is still mostly intact and not actually dead, and the soul is bound to a new body, the old body may still live with a rudimentary intelligence and is a very likely target for possession.

In the same way that the Self-nature makes you into what you actively want to be, **Healing is volitional on the part of the healed.** It makes a person's body and mind into what that person wants. If someone is blind and is happy and ok with that, Healing will not regrow their eyes, any more than it would remove the extra arms so common among Ægis citizens. Some people with dreams of a different life but with low Self-nature will also be happily surprised when a high-powered healer remakes their body in ways they only dreamed of. (The healer is often surprised as well.) Healing doesn't "fix injuries," it makes people closer to their ideal selves.

Immortality

Nature: Self 3

Descriptors: Internal

Mana: Minimal

Common side effects: None

Many characters in SsA are immortal. They do not die of old age - or indeed, of nearly any cause whatsoever. They can be harmed, but they will heal. Even when decapitated, they need but rejoin their heads to their bodies (or more likely ask a friend to help) and they will eventually be none the worse for wear.

Immortal characters may still take their own lives, if they do it knowingly and willingly. In addition, each Fount has a particular weakness by which its practitioners can meet their final doom:

- **Alchemy:** Each alchemist's Potion of Immortality has a specific flaw. If another alchemist were to determine the formula through espionage or by analyzing blood samples, they could brew a counter-agent, which could be delivered by poison or coated weapon. No alchemist could fail to recognize the presence of their own counter-agent.
- **Arete:** Arete practitioners must be killed by themselves in some way - whether by a clone, or by a mirror duplicate, or by being strangled with a rope made from their own shed hair.
- **Earthpower:** Each bearer is weak against a particular plant from their homeland. Garlic, mistletoe, and poisonous berries are all common choices.
- **Elementalism:** Elementalists can only be killed by being dragged to the edge of the Great Basin and thrown, bound and gagged, into the formless void beyond the world where existence loses all meaning.
- **Invocation:** The ritual removal of a particular organ, dependent on the character's patron, is the only guarantee of death. Common examples are the heart, the liver, or good old-fashioned decapitation. Vaporization doesn't count - the ritual is just as important as the removal.
- **Necromancy:** Necromancers are killed when their mouths are stuffed with holy materials, such as communion wafers, prayer beads, or blessed cloves. The materials must be appropriate to the necromancer's own Tradition. Practitioners of Necromancy often achieve "immortality" by becoming ghosts; this technique will bring them to nonexistence whether they are physical or incorporeal.
- **Oneiromancy:** Each oneiromancer has a particular Dream World that speaks to their soul. A weapon forged in that world and brought to the Great Basin can kill them.

Immortality, once obtained, requires only a trickle from the body's internal flow of mana to maintain. Magi who are assaulted in severe null zones may find that they take much longer to heal, but they still will not die from the most grievous injuries.

Those who follow multiple Traditions have Immortality from just one of them. They could change which one, but it would require a minor ritual, and there would be a few moments at the climax of that ritual during which they were mortal.

((Add notes here on the Obligatory Instant Death Cutsceen Rule.))

((Notes here about most civilizations NOT having fully adapted to immortality yet. Compound interest and inheritance are still common in some places.))

Applications

It is really, really, hard to kill people in this game. In general you're better off not trying.

As long as you are alive, you can do magic. However, depending on your Path, you may not be able to do very much. A severed head could still do linguistic magic, and perhaps a touch of blood magic, but it's not going to mix reagents very effectively. Being down to just your head doesn't change the amount of mana you generate.

When you are severely damaged, you **use Self to regenerate**. See Healing (page xx) but use Self instead of Communion to determine the timescale. Continuing damage (like being trapped under a mountain or dissolved in acid) will slow this or prevent it entirely.

Mana Analysis

Nature: Mystery 2

Descriptors: Silent. At Mystery 2 and 3 this technique is a Procedure; above that it requires tools.

Mana: Minimal

Common side effects: None

Mana Analysis allows magi of all stripes to perceive mana, determine its amount and aspect, and guess what its flows indicate about the shapes it took recently (and thus what was done with it). The Geometer's Guild refers to this as *Aspect Diapason Assay*, a more technically accurate term but a bit of a mouthful. They do this via measurement, sometimes with tools, sometimes by thumb and eye. As always, this expression of Mystery varies with the user's favored Path. Those walking the path of Reagents might peer through crystals; those of Discipline might make small mudras and feel flows in their hearts; those with Patrons may hear whispers; etc.

Most adults are continuously and subconsciously performing some level of mana analysis whenever they're awake and alert. People who are distracted, tired, or intoxicated are likely to miss things. Fine details are easier to spot if you intentionally pay attention. It's a lot like having an additional sense.

This is the procedure used to determine the magnitude of mana flows, identify aspects, and connect magical signatures to individuals as described for the Mystery nature. The effects at different ranks are repeated below for convenience.

1. No access to this procedure. No ability to perceive mana.
2. Witness the general flow of mana in the area, thus perceiving major recent magical effects.
3. Discern others' magical signatures, Traditions, strength of Natures, and all other game stats. Read strong aspects of mana. Feel when a door to the Travel lattice is about to open nearby.
4. Read ley lines to investigate the recent aspects of upstream towns and cities. Read even subtle aspects of mana. Perceive personal magical signatures left on ongoing effects. Feel when someone is moving toward your location in the Travel lattice.
5. Read the aspects imparted on mana by nations and cities upstream from a ley line and track influences to their source. Perceive personal magical signatures even after an effect has ended.

Mana analysis does not require any mana input to operate at short range. Reading things at a distance requires more mana and a connection.

Applications

Many technologies use automated mana analysis to **trigger effects based on particular presences or events**. The different aspects of mana reflect all of the vast, multifaceted world of the Basin, so these triggers can be quite fine-grained and discriminating. One mechanism might detect an intruder in a tomb by seeking out life-mana. Another could find soldiers in a crowd by seeking out War-essence, or romantic partners by detecting bonds of love.

Nations gather intelligence on their hubward neighbors partly by analyzing the mana flows that pass through their territory.

Investigations that discover a tool (a murder knife, a brush used to remove fingerprints, a book full of correspondence in invisible ink) can **identify the true purpose** of them much more easily. The mana that exudes from objects is aspected by the ways in which those things were used. Naturally, Trickery and Mystery techniques can obscure such things with preparation and a ritual.

The Mana Shell Game

Nature: Trickery 3

Descriptors: Silent

Mana: Minimal

Common side effects: Emotional fatigue, Chaotic mana

When sorcerers reach for magical power, they typically pull some from the wellspring that is within all of us, but generally also from the world around them. The same is true of their machinery. A geometer's healing tattoos rely on outside mana as much as possible, pulling from their bearer's reserves only when necessary.

Because many techniques and devices require very specific types of mana, it's possible to disrupt their operation if you feed them the wrong type. The "shell game" quickly and quietly replaces mana of one aspect in the local environment with mana of an entirely different aspect.

If the person running the game is unprepared, they can still slow down others and cause malfunctions in their technology or wild magic surges, making this perfect for a subtle conflict. If they're prepared, they can feed in mana of a conflicting type, potentially causing false mana analysis readings, backfiring curses, unstable conjured objects (or the wrong object entirely), energy wave explosions, and more.

Technologies that are noted as using little or no mana can be adapted on the fly to use only the mage's internal store, but that won't prevent the first incidence, only later disasters. The shell game itself requires very little mana (befitting its Silent descriptor), but that mana must be aspected with treachery or deception and cannot come from within the person running the game - it must be drawn from outside.

Applications

The shell game is designed to fool people - but unlike other Natures, Trickery can be subverted. Many applications for the mana shell game have nothing at all to do with its original purpose.

The shell game forms the basis of numerous **mana transfer technologies**. If there's a ley line that flows the wrong direction entirely, a mana "irrigation" process that delivers magic to otherwise low-mana areas, or a battery that stores particular aspects, you can bet that the mechanics of the shell game are hidden somewhere inside. These applications fall under Industry instead of Trickery.

While the shell game is normally used to ruin someone's day, it's also possible to **provide someone with exactly the mana they need**. This uses the usual teamwork rules.

Wild mages use the shell game extensively to **mix aspects together**. To beckon seeds to grow, an elementalists might combine earth's stability, water's nourishing, and air's swiftness. To generate skeletal servants, a necromancer might take the motion from a flickering shadow, the obedience of a beloved pet, and the old stubbornness of the ground to bind it all together.

Mystic Defenders / Servitors

Nature: War 3 / Industry 2

Descriptors: Ex Nihilo

Mana: Moderate to create, Low to maintain

Common side effects: Warped mana, Emotional fatigue

Mystic defenders are guardians and warriors empowered by a caster's might. Alchemists conjure automata; necromancers march their skeletons and war ghosts; oneiromancers are accompanied by beautiful gossamer cataphracts. They can follow fairly complex orders as long as those orders pertain to military actions or the tasks of a sentry. However, as temporary constructs of War, they are incapable of building, investigating, or communicating anything beyond what's needed for their mission.

In game terms, mystic defenders act as a Conflict with War and Soldier attributes equal to the caster's scores minus one, and no Core Values.

Mystic defenders require a fair amount of mana to create, and a smaller amount to maintain. They can be created from any sort of mana, and they aspect it with war, defense, and other flavors depending on how they are used. Nations that keep a large standing army of defenders often force their "downstream" neighbors to deal with both depletion and pollution of mana. Marching mystic defenders into a null zone will cause them to falter and perhaps even disappear.

Constructs that do things other than fight are typically called Mystic Servitors instead, and are made with Industry rather than War. They are unintelligent, and cannot even be programmed particularly well. They can be given tasks, but not sophisticated ones. "Cook me dinner" will work just fine, even if dinner may be uninspired. "Cook dinner for me and my dozen picky friends" is going to end with the same food being made for everyone.

Creating longstanding defenders or servitors is a Ritual (see page xx for examples).

Applications

Servitors are not typically given senses beyond the usual five (and often lack one or more of those). With a craft ritual one can **add senses derived from mana analysis** to improve a servitor's understanding of the world.

Psychometry

Nature: Mystery 3

Descriptors: none

Mana: Minimal

Common side effects: Emotional fatigue

Psychometry, or object reading, allows you to see glimpses of the past. You examine an object or location and receive psychic impressions from it, showing who used the object, who met in the location. A knife will tell you who it killed. A bed will tell you what was whispered there.

Base-level psychometry allows only non-magical senses. As the Mystery-Nature deepens, magi are able to read the residues of aspects and personal magical signatures from farther into the past.

It takes a few minutes to perform the brief rituals of Psychometry, whether they involve burning hallucinatory incense or drawing a circle in which to meditate. The object need not be touched, but it should be close by. Psychometry is very similar to Mana Analysis in the ways that it is expressed, and most experienced magi combine the two effects without thinking about it.

The most common way to get around psychometry is by destroying the place or thing in question. Murderers and thieves are thus often arsonists as well, destroying whole buildings in an attempt to get away with their crimes. The crime rate in most of the Basin is rather lower because of this, but those which are committed are often more severe.

Psychometry does not work on sentient beings, or even on animals (though it works on plants fairly well).

Applications

Centrality matters. The more important something is to a particular event, the better one can tell what happened. A card from a deck carried in someone's pocket as they committed a murder will carry a much weaker impression of the event than the strangling cord. A stone taken from a ritual circle will know better what the ritual was than a stone that was merely nearby.

If not centrality, then size. All else being equal, locations are better keys to the past than objects, and an intact building will know what happened inside better than a single floorboard.

If not size? Each Fount has its own specialties as to where it can best obtain information. An Arete master might look at books and tools; an Elementalist at gemstones and ashes; an Oneiromancer at the feel of a scene rather than the information given by each part.

Predictive psychometry is a challenging art. Oracles describe the past as "misty", but the future as "ringing", as if a thousand resonant timelines strove to push themselves into the present all at once. There are times when the ringing clears, and the future can be told more easily, but as one departs from the present such times are few and irregularly spaced. It becomes more and more difficult to distinguish anything at all in the clamor. As with ordinary psychometry, objects and places are suitable subjects; people and animals are not. ((GMs should either use this as an excuse to make precognition impossible except for plot-relevant items, or as an excuse to bring in guidelines from the Chronotech supplement.))

Rapport

Nature: Communion 3

Descriptors: Connection, Procedure

Mana: Low, or moderate at range

Common side effects: Emotional burn-in

Rapport is the act of sharing minds and souls with another being. It allows perfect communication without the need for language. Achieving Rapport typically takes about a minute and can be done up to a few paces away. Communion 4 and a mystic connection can extend that distance even across multiple realms of existence. Any number of people can share Rapport at once.

Emotional bonds can be formed or broken very quickly during Rapport. Characters who have experienced Rapport a few times will know how to share what they want and hold back their private selves. The inexperienced will tend to over-share. Those who have practiced Rapport together can even "dilute" it to a shallow experience of surface thoughts and sensations, allowing those involved to move and act normally while speaking to one another. This can be maintained indefinitely, but risks allowing others to use the channel as a magical connection through which to curse all involved at once.

It is possible to force someone into Rapport, but it is difficult and harmful, and fits under War rather than Communion. It should be considered a Major Complication - the communication effect may be temporary, but the negative emotional and spiritual effects are longer-lived.

Rapport requires low amounts of mana when the other person is nearby. If it is being used at great distances or across worlds, it requires a moderate amount of mana. It always draws from all participants, though not necessarily to the same extent. No particular aspect is required (but remember the need for a mystical connection).

Applications

Rapport is often used as part of intimate emotional situations, including weddings, sex, and ceremonies.

Long-term Rapport between people who want a deep and indelible connection with one another can result in **group-minds**, where decisions are made not by individuals but by an amalgam of all of them. Treat these as a single character with multiple bodies, using the Swarm earthly form (see page xx). Group-minds take about a year of continuous Rapport to form between typical like-minded individuals.

With permission, one character can take control of another's body. If both have a particular Profession, they can **use the Teamwork rules**. If only one has a Profession, the others can use it well, though this requires a deep level of sharing and connection.

As souls are shared, so can magic be shared, and **one character can express their Tradition through the body of another**. The more different their Traditions, the harder this will be. For example, practitioners of the Sacred Geometry rarely carry the meteorite fragments needed for The Starlit Way. A mismatch in Founts results in a -1 to all Nature scores, as does a mismatch in Paths. Only one character can wield their magic at a time this way

The Red Space

Nature: Trickery 2 or 4

Descriptors: Access, Procedure

Mana: Large or higher

Common side effects: Mana depletion

At every point in the Kaleidoscope there is a strange world tangent to our own. It is lit from all directions with an uneasy red light. It is accessible to anyone who knows the proper thought sequence. Time flows normally but its effects are lost - no one grows old, or tired, or hungry. Most importantly, it is a universe far more vast than our own, where every thumbs-width in our world is a koss in theirs. If you and a friend step through while holding each others' hands, you will not be able to see each other when you arrive.

The Red Space is used primarily for storage - vast amounts of storage, though only a small amount at a time. Transferring a typical goblet would require, for a moment, all the mana an ordinary person can bring to bear. Bringing in something more than human-sized can only be done on a ley line, and something more than wagon-sized is prohibitively mana-expensive. Some have built fortresses here, but the omnipresent light slowly drives one mad - even shutting your eyes doesn't help. Instead, people place things they value here and lock the access point with their own magical signature. One must be able to both replicate the signature and find the precise access point in order to retrieve what has been left.

Opening a portal to the Red Space devours mana quickly. If left open, such a portal will remove all mana from the surrounding foot or two in about a minute, and then snap shut. Those capable of mana analysis will note this power flowing into some sort of pattern within the space, suggesting that the Red Space was artificially created. At Trickery 4 one can duplicate this feat, conjoining a small portion of Red Space to oneself, to store and retrieve objects at need. Each item is "attached" to a particular point on the body. This space remains with the character even if they leave the Kaleidoscope, though they may not be able to access it in null zones.

Staying within the Red Space for an extended time is not encouraged. With the realm itself dispersing mana quickly, within minutes it becomes impossible to leave on one's own. Even with one's eyes closed, the sickly light is still visible. Those who are without sight report a dual-toned humming that they cannot ignore, or a scent that gnaws at the edges of consciousness. One cannot sleep - cannot stop thinking - cannot escape. The mind was not destined for such things. Leaving someone in the Red Space should be considered a Critical Complication.

Applications

Like the mana shell game, the red space is an expression of Trickery, and can be turned to a number of unexpected uses that have nothing to do with tricking anyone.

Refrigeration is fairly uncommon across the Basin. Instead, many people **store food in the Red Space** because it doesn't decay there. The mana cost is high for a common household procedure, but it's only temporary.

Deconjunction is typically a more cost-effective method of **disposing of unwanted items**, but sometimes you only want to make someone *think* you destroyed something.

Shapeshifting

Nature: Self 2 or 4

Descriptors:

Mana: Low, but user only

Common side effects: Chakra occlusion, Emotional burn-in

Shapeshifting comes in two tiers. The first provides devotees of the Self a few specific other forms that they can attain. Each of them is tied to the character's Tradition, and their Fount in particular. Someone with Earthpower might need the shell from a bird's egg or might keep the skin of a deer so as to become those creatures. An Elementalist might light a massive bonfire and step into it in order to transform into a fire elemental. An Arete master might even take on the abilities of a form - the climbing skill of a goat, the flexibility of a snake - without leaving their human shape. No matter what their Tradition, characters with Self 2-3 should choose no more than a half-dozen alternate forms.

Later on, mastery of Self (4+) allows you to take on a myriad of forms appropriate to your Fount, including those with more unusual characteristics (such as those with Supernatural Natures). You can also remain who you are even when your form changes against your will. If someone else attempts to alter your form, you can treat it as if the magic were your own and retain complete control.

Several appropriate forms are listed below for each Fount. These should be considered examples rather than a complete list.

- **Alchemy:** Iron golems, silver angels, bronze tigers, quicksilver nightingales, crystalline orreries, dogs of salt, sulfur-koi, spheres of radiance.
- **Arete:** Arete practitioners take on animal characteristics rather than forms: the stealth of the fox, the strength of the elephant, the climbing grip of the orangutan, the leap of the gazelle, the lightness of the robin, the speed of the salmon.
- **Earthpower:** All manner of natural plants and animals form the core of Earthpower's shapeshifting expressions. Advanced bearers of the power can also become more imaginative representations of nature, like walking trees, creeping fungus-beasts, swift whirlwinds, or even living earthquakes.
- **Elementalism:** Vaguely humanoid shapes of the five elements. The more powerful the Self-nature, the more intense the manifestation, but even a beginning acolyte in Elementalism can become an energy-being of fire or void.
- **Invocation:** Angels, demons, shadows, spiders, birds, toads, weasels, ravens, storks, ibis, dragons, phoenix, and other forms with strong symbolic meaning.
- **Necromancy:** Shadows, skeletons, zombies, vultures, crows, worms, poisonous vermin, and other creatures associated with death.

- **Oneiromancy:** A dream-lord might become nearly anything, from an ant to a house. What is certain is that it will be many-colored and strange, that it will flow and move in unusual ways, and that it will seem just a bit different to everyone who sees it.

Shapeshifting will only accept mana from within the user. Regardless of the form, shifting locks up the majority of one's magical power, reducing all other Natures by 1 (to a minimum of 1). If someone turns you into a frog, and you *choose to remain* as a frog rather than becoming what you were before, your magical power is likewise locked away.

Applications

If you're trying to **force a shift** on someone else, that's War for temporary techniques ("And now you're a slug" or "All my soldiers have bear strength for this upcoming battle") or an Enchantment ritual for long-term ones. If you're changing just how you look for the purposes of duping someone, that's Trickery.

Changing your Earthly Form is fairly common, especially with higher-powered shapeshifting. A necromancer might become a ghost, or a ghostly one might become flesh and blood. Taking on some mental characteristics of the form you attain is also common, as aspected mana flows continuously through your body.

If shapeshifting changes your Natures, especially by **granting a Supernatural Nature**, you should immediately recalculate your Power and Import. The highest Supernatural Nature you can obtain through shapeshifting is 4.

Spirit-Walking

Nature: Mystery 3

Descriptors: Silent

Mana: Minimal

Common side effects: Warped mana, Chakra occlusion

Spirit-Walking lets you move through the world in a way that keeps you hidden from the eyes of others. Necromancers and some Invokers step into a shadow realm parallel to the Kaleidoscope. Oneiromancers wander unseen from one person's dream to another's daydream to another's fantasy. Elementalists typically turn themselves into air spirits. Practitioners of Arete, Earthpower, and sometimes Invocation shift their bodies into spiritual forms that move unheard and unseen.

Spirit-walking allows you to walk through unwarded walls, avoid the sight of those with a weak Mystery-Nature, and leave no trace in the physical world. Despite the name of the technique, even spirits cannot perceive those who move in this way. Interacting with objects (other than via observation) ends the effect. One can speak in a whisper and touch with a feather-light hand, but more ruins the spell.

Each approach has its own unique limits that can be overcome with sufficient expertise. For example, winds might blow a novice Elementalist off-course, but not an experienced one. Light might bar a young Necromancer, but an experienced one will deftly pour their shadow-body through cracks in rock and wood. Spirit-walkers must still breathe, but most forms of immortality allow ways around that particular problem.

The spirit-walking spell requires very little mana, but applies a continuous aspecting to all mana available to the caster. The aspect is appropriate to the caster's Fount and its method of spirit-walking. All Natures are reduced by 1 except for those expressions that fit the appropriate aspect. For example, an alchemist moving through reflections might Travel or access the Red Space, but could not easily heal someone or throw an energy wave. An Elementalist moving as mist could use their air-based spells, but would have difficulty with others.

Applications

Spirit-walking is normally an art that applies only to oneself. However, familiarity with a particular sort of creature allows one to **extend the spirit-state to others**. An experienced horse rider could enchant their mount without the need for a ritual. A shepherd might let their herd pass unseen by a hungry dragon. Those who lead sermons or meditations can help other people transcend.

Spirit-walking **pairs well with Travel**. One need not cease one activity to begin the other, and the Travel gateways opened by spirit-walking individuals are likewise invisible.

This spell provides a great degree of **protection from the physical world**. In the same way that a spirit-walker can pass through walls, arrows and avalanches likewise pose little difficulty. Each Fount's method can be blocked in specific ways, which are typically easy to spot and require maintenance. (In terms of descriptors, they're Loud – see page xx.) The only way to block all spirit-walking is to create multi-layered protection or a Null Zone.

Characters who spirit-walk extensively may eventually become **stuck in this state**. This is similar to having an Earthly Form that is Phased Out and Aspected, but with the additional disadvantage of chakra occlusion as described above. Becoming "unstuck" should require the same work as overcoming a major Complication.

Characters who are **normally Phased Out** do not use spirit-walking to touch the physical world. Instead, they use Industry to move objects, and use spirit-walking to become invisible.

Travel

Nature: Industry 3

Descriptors: Access

Mana: Moderate, Large for portals kept open

Common side effects: Mana depletion

Properly known as Lattice Travel, this is the Kaleidoscope's fastest and most reliable method of long-distance transportation. Travel allows Industry practitioners to move from one location to another without traveling through the Great Basin. Those with the right access words call out to empty space, which opens a portal onto pathways and wide bridges that were long ago built into the fabric of reality.

Lattice Travel always opens a five-koss-long path, regardless of the distance in the Basin. There are doors at each end, which appear and disappear as this power is used. Arriving at your destination more quickly is merely a matter of running or flying down the path. It is possible to leap from one bridge to another (gravity is nonexistent once one is off the path), but the destination of the portal at the end is impossible to determine. One might end up in the depths of a sea or falling from the sky. Stories abound of madmen escaping from the authorities via such leaps, but the stories are rarely about the 99% whose immortality is sorely tested in the attempt.

Travel is not particularly mana-intensive and does not disrupt the local mana flows, unless the portal is kept open for more than a few seconds. It does rely on lattice points spaced about 10 meters apart, so pinpoint accuracy is not possible. Those with access to Travel can sense the access point nearest to them using Mystery. Travel is kind to its users - it assumes you want the nearest open space on the ground or another flat surface - but you can override that with specific instructions. If you try to Travel into solid rock you probably won't be able to open the destination doorway, and you'll need to walk back to where you came from.

In order to reach a particular destination via Travel, you must be able to specify the destination unambiguously. You can refer to landmarks, directions, distances, or people or objects to whom you have a mystic connection. Ambiguous directions result in unreliable travel and might invoke the Bad Luck rule (page xx). Here are a few examples:

- In the Cloud City of Uitomo, on the world of Tumar, just inside the rimward gate.
- As close as I can get to my friend Baika, whose talisman I'm holding.
- 20 miles hubward of Reidan City along the River Feng, near the cliffside. (Note: Approximate locations are ok if you don't care where along the cliff you arrive.)
- The throne room of Udak the Conquerer. (Note: If there are two people of that name and title, you may not get the one you want.)

- The tallest spire in the city described in the book I just read. (Note: If that city no longer exists, or was a fiction, you may end up at the place in your current world that seems closest.)

((Insert a "breaking and entering with Travel" sidebar. Important notes:

- people can feel you coming with the Mana Analysis expression of Mystery
- high-level Industry can move Travel lattice points.))

Applications

It is a rare commodity indeed that cannot be **shipped through the Travel lattice** rather than overland across the Basin. Nearly all long-distance shipping is via Travel.

Travel can reach distant locations in the Basin and other worlds of the **Kaleidoscope**, as well as the **Worlds Beyond** and back. It can also take one from realm to realm within the Worlds Beyond, but for movement within a particular realm Travel fails, and one must walk or fly. All Travelers who arrive from a particular world in the Kaleidoscope arrive at the same place within that realm.

Travel **cannot reach** the Dream Worlds (use Communion for that) or the Red Space (which has its own methods of access).

Universal Repositories

Nature: Communion 3

Descriptors: Access

Mana: Minimal

Common side effects: Emotional fatigue

Universal Repositories are ways to store information so that it can later be retrieved from any location. They are available more broadly than shapes in the Canon of Form (see page xx), accessible from all points in all universes. Each Fount has its own version, some of which are natural parts of the world and others of which are pieces of ancient technology that have been recently rediscovered.

Each Nature has access to its own unique universal repository:

- **Alchemy:** The Invisible Press
- **Arete:** The Akashic Record
- **Earthpower:** The Wind that Spoke
- **Elementalism:** The Lettered Smoke
- **Invocation:** The Echoes of Wisdom
- **Necromancy:** The Whispers of the Dead
- **Oneiromancy:** The Sage's Dream

Accessing a Universal Repository only requires a touch of properly-aspected mana and the willingness to enter Rapport with the Repository itself. Someone with an appropriate Communion-nature could do it by holding a book or tablet, as could someone in a classroom or holding a quill pen. Those accessing a Repository can create duplicates of scrolls, books, tablets, etc. from it as per Conjunction (page xx), or can simply close their eyes and read the text without calling forth the object. The repositories can deliver specific named texts or those that fit certain limited queries - they know the topics of texts, know the author's magical signature, know which version of a text is most recent, and know when materials were committed to them. They do not know fact from fiction.

Committing material to a Universal Repository is a craft ritual that destroys the original text. All materials are preserved in their original languages. There is no way to remove material from a repository. If a text is conjured, updated, and then re-committed, the original version is still available.

The various repositories do not naturally interrelate with one another. For instance, a book that is committed to the Lettered Smoke cannot be accessed from the Invisible Press or the Whispers of the Dead. However, many people have created methods by which knowledge is brought out from one repository and committed to another, so knowledge that is committed to one Repository will eventually be found in the others.

((Sidebar: What about the blind? What about audio recordings? What if you're a brain in a jar?))

Applications

There are currently no restrictions on who can access what knowledge. To keep secrets within a repository, one must use **codes and ciphers**.

Searching a repository can take a long time. You get what you ask for immediately, but if you can't specify exactly what you want, you might end up asking for a lot of different things before you get the right text. This is especially true for non-experts looking for specialized knowledge.

Rituals

((This is a placeholder for a big list of what you can do with rituals of various types.))

What do rituals require?

The term "ritual" gives many people the image of a single practitioner in a closed room, drawing symbols and cooking reagents until the project is done. That's fine for rituals that require Nature 2, but once you go above that you're going to need support.

At Nature 3 you'll need some minor technological support or a number of assistants helping you out. A coven of witches, a tiny fork off a ley line, a set of troubleshooting guides stored in the Universal Repositories, or a well-enchanted relic will be sufficient.

At Nature 4 you'll need serious technological support. You should have most of the energy from a typical ley line, a set of high-end tools, or a dozen willing associates.

At Nature 5 you'll need most of the energy from a major ley line, a hundred eager cultists, access to a broad set of exceptionally pure reagents, or other such high-quality resources.

Note that the teamwork modifier (SA2 page 53) only applies once you've passed the threshold for starting your ritual. If you're using a dozen casters to achieve a Nature 4 ritual, you'll need a dozen more to get the first level of teamwork modifier.

All magical rituals require properly-aspected mana. If you're near an appropriate ley line, or if you and your assistants have Aspected Earthly Forms, those are both good ways to do it. Other times you'll need to work out a way to produce that mana before you can start.

What Magic Can't Do

- **Remove the Gift.**
- **Destroy a soul permanently.**
- **Instantaneous Teleportation.** Travel is the closest thing.
- **Steal mana.** You can't deprive someone of their magical ability by quickly removing the flow of mana. However, you can create "dead zones" where very little mana seeps in, and that which would flow in from outside curves around and refuses to enter. This can only be done slowly and gradually, via Rituals.
- **E-mail.** You can use Rapport to connect with someone at a distance, but you can't leave them a message. You can burn knowledge into a universal repository, but anyone might access it, so you'll need to encrypt secret messages. The closest you can get is "hanging" a dream with Oneiromancy or having an intermediary send the message for you - and they'll need a connection with the recipient.
- **Microscopic vision.** There just aren't a lot of good magical methods for this. The closest equivalent is shrinking yourself down with Self and viewing things from a small scale.
- Magic in the Basin can **cure disease, but not detect it very effectively.** Psychometry might tell you if someone left a diseased object with the intent of causing harm, but it won't tell you what the disease is or how to treat it nonmagically.

Infrastructure-Level Magic

((placeholder))

((The Threefold Gates of Retribution, Travel restrictions, the Overmind, choral terraforming, mana conditioning and cleansing, etc.))

Civilizations

((placeholder for generic civ intro))

((Note that the civ icons below are fun placeholders, not actual attempts at their emblems.))

This century, at the end of the Interregnum, is a time of reconnection in the Great Basin. The civilizations described below are far from the only ones in such a large world. Most of them are at great distances from one another, surrounded by Returner cults and Unruly Lands. Some even call other realms of existence their home. Your characters will have the chance to discover new civilizations and make the first steps towards trade, toward isolation... or toward war.

((Need something about land and country - Travel makes every nation adjacent to every other, and also to unpopulated places. If you have a picture book of far-off lands you can go wherever you want. It's also pretty easy to set up an outpost of a civilization thousands of koss from their traditional borders. Introduce the 5-koss city-state as a building block.))

((Sidebar: Every civilization in this book has issues. None of them are perfect. All of them do at least one good thing; all of them do at least one bad thing. Some do several *awful* things. They are written with intent. We hope that, in your games, you'll be driving to fix those issues.))

The Cult of the Empty Grave

History

Even before the Gift, the Great Basin was a place of magic and mystery. Supernatural creatures roamed the world, from dragons to doppelgangers, and ghosts haunted graveyards and broken-down houses alike. In one particular country, though, these ghosts were not feared, but respected and venerated. They were the spirits of beloved ancestors, and their families loved them in death as they had in life. In return, these ancestor-spirits taught and defended their descendants. Few became ghosts, but those who did were an integral part of life.



When the Gift came, it came to mortals – not ghosts. The people were dismayed. How could this oversight have happened? And what would happen to the living once they passed on? Would they lose their power? How could such an imbalance be acceptable to Aum? Certainly this was a mistake, and the dead deserved the full measure of the Gift as much as anyone.

Danger closed in from all sides as war began to consume the Basin. In order to survive the Interregnum and retain the wonder that had been given to them, the living enchanted the dead so that they could use magic as well.

This was a spell of great cost. Magic was not well-understood, and the price was paid in millions of lives, none of whose spirits would ever return from the afterlife. To this day, that generation's absent ghosts are venerated beyond all others; their traditions and their lives used as templates for the present.

Eventually all the mortals of this realm passed through the veil to the world of the dead. Because of the Great Wonderwork, anyone who dies as a member of the Cult rises as a ghost, with the full magical powers of the Gift. Their magic sustains them. They will never fade into reincarnation unless they desire it. They even bear and raise ghostly children, whom they grant the Gift as part of their coming-of-age ceremony. There are no more living members of the Cult now, except for the occasional convert.

All in all, the Cult of the Empty Grave much prefers a spectral existence to one of flesh and blood. This commitment to afterlife-as-life pays off in spades when it comes to the mana flows and ley lines in the Cult's territory. Nearly all mana there is death-aspected to some extent. This enhances their own power, and makes their lands very difficult for outsiders to invade, though it does have unfortunate side-effects on the local wildlife.

The Cult is ruled by a council of a thousand of its most aged and experienced elders, all of whom are ghosts. While it is technically a theocracy, it functions more like a single-party democracy, where it is very difficult for newcomers to gain any influence at all.

Spotlight: Beauty

In the years around the Gift, Duchess Wondrous Hematite was considered the most striking and beautiful person in the Cult. There are hundreds of portraits of her. Painters would travel for a thousand miles to capture her visage in a new setting. Only a handful are displayed in this age - the Duchess herself turned out to be a traitor to the cause, and her name rings in infamy.

Instead, the portraits of her currently displayed are chosen because they contain, in the background, the same androgynous figure: M. Inked Sagacity, necromantic genius and long-time associate of the Duchess. Where Hematite opposed the Great Wonderwork, Sagacity made it possible.

Sagacity's unique face and form became the standard for beauty in the modern-day Cult. Women and men alike strive to emulate them. Self-magic enhances this: distinct masculine or feminine features are rare in the Cult. Men who are already born with more feminine features and women born more masculine often shift in order to emulate Sagacity more explicitly. Everybody agrees that no one can quite match them - but nearly everyone tries.

Spotlight: Compassion

The Cult of the Empty Grave has a double reputation. Those who know little about them see the Cult as an odd and potentially dangerous group of death-obsessed magi. It's difficult not to see this in their black-sand deserts, their rotting swamps, their bone-white ley lines. However, those who live closer to the Cult see a different side: the Cult is one of the most charitable organizations in the entire Basin.

Access to mana, even to *properly aspected mana*, is considered a right in the Cult. This is easy for their citizens, but they make it possible for visitors and expatriates as well. Since carefully aspected mana is the basis of most of the Basin's economy, this means that the poorest of the poor in the Cult's territory lives quite a good life indeed.

It's not just monetary support, though. Cultists care about one another and about the right to exist as you want to exist. If you don't like what you are and want to change, they'll help. If you're cursed, they'll lift it. If you need to be healed, they'll find a way to do it. Death, from the Cult's viewpoint, was always intended to be a release from pain, and that should mean something.

Hallmarks

- Shipments of bone and ivory
- Riddle contests that sharpen the Mystery-Nature
- Identical-looking citizens with similar faces and bodies
- Choruses of invisible voices that repeat benedictions upon travelers
- Obsidian monuments that stand in solemn recognition of those whose existence ended at death
- Rains of darkness that cleanse the land of warped and chaotic mana, returning it to its natural state
- Empty graves whose stones bear mystical inscriptions that funnel necromantic mana into the cult's ley lines
- Trade routes along ley lines and marketplaces at their confluences, for money is another kind of mana to necromancers
- Portals that allow those dead to step through and become as the living, and vice versa, until the sun next crosses the horizon
- Skeletons plant and prune vines whose grapes are made into wine the Cult sells to outsiders, who have visions of their own ancestors

Core Values

Children of the Cult are told, **Respect your Traditions**, for those who are older know better. Their ways are what saved us all from nonexistence during the Interregnum. Truly they were the greatest among us. Trust that seeking peace is right, that there is no fear to be had in death, that trust must be earned, and that The Practice (see below) is the path to enlightenment. When dealing with the Unruly Lands, the Cult espouses the methods of 400 years ago as the proper and respectable way to live. They do encourage the traditions of others, but primarily when they align with the Cult's own.

The children are also told, **Explore Yourself**. Know who you are, especially in the corners of your mind and your emotions. The Gift made it so that no one can take these things from you. Your mind is yours to grow and change as you see fit. It is the only tool that no one can take from you, and you should know it well.

Traditions

The Practice: C5 I5 M5 S5 T3 W3

The Rage: C3 I5 M3 S4 T4 W5

The codified, cautious, systematic exploration of death-magic is known as **The Practice**. It follows the path of Language to the fount of Necromancy, and is the most commonly used magic

in the Cult. With this they build their nations, unite their people, and investigate their world. A master of The Practice might:

- Whisper the words of the ancients, beseeching them for wisdom.
- Inlay runes in a sword made of narwhal tusk, that warn its wielder of hostile magic.
- Chant to call bone-and-obsidian buildings up from the ground.
- Carve a tale onto their own bones, using ivory scalpels that pass harmlessly through flesh, so that they can become more like the person in that tale.

When the Practice is too slow and too weak, and existence is on the line, Cultists in dire need draw upon **The Rage**. While still a necromantic art, it follows the path of Belief rather than Language, using a Cultist's drives and passions to fuel more dangerous magic. This is most commonly tied to the Empty Grave's *Respect your Traditions* CV, with Cultists feeling anger and indignation at those who would sully their history, but it is also frequently connected with more personal CVs. Necromancers driven by The Rage have been known to:

- Call up dark fogs to hide in, with deceptive shapes moving inside.
- Raise a pure-white barrier of faith against which curses shatter.
- Stoke up one's vitriol and vomit forth waves of green flame to drive back invaders
- Demand in a thousand ways that a shattered building grow back into its original shape, and lo it does.

The Practice is the Cult's official tradition. The Rage is taught amongst secret societies and heretic splinter factions. Many people spontaneously discover it in moments of great need, making scholars wonder whether its roots are secretly encoded somehow in The Practice, or whether it was perhaps a side-effect of the Great Wonderwork.

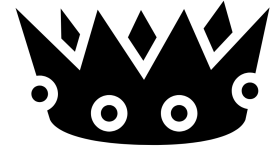
((sidebar: what are ghosts?))

Benefit

Once per session, when they achieve an Advantage through conflict or Theme use that deals with the afterlife or with eerie events, Necromancers of the Cult may raise the level of that advantage by one (for instance, from Minor to Moderate).

Diadem

History



Diadem began as a trade alliance. Four nations, known historically as the Four Jewels of the Crown, worked together to ensure that their people had what they needed, and their rulers grew rich and powerful in the process. This alliance was sorely tested in the period after the Gift, and for over two centuries one nation's interests were dominant over the others due to an imbalance of magical power and new, valuable trading goods. The other three nations were practically extinguished.

Eventually the dominant nation "rediscovered" the art and customs of the other three cultures. Surviving members of those groups were invited to teach their ways and their history. The people of Diadem enjoyed this. In fact, they enjoyed it so much that they brought in storytellers and costume-makers from many of their distant vassal states, to enrich themselves with the customs of their allies. Entertainers and servants perform their arts at the invitation of Diadem's elect. The citizens of Diadem now talk about their "crown" being studded with the "jewels" of other cultures. Most of Diadem's cultural practices are now borrowed from other cultures, and eventually discarded when something new comes along.

Diadem is an aristocratic republic. Only land-owners in the four central nations are considered full citizens. Those citizens choose eleven merchant families to wield power, based primarily on popularity and the wealth that they bring the citizens. These families make decisions for Diadem, but also sponsor "lesser" families, who obtain economic leverage over vassal states spread far and wide across the Basin.

When Diadem accepts a vassal state, they agree to support their new allies in a variety of ways. Most of these are economical or military, but they also agree to take a multitude of pressures off those states, including any refugees who arrive from nearby Unruly Lands. These individuals are initially sent off to the central nations, where they live in neighborhoods together and learn Diadem's language and culture. Few end up as land-owners, but many form their own trade families and seek sponsorship from the ruling families.

Spotlight: Wealth

Diadem is fantastically wealthy, rich even among major civilizations. Their homelands are naturally high in uniquely-aspected mana, which they parlayed into further territory and favorable trade deals. This gives them substantial leverage when it comes to working with other groups. Most civilizations can't afford to ignore any one Diadem merchant house, let alone

several of them acting together. Only Those Above the Sky rival them, and they're not as organized.

The Unruly Lands don't participate in the aspect economy, but this doesn't keep them out of the Diadem's influence. Where the merchant houses couldn't buy territory, they sometimes hired mercenaries to take it by force. It was Diadem that taught other lands to pull in their populations, to concentrate around the places they can defend and the things they care about, and forsake those parts of the world that are useless to them.

These days, they'll say, those events are behind them. Diadem hasn't sent mercenaries into foreign lands in fifty years. Nevertheless, they still hire a great number of them, and they still gobble up new vassal states at a tremendous rate. They take their tribute not only in aspect-wealth but also in skilled and unique servants. The shadow of force can sometimes be just as effective as spears at the door.

Most people who are sent as tribute to the merchant houses are themselves nobility back home, or something close to it. They're always skilled, intelligent, fascinating, or unusual in some way, often more than one. They're often unhappy about being sent, and their families aren't often happy about sending them, but what's the worse consequence: having your nephew live with the Diadem, safe and sound in their capital, for three years, or refusing the wishes of powerful people with ambition in their eyes?

Spotlight: Children

Family is very important to Diadem. It's one of the things that initially draws in many of their vassal states. The major merchant families aren't just ruthless capitalists (though they are that), they're also loving parents - and grandparents, and great-grandparents, and great-great... well, let's just say that immortality hasn't slowed them down.

Children are at the heart of a Diadem family. They are showered in love from the day they're born. They receive affection, attention, structure, education, time to play, and all the opportunities their parents and the Gift can give them. With multiple generations of child-raising experience all present in the household, no one slips through the cracks. Firstborn children aren't over-protected. Middle children aren't overlooked. The youngest aren't allowed to skip responsibilities.

If there's a direction in which Diadem errs when raising their children, it's that "know your place" and "stay in your lane" are emphasized a bit too much for some people's taste. Rich children are told that they'll have to take responsibility for the business "some day." (Whenever immortality makes that day...) Impoverished children are told that there will always be someone above them. Most people don't spot this aspect of Diadem right away, because children in many

civilizations are seen as well-mannered if they "know their place." Outsiders more often notice because those "manners" are part of adulthood here, too.

Hallmarks

- Carefully manicured parks
- Ubiquitous magical servitors
- Unusual costumes and jewelry
- Men carry pregnancies; delivery is by sorcery
- Almost every object is enchanted in some way
- Refugee neighborhoods full of individuals from other lands
- Groups of people each dressed in a different distinctive manner
- Ley lines beautifully enclosed in crystalline housings, with constant firework-like displays of light

Core Values

The outside world knows that Diadem's inhabitants **Embrace the Eclectic**. They're neophiles. The stranger things are, the better they like them. In this land, wonders are built simply to have a world full of wonders, and if they don't all mesh together perfectly that's ok.

They don't realize that its inhabitants are expected to **Face Duty**. This applies to everyone, from the citizens who owe their families their best efforts to the vassal-state residents who are expected to spend their time adding jewels to the Diadem.

Traditions

Transubstantiation: C5 I3 M5 S5 T5 W3

Drudgery: C3 I5 M3 S5 T3 W5

As is typical of their all-or-nothing approach, Diadem has two common Traditions: Transubstantiation and Drudgery. Most residents are comfortable with one of them and practice little to none of the other.

Transubstantiation uses carefully gathered Reagents, mixed and burned, to evoke Oneiromancy. Diadem's mighty use this art to investigate what interests them and stay in touch over long distances; those less mighty often employ it in acts of entertainment.

Transubstantiators have wielded their power in the following ways:

- Burning exotic herbs whose fumes excite the mind
- Applying drops on the eyes to see the flows of magic
- Rubbing the skin with a blend of rare oils lets one slip into the walking dream

- Growing beautiful and ephemeral houses from the most perfect of tiny shells from the oddest of beaches

Drudgery requires Discipline of the physical body. Through exercise and physical perfection one can use the powers of Elementalism to affect the physical world. This has built many of Diadem's cities, defended it in wartime, and shaped its underclass. A Drudge might use their power to:

- Invoke the power of stone, moving it or taking on its durability via lifting exercises
- Invoke wind's gusts or its seeking, cutting chill using breathing exercises
- Invoke water's fluidity or part lakes with slow, intricate flowing movements
- Invoke fire to burn, warm, or inspire using patterns of shouts and claps
- Invoke the shadow in perfect stillness, to hide or devour

Benefit

Once per session, when they achieve an Advantage through conflict or Theme use that relies on their trade connections, those who are full citizens of Diadem may raise the level of that advantage by one (for instance, from Minor to Moderate). Many Diadem citizens are members of the High Society society, but not all of them.

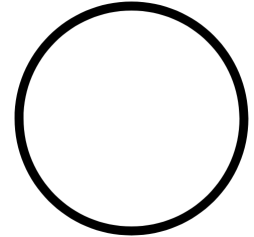
Those who reside in Diadem or its vassal states but are not citizens receive a different benefit. They instead improve an Advantage once per session when attempting to avoid notice, hide their talents, or mollify someone in a position of power.

Vassal states that are only very distantly or recently tied to Diadem can be treated like Unruly Lands instead (page xx), and their citizens can receive the appropriate benefits instead if they choose.

The Geometer's Guild

History

The Geometer's Guild was a mysterious assemblage of magi who ruled an entire continent. Though the sea foiled their attempts at further conquest, the members of this powerful society were the sovereigns of their realm, and all other people were their subjects. It was not a harsh rule, but still it was rule by might rather than by consensus.



When the Gift was given, the ancient masters saw the writing on the wall at once. Rather than try to cling to power and be overthrown, they decided to share their wisdom with their citizens. They inducted every citizen into the Guild, expanding its rules and its rank ladder to accommodate millions of powerful but untrained new magicians. Naturally, neophytes were placed on the bottom rung. Knowledge can be leverage.

Now the Guild is a well-oiled machine, pumping out hundreds of thousands of rigidly-educated geometers each year. They work in concert to enchant the lands, advance mathematical research, investigate new continents, and hunt down objects with rare and powerful aspects. Their notation for the metaphysical has a precision and descriptive power unmatched among other systems. This has made it quite compelling for scholars all across the Basin as a common language for all mystical phenomena. With the size of the Guild and their scholarly influence, it's difficult to talk about magic *without* using at least some of their terminology. This is unfortunate, as some aspects of the Basin's metaphysics cannot be described by Guild notation.

The Guild is constantly engaged in outreach to the Unruly Lands. They seek to educate citizens there in a proper and rigorous approach to the magical arts. Many nations have abandoned their long-established Traditions to adopt the Sacred Geometry. Scholars come from all across the Basin, and indeed from multiple worlds of the Kaleidoscope, just to study at the feet of the Guildmasters.

Though it has all the trappings of a meritocracy, the Guild is still rigidly hierarchical, ruled by those whom the masters made most powerful and influential. It is an oligarchy controlled by the leaders of the Guild's main branches: Deduction, Procurement, Education, Expansion, and Integrity.

Spotlight: Social Clubs

Many practices in the Geometer's Guild are strictly gender-segregated, and have been since long before the Guild's presence was publicly known. Armies have men's battalions and women's battalions. Schools are taught by women, to women, or by men, to men. Even the instruction and support of sorcery conforms to this rule - men are expected to be more cautious and intellectual

and are given greater technological support in Mystery and Communion, while women are better-supported in Industry and War as befits their expectations of strength and courage. (There is no game effect from this. If you want your character to hew to this standard, select your Natures appropriately; if not, you are simply an exception to the rule.) Children who do not strongly identify with one or the other are expected to eventually "choose a side", and to use Self-magic to make it so. Many people wait until their twenties or thirties before finalizing their choice, but almost none change afterward.

Nowhere is this divide more clear than in the Guild's social clubs. The vast majority of them are single-gender. Many are arranged around a particular purpose, from sports to games to politics to sorcery. Nearly all have a "rival society" - a women's kayaking club, for example, might hold races against a men's kayaking club from a neighboring prefecture.

Loyalty to fellow club members and to one's gender is *de rigeur*. Lattice Travel keeps distant friends together through their club. Guild members mingle with one another at the lodge, discussing or participating in the club's activities. They flirt, court, and marry primarily within the same club. This leads most married couples to have a strong shared interest, which the Guild as a whole considers very healthy.

Spotlight: Law and Justice

The Guild hasn't just codified its magic and its education - it also has a codified set of laws and an extensive system of justice, judgment, and punishment. It is known as the Brightgarden Schema, for an ancient mythological figure of law and equality, Epitome of Brightgarden. It is implemented by the Guild's Branch of Integrity.

The Brightgarden Schema began as a system designed to prevent infighting and settle disputes amongst the original Guild. It is very much a product of its time and its authors. Theft, murder, rape, and curses are explicitly called out as crimes, but guidelines are given to determine what is and is not a future criminal act. It allows dueling, but not vendettas. It demands restitution rather than incarceration or punishment. Periods of ostracization and shunning are occasionally prescribed, but there are few permanent punishments allowed. It treats all members as equals, with the exception of the Branch Chairs (the leaders of each Branch), who are given additional latitude and power. Members of the Branch of Integrity who are pursuing their duties are held to a different standard, but one that is also codified and strictly enforced.

The Schema isn't perfect. There are certainly some areas where its age shows. However, it's the oldest law system that actually deals directly with magic, its abuses, and the loopholes that people might exploit in a mystical world. Thus, as with their magical tradition, the laws of the Guild have spread across much of the Basin and the Schema has been used as the basis and inspiration for legal systems in dozens of nations.

Hallmarks

- Public libraries
- Mystic architecture
- Roads laid out in holy geometric patterns
- Schools and gymnasiums for mystical training
- Hair, tattoos, and even veins that run in strict lines and perfect circles
- Carefully pruned and fractured ley lines that provide power to all citizens
- Burrowing construct-insects enchanted to carve a whole continent with runes
- Apprentices working in unison to create great mystical structures for their teachers
- Ziggurats, pyramids, obelisks, and other structures of stark form, often hovering over the center of a perfectly circular lake
- Transit centers where all the Lattice nodes from nearby lands have been combined into a single massive nexus, allowing the Guild to observe and measure Travel more easily

Core Values

Understanding geometry and logic requires one to prioritize **Order Above All**. The universe has order to it, though it may be complex. Society must have order too, so that it does not fall into chaos.

The Guild's mystic origins are still an important part of it today. The ultimate goal of geometry is to free oneself from the realm of the flesh and enter the realm of matter, of energy, perhaps even of pure thought. Any barriers within the self are to be overcome. From neophyte to master, all are told, **Transcend Your Limits**.

Traditions

Sacred Geometry: C4 I5 M5 S4 T4 W5

The Guild's one and only tradition is **Sacred Geometry**, which uses Geometry to engage in Alchemy. Its effects can be seen all over the lands, from too-straight roads and trading arcs to complex three-dimensional pathways in river dams and deep mines. All citizens use it to ward themselves and their houses, and to provide for themselves without the need for farms or labor. The Guild's masters commonly:

- Design fields in shapes that both maximize crop yield and condense mana from the air
- Build fractal-edged tools with which to tow Travel lattice points into new positions
- Inscribe patterns on lenses with which to analyze the world more closely
- Use memorized and repeated mantra-proofs to open Travel gates or to Shadow-Walk

- Trade complex knotted bracelets with friends, allowing them to maintain Rapport at great distances
- Construct automata with mathematical inscriptions that can link together in different ways for a variety of effects

Other traditions are learned here only by members of outside societies, or as passed down through family lines from immigrants. As immigration is carefully controlled, this is fairly rare.

Benefit

Once per session, when they achieve an Advantage through conflict or Theme use that deals with logical deduction, mathematics, or geometry, Guild members may raise the level of that advantage by one (for instance, from Minor to Moderate).

Glimmermere

History

The original Glimmermere was an artist's collective, on the shore of a lake. Its residents were painters, potters, poets, and craftspeople. On the day of the Gift they were gathered on the mural in their great meeting-hall. They felt the power take hold of them, each of them coming to a personal epiphany before joining together in communal Rapport. It was a powerful feeling that the original members of the collective would think back to even centuries later.



For some time the residents of Glimmermere continued on in the Basin, learning and growing together, improving their art. Then things became too dangerous for them. They were thinkers and artists, not soldiers. Rather than stay and risk their lives, they slipped quietly through that very same mural and beyond the world, into the Dream World known as Sunset-Over-Sea. Once they had their feet under them, they painted and sculpted the world around them to suit their liking. Most find it much more likeable than they did the Basin.

Over the centuries they've gathered other talented artists to them. Some were like-minded, and stayed. Some were not, and went their own way. As each artisan created further masterpieces, they opened up pathways to new Dream Worlds. Sometimes an enclave of citizens would step through to that world, and Glimmermere spread across hundreds of worlds. It may not be the largest civilization, but it's almost certainly the most widespread.

Most citizens of Glimmermere left the Great Basin behind forever. The end of the Interregnum seems unlikely to entice them back. Some, however, return there from time to time. Many are wistful wanderers, looking for friendship or inspiration. These explorers are often ill-prepared, thinking their magical talent and full-body mystical tattoos alone sufficient for the task. Older residents travel better-prepared. Their garments are covered with artwork, all of it mystically active. Patterns and hues in their clothing change at their command - some might calm minds and heal hearts, others might shunt violence into the Dream Realms. Their hair is woven in ways that map the Travel lattice. People who've only met Glimmermere's dreamers are surprised to see someone so prepared, but being an artist requires planning as well as improvisation.

Bodies in Glimmermere, though they certainly look striking, are typically fairly conventional in their structure. Many people paint or sculpt themselves into new forms, but in general the residents prefer to create avant-garde takes on conventional bodies rather than living as something "nonsensical" like a hyperintelligent shade of the color blue.

Glimmermere is an adhocacy.

Spotlight: Drama

Glimmermere loves drama. There's a place and a time for it, and that time, in addition to on the stage, is during a romantic relationship.

Residents of Glimmermere believe that romance should be *romantic*. It should be a tumultuous affair, a driving need, something to shake the foundations of the world and leave you breathless. It doesn't matter who you love - indeed, forbidden love can be the *most* romantic, though taboos on age remain. What matters is that you love strongly and freely and without restraint.

Visitors to Glimmermere sometimes find themselves caught up in this if they catch someone's eye, or if someone considers them a potential rival. Fortunately, most affairs are short, and children are rare. The lasting consequences are more emotional than physical. There's an understanding, at least among the locals, that the consequences of romance should remain within that arena and not spill out into the rest of life.

Spotlight: Growing and Flowering

On the opposite end of the see-saw from Glimmermere's drama obsession is their desire for wisdom. Life experiences are not merely to be felt, but to be learned from, internalized, and turns into inspiration.

The reality of immortality has shifted the narrative that wisdom belongs only to the old. Many Glimmermere residents take on a more cyclic approach. Each part of their life (social, creative, family, etc.) is in either what some call a "growing" phase or in a "flowering" phase. Those who are growing make mistakes to learn from - they live lives of drama, chaos, and great activity. Those who are in a "flowering" phase have the wisdom of their experiences, and are able to share that with others. Someone might say that they're growing as an artist but flowering as a parent, for example.

It should be noted that Glimmermere's residents are just as bad at accepting advice as they are good at giving it. Even someone who admits they're in a growing phase might not be willing to hear from someone who's flowering.

Hallmarks

- A focus on form over function
- Self-perpetuating dream world factories
- Works of art in the process of creating themselves.
- Ornate cities raised in a weekend and razed a week later

- Strange landscapes appearing and disappearing in the sky
- Custom-drawn constellations to enhance astrological powers
- Children learning magic earlier than in any other civilization
- Statues performing plays and arias to accumulate stores of mana
- Bodies dreamed into beautiful symmetry or some fascinating, new, unheard-of form
- A trail of exhibition halls across a dozen Dream Worlds, each with a painting that leads to the next

Core Values

Whatever else you do, you must **Live your Truth**. Do not conceal who or what you are, and don't let others convince you to hide it either. It's ok to play pretend, or to be an actor. It's not ok to stuff down what you are just to make someone else happy.

However, you are not the only being in this world. **Carry the Thread**. Bring the work of others into your own, call back to what has been done before, make the meaning of others clear in your own work. Isolation is a weakness in art.

Traditions

The Higher Talent: C5 I5 M5 S5 T4 W3

The Mad Power: C5 I3 M3 S5 T5 W5

Art on its own can feel magical. **The Higher Talent** is art as true magic, using symbolism and metaphor to craft magical effects from artistic works and techniques. The Higher Talent follows Artistry to Oneiromancy. Each resident of Glimmermere has their own particular artistic focus, and so dozens of variants on The Higher Talent are taught by masters of the various arts.

Painting, sculpture, poetry - all manner of artistic endeavor apply. Virtuosos have applied the Higher Talent to:

- Sketch their friends and speak to them at great distances
- Hand-sculpt an object out of the air itself
- Whisper a few unfinished lines of haiku and fade from awareness
- Play a complex song of interleaving rhythms that opens a pathway to another world

Sometimes art is too slow or too easily misinterpreted. Sometimes you just need power. **The Mad Power** follows the path of Wild Magic to Arete, and it's associated with many a legendary rescue or tantrum. If the Higher Talent is a carefully planned and executed portrait, the Mad Power angrily tears the canvas and hurls paint. Divas have used the Mad Power to:

- Douse themselves in mud and break out of the hardened shell in a new form
- Fragment into hundreds of multicolored prism-selves that fight like an army
- Scarify the soul with patterns both beautiful and terrible

- Smash together collected bits of discordant mana and scream loud enough to shatter a building

Most inhabitants of Glimmermere know both traditions but are hesitant to call on The Mad Power. It locks one into a vengeful mindset too easily, they say. Still, there is no taboo against learning it, only against using it too often.

Benefit

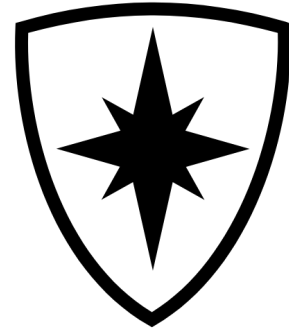
Citizens of Glimmermere receive the Artist profession at 3 (with the usual two specializations), and competitive advantage in Artist.

The Golden Ægis

History

Not every religion is true.

The Church of the Shield ruled an archipelago that stretched for nearly a thousand koss. They built towers of shining black rock to exalt the virtues of their gods, and the angels who came invisibly to protect believers and non-believers alike. When they received the Gift, they built those towers taller still, and capped them with portals to the Worlds Beyond. The church had long known of these distant realms, but now that there was a chance of actually reaching them, the congregations rushed to meet their gods. They knew of the chaos that was spreading across the world. Surely, with their own might added to that of the angels, the world could be brought to a joyous peace.



Though they reached the Worlds Beyond, they never found their gods - or anyone who had ever heard of them. Their religion had been a lie all along. It was... disappointing.

While the church crumbled, faith remained. Some of the largest congregations came together and made a pact amongst themselves, reinforced by magic. If their gods did not exist, then by all that was holy, they *should*.

These people became "Shieldbearers" of the Golden Ægis: would-be protectors of the Basin. They are the angels and gods that their people needed. They live in mana-rich Worlds Beyond and along ley lines in the Basin, using the excess power to bind themselves together in a civilization-wide Rapport. They are not a hive-mind - individual Shieldbearers retain their identity - but the Overmind of the Ægis is there in all their minds, a comforting presence and a source of strength. It is through this that they measure themselves and each other, dreaming of one another's thoughts and deeds, recognizing the inherent worth of each person and what they have done.

The Ægis is a very hierarchical timocracy, ruled by those who are instinctively seen to have the greatest honor. Honor in the Ægis is achieved by upholding the civilization's Core Values in word and deed. The Overmind records and esteems their acts. Wishing to rule is considered dishonorable; thus it is that several of the Ægis' highest-ranking officials are all but forced to continue with their positions. Some would do almost anything to be replaced, but cannot bring themselves to sacrifice their own honor - yet.

Spotlight: Focus

Shieldbearers are expected to concentrate on their duties when in the field. When off-duty, they can pursue their own interests and hobbies, or even simply relax. When on-duty, their minds should be on the important work of bringing justice to the world. This focus requires the Shieldbearers to know themselves. To act for the greater good rather than for selfish causes, they must know their own reactions and goals.

Some time after their ascension to the Vessel of Heaven, the Ægis decided that the custom of gender and the stereotypes attached to sexuality clouded the knowledge of the self. They believe now that freedom from these constructs allows them to see their own selves without the stereotypes and potential confusion that gender can bring. Shieldbearers present themselves without gender and without sexual characteristics. Those who are old enough to have been there when the Ægis began used Self-magic to remove their sexual characteristics.

Children in the Ægis are born of a union between two or more Shieldbearers, each contributing a portion of their magical signature. Most begin as children, but some (especially in times of duress) spring full-grown into existence. All are born sexless. Those who embrace sex or gender later in their lives are seen with some degree of uncertainty by their fellows - do they really know themselves well enough to say that they fit into these categories, or have they simply accepted an easier path?

Spotlight: Humility and Respect

When they chose to emulate holy beings, the Ægis did not merely seek power. They wanted to become the angels of their stories: honorable, humble, respectful, and dutiful.

A proper Shieldbearer does not boast of their own deeds. They do not place themselves in positions of political influence or use their reputation to funnel mana or change policies. They tend to their duties and to the wellbeing of others - and occasionally to their own wellbeing, for a sick doctor can unintentionally harm thousands. They are equally unmoved by threats and bribery.

A proper Shieldbearer also uses humor to disarm anxiety, meets anger with compassion, and sheds insults like a duck sheds rain. They act based not on the positions of others, but on their merits. They seek to bring others not only to physical wellbeing, but to mental and emotional health as well.

It's not easy to be a proper Shieldbearer. Most lean heavily toward one particular set of virtues, and that is considered normal. After all, striving is a virtue as well, and that could not be true if perfection were expected of everyone.

Hallmarks

- Muscular humanoid bodies with animal heads
- Speaking with friends far-off through the Overmind
- Hosannas and bells played by invisible magical servants
- Children being taught of far-off lands and their cultures
- Symbols of the Ægis' gods tattooed or branded in strategic locations
- Island retreats for those times when Shieldbearers must relax and recuperate
- Many-armed armor of dark gold with wings of blue light, summoned from beyond
- Pools of blue energy that collect the most intense of beliefs and passions, to fuel later magical endeavors
- Meditation circles separated by entire worlds, using Rapport to keep their fellows in regular communication with one another
- The Regimen Affectus, a civilization-wide aspect-resonance that helps people control their emotions and maintain calm in the face of stress or danger

Core Values

Each member of the Ægis is expected to **Bring the Light** wherever they go. They carry offerings of peace, justice, and understanding to those who are ready to receive them. For those who are not, they have stern words, and sterner actions if need be.

However, simply opening eyes is not enough. A Shieldbearer must also **Answer the Call** when someone requests that they take action. If they hear of injustice in a far-off land, if someone speaks of being tortured or assaulted, citizens of the Ægis take those things seriously. They need not go flying off immediately, but they cannot simply let the matter pass.

Traditions

The Calling: C5 I5 M3 S5 T3 W5

The Aura of Heaven: C4 I3 M5 S5 T4 W3

In learning **The Calling**, Shieldbearers follow the path of Belief to the fount of Invocation. It is typically tied to one of the Ægis' two Core Values, but is sometimes tied to a personal CV instead. The "gods" of the Ægis use this art to direct their angels, build new realms of Heaven, and continue to transform into impossible creatures of spirit. They rely on their angels to protect them as they plumb the depths of the multiverse. In return, these "gods" act as the patrons who empower others with the Aura of Heaven (below). The angels of the Ægis have been known to:

- Unlock the Travel lattice with the urgency of their need

- Heal with the belief that no one should have to suffer
- Coerce a ley line into shifting with the studied conviction of a hundred souls
- Project their love for their allies into a glowing shield that grows stronger the more it is tested

The Aura of Heaven is the power of Arete, bestowed on angels by their distant Patrons. It is the source of their holy armors, their dashing flight, their beneficent healing touch. All of the more direct and interpersonal of the Ægis' magical expressions are all part of the Aura, to better facilitate their work in the Basin. The gods of the Ægis have granted the power to:

- Call on The All-Benevolent Eye to reveal secrets and danger
- Learn the secrets hidden in ancient tomes from the whispers of The Eternal Librarian
- Beseech That-Which-Endures for protection
- Give their physical form to They-Who-Witness, so that it might become what the world needs in this moment.

All members of the Ægis who operate in the Basin take on the Aura of Heaven. All who make their homes in the Realms Beyond know The Calling. Many Shieldbearers know both.

Benefit

Once per session, a Shieldbearer can reduce a Complication by one level in the moment they take it by drawing extra strength from the Overmind.

The Hearth-Kin

History

The Interregnum was a terrifying time in the Great Basin. Armies marched every day. Cities were destroyed by fire and ice and plague. Assassination was commonplace, and oaths of vengeance dragged out wars for dozens and even hundreds of years.



Many of the more peaceful folk of the Basin feared for their lives and their families. Some of them (like Those Above the Sky) stayed in the same world but moved away from the Basin. Others (like Glimmermere) drifted into Dream Worlds to escape. The ancestors of the Hearth-Kin went to the Worlds Beyond. This was dangerous territory. These folk made some of the earliest maps of the Worlds Beyond, showing safe passages and dangerous locales. That knowledge was often paid for in lives and limbs lost. Eventually, though, they found places that were hospitable to them, with pantheons who looked on what happened in the Basin with sorrow and were happy to take in refugees.

As the wars began to end, many of these expatriated families found each other. They expressed sadness at the state of the world. They felt guilty for leaving when they might have helped (even if, in truth, the wars were driven by forces they could not have opposed). They regretted their abandonment of the world, and resolved to return to it – to take responsibility for their actions and to live up to their potential.

A great oath ("The Congerie") sealed them together into one large family, the Hearth-Kin. They are returning even now to the Basin. The trip back has not been quick or easy, but they are prepared and determined to make a difference. The group's advance scouts find the places where they can do the most good, where things are most dire or where injustice is rampant. The Hearth-Kin then descend onto those places from the Worlds Beyond and immediately work to make right what went wrong.

When the Hearth-Kin settle a place, they often plant a Hometree on a ley line confluence. This powerful structure serves as housing, provides food, and defends those within. It even drops fruits full of properly aspected mana.

The Hearth-Kin settle matters via direct democracy, but prefer consensus-building to explicit votes.

Spotlight: Family

The Hearth-Kin traveled in large family groups on their way back to the Basin. This was both for companionship and for protection against a dangerous world. Their initial settlements tend to be 400-500 individuals, many of them distant cousins, with another two extended families arriving within the year.

The Hearth-Kin have three primary sexes: two who provide genetic material, and a third sex that incubates the material until the birth of the child. This was an unanticipated side-effect of the Congerie, but one that the Hearth-Kin have embraced over time.

The first sex, niha, are known for keen perception and wanderlust. The second sex, bachav, are known for being slow but strong and durable, with a high pain tolerance. The third sex, ranan, are known for feats of memory and creativity, and for being hungry often. The niha fertilize the bachav's eggs, which they in turn provide to the ranan. Some Hearth-Kin live most of their life in one of these sexes, but most use the Self-nature to switch back and forth from year to year depending on their current mindset. (Much as with differences between male and female characters, there is no game effect for these sexes.)

Children among the Hearth-Kin are stereotypically happy, loud, numerous, and smart enough to shut up and hole up when there might be danger. Having a family is considered part of growing up among the Hearth-Kin, and no one is considered an adult until they've raised children of their own.

As in all human civilizations, some children are born as intersex, not easily assigned to one of the three. The Hearth-Kin honor these children the same as any other, and try to help them find their place or stake out a new space for themselves. All Hearth-Kin are acutely aware of what it feels like to have others treat them as bizarre for how they were born, and they will not do that to their own children.

Spotlight: Brother's Keeper

The Hearth-Kin have no formal code of justice. They've seen such things abused too often in the Worlds Beyond. This leads to an inconsistent approach, with what is and is not a crime being decided by local elders and tribunals. One Hometree's justices might decide that it's unreasonable to tap the local ley line without emergency need, and demand that restitution be paid to those downstream. Another Hometree's matriarch might deem it reasonable but insist on oversight. These judgments are rarely written down, and there's not much care for consistency. Let the punishment fit the crime, and let reeducation and restitution be more common than punishment; that's Hearth-Kin justice in a nutshell.

One element that's consistent across the Hearth-Kin is the idea that everyone is responsible for one another in all that they do. This applies on a community-wide level (you can't just banish someone and let them hurt other civilizations) and on an individual level. If your friend is doing something wrong, you can't just walk away and wash your hands of it. If you know they're going to hurt someone, you share in the blame when you decide not to stop them.

Visitors from other civilizations often find this very difficult. It leads to the sort of behavior that most people associate with organized crime, but aimed in an entirely different direction. Both would say "If you screw this up I'm on the line too," but rather than saying, "Stay quiet, do what's good for you, don't be a snitch," the Hearth-Kin encourage one another: "Stand up, do what's right, get loud if you have to." You'll never hear the phrase "mind your own business" among the Hearth-Kin. Everyone's business is everyone else's business, and citizens believe that they'll all rise or fall together.

Hallmarks

- Healing fruits
- Everyone carries a knife
- Fast-growing vegetation
- People calling each other "cousin"
- Strident philosophical debates
- People taking care of each other's children
- Herbology greenhouses soundproofed for mandrake
- Frequent lightning storms that provide or discharge excess mana
- Tattoos bearing strange powers from the blood of creatures in the Worlds Beyond
- Mementoes of friends long distant to help trigger cascades of memory and willpower
- Children learning and playing with sprites, pixies, and other small spirits of Earthpower
- Redwood treehouses growing in the middle of a savannah, or jungles impossibly sprouting in arctic regions

Core Values

Members of the Hearth-kin know that to **Love your Family** is the highest calling. You don't have to get along, but you have to try. You don't have to obey, but you have to listen. You don't have to agree, but you have to help when someone's in a tough spot. Much like the Hearth-Kin didn't all start out as family, an individual member's definition of "Family" can include whomever they want, not just those sworn in Congerie.

But you can't just sit out and be with your family while there are things to be done. **Build a Just World.** Help the oppressed, oppose tyrants, and call out injustice where you see it – and don't wait. Action today is better than excuses tomorrow.

Traditions

What Binds Us: C5 I5 M3 S3 T3 W5

What Defines Us: C3 I3 M5 S5 T5 W3

All members of the Hearth-Kin know both of these Traditions.

What Binds Us was used to create the pact that originally united the Hearth-Kin. It follows the often-maligned path of Blood Magic to the fount of Earthpower. The Hearth-Kin's blood-oath to the universe and its people is what allows them to draw on that fount. It is this that keeps this new civilization together, both in terms of communication and in terms of building homes for everyone and defending them. Its masters can:

- Mark a necklace with a drop of blood to ward off curses
- Grow a healing herb in their wild hair or by spitting on the ground
- Listen to their own heartbeat to hear the voices of distant friends
- Cut their hand over the ground in a ritual pattern and summon forth a living watchtower with lichen circuitry and protective patterns writ in gleaming leaves

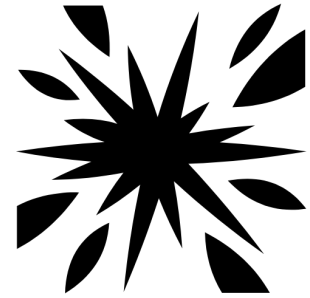
What Defines Us counterbalances the binding tradition, letting each person follow their own Beliefs and achieve Arete. It is the magic of one's own mind, body, and soul, separate from others. The Core Values that power What Defines Us are almost always drawn from a personal or societal belief rather than from one of the civilization's common CVs. Adepts of the defining tradition have:

- Burned away illusions with their dedication to the truth
- Led their enemies into pocket dimensions for the sheer laugh of it
- Meditated upon their own nature until they became their greatest dreams
- Explored the intersection between love and charity to enchant others with healing power

Benefit

Their long travels in the Worlds Beyond left the the Hearth-Kin with many allies. Once per session they may gain a Moderate Advantage when finding allies in or from the Worlds Beyond.

Nova Commonwealth



History

A nova, or new star, is a new wish of Aum's expressed in shining light. This nation named itself after the same concept: a new, shining idea in the world.

Nova was one of the first civilizations to escape the Interregnum. Being close to a number of natural magical locales and having many sorcerers already living in the area, they had a head start when it came to dealing with a magically-enhanced society. This let them give aid to shore up nearby kingdoms and federations when they threatened to collapse. This, in turn, made the core of their empire safer, freeing time for leisure and experimentation. Eventually they became less of an empire and more a federation of allied states, each seeking to advance sorcery in their own unique ways. They have seen several other civilizations come and go.

Today Nova has splintered into over a hundred member groups, officially called states but more commonly referred to as sects. The core of the group is a dozen larger sects with millions of members each. Many more conservative sects drew a line somewhere in their magical experimentation that they were unwilling to cross. Meanwhile, other more radical sects crossed the lines that no one else would. Sometimes this ends with eventual acceptance and a return to the fold. Sometimes not.

Each sect typically has its own area of specialty. Some focus on exploring Dream Worlds. Others look for unifying principles between the Paths. Some are primarily economic, traveling the Basin to obtain the rare and strongly-aspected materials needed for others to continue their research. Some sects serve as temporary "retirement" communities where those who have grown weary or feel burned out can relax for a few years. Few citizens of Nova can bring themselves to rest on their laurels for too long.

Each sect of Nova is ruled differently, with democracy being fairly common. Settling disputes between different sects or setting direction for Nova as a whole is done by vote, but there is a fair amount of corruption, making it closer to a plutocracy at the higher levels.

Spotlight: Responsibility

The Commonwealth expects its citizens (and people in general) to act responsibly. If everyone does what they want, then everyone needs to act in a mature and conscientious manner. There are minimal laws in the Commonwealth, aimed primarily at settling disputes between sects. Consequences at the personal level are far more often delivered via social pressure than via law enforcement. This might sound ineffective, but keep in mind that "social pressure" means "a

thousand archmagi have all gotten together and decided you're a rotten git". That's not something to trifle with. Confusing for outsiders, yes. Ineffective, no.

Unfortunately, there's a certain amount of blame attached here as well, and a conceit of superiority. Nova citizens often feel that people from the Commonwealth, with their magical prowess, should not be making excuses when something bad happens - even when that thing is the result of someone else's actions. You should have known. You should have acted differently.

When one person feels they've been unfairly treated, and the other party refuses to admit wrongdoing, there's often little recourse within the Commonwealth's legal system. Extreme cases lead to people rounding up as many friends as are willing to participate and meting out punishment on their own. "Mob justice" has an uncomfortably large role in Nova's history.

Spotlight: The Million Ways

When the Hearth-Kin returned from the Worlds Beyond, with their unexpected new sexes, some civilizations questioned whether they should technically be considered human. The change was large, many said. They should be considered a new class of being.

Nova refused to even begin that discussion. Across thousands of sects, almost unanimously, they spoke: There would be no debate on this front.

There was no redeeming quality, stated the citizens and rulers of Nova, in a debate on whether or not someone was considered human. The Commonwealth charter did not even contain the words "human beings" - it spoke of the rights of "all self-aware beings" and even of "all beings", because the road to "technically not human" was a road of bigotry, degradation, and disgrace. There would be no debate. Nova demanded, on behalf of the Hearth-Kin, the same respect for selves and rights that was shown to all other individuals, because there are a million ways to be alive, and humanity is no greater than any other thinking being. With Nova's size and influence, the other civilizations had little choice but to agree.

The Covenant of the Million Ways has guided Nova well in many other matters as well, from providing equity amongst their own citizens to dealing with sentients from other parts of the Kaleidoscope. Nova is perhaps the easiest civilization to get around in for those whose bodies and minds differ from those of conventional humanity.

Hallmarks

- Complicated relationships
- Buildings floating in mid-air
- Flamboyant fashion and style

- Aerial chariots and earth-swimming trains
- Romantic triads and quads, including as parents
- Massive turbines along ley lines that cleanse polluted mana
- Drawing Earthpower from multiple uninhabited alternate worlds
- Dumping chaotic mana beyond the Basin where it cannot harm anyone
- Infinitely-recursive dreams within dreams generating oneiromantic power
- Alternating cells of wild magic and static patterns that spontaneously build new structures
- Ley Junctioning by which individuals can "donate" unused power back to Nova's ley line network, and draw more on it when the need arises

Core Values

The first rule of the Commonwealth is **Cause No Harm**. Magic can have horrible side-effects, and many magi in the past have done terrible things simply because they had the power and no one could stop them. The most radical or conservative of sects typically splinter off because they disagree on what will cause harm. The mainline of Nova culture sees Cause No Harm as an imperative that extends even to economic and societal harms, tying in strongly with their ideas of responsibility and the Million Ways.

Once you've learned to avoid harm, **Do What Thou Wilt**. This is not a passive dismissal of other's actions or behavior; this is a commandment. Find what you love, or find what you want to do, and do it. Nova has a well-deserved reputation for bleeding-edge technology, and this is part of why. The Commonwealth does not consider it proper business to police one another's work, either on a personal level or sect-to-sect. With magic and immortality a real part of the world, there are few mistakes that cannot be repaired afterward, with amends and apologies made.

Traditions

Each sect has its own unique Tradition; sometimes more than one. The most common Founts are Alchemy and Oneiromancy. The more material Paths tend to dominate, as they are easier to experiment with, but there are sects representing every Path and every Fount. Players of Nova characters should create their own Tradition(s) according to the rules on page xx.

Benefit

Commonwealth citizens are used to turning roadblocks into opportunities. They receive an extra Twist *each* time their use of Themes is stymied in a session, not just the first time. (See SA2 page 68)

The Sovereigns of Hell

History

Some parts of the Basin are, by luck or ancient curse or mere coincidence, connected with other worlds. One particular kingdom was uncomfortably close to one of the Worlds Beyond, a hellish plane of devils and fire. For untold ages these creatures regularly brought strife and grief to the lands. When the Gift came, someone unknown closed that gap, and the kingdom was ravaged by demons for decades. Tempters, warlords, deceivers and destroyers, they showed the common folk no mercy, letting them recover only long enough that they would be good sport again.



It was a century before the resistance gathered well enough and learned well enough to fight. In a holy crusade, every citizen rallied their power, and together they invaded the demon realm. In a few short years they had claimed a space a hundred koss on a side and forced the denizens there into servitude. While demon-binding is no longer a valid art, there are other ways to force those weaker than you to serve.

The Sovereignty now is a land of beauty and majesty, its natural bounty clear for all to see. The citizens there live lives of ease and happiness, and all their needs are provided for. Meanwhile, in Hell, the war continues, with sorcerer-generals leading armies of devils deeper into that world and conquering ever more territory. They mean to see that the natives of that world will never threaten the Basin again, and that they will regret what they did in perpetuity.

The Sovereigns are nominally an autarchy, ruled by the Imperios of Hell. Realistically, this ruler's decrees are few because of the likelihood that they will be ignored, and individual families rule themselves for the most part.

Spotlight: Seduction

In the old days there were incubi and succubi aplenty traveling the Sovereigns' kingdom. These demons had a particular interest in sexual temptation, and in using that as power over mortals. Whatever you might imagine about them is likely true - they were creatures of archetype and stereotype, but not much additional personality.

To protect themselves from this devilry the citizens started concealing their genders. They wore loose-fitting garments; they bound their sex characteristics; they shaved and plucked. Eventually the denied tempter demons were so frustrated that they lost much of their power. This process took decades, and was important for centuries more. Concealing one's gender was deeply ingrained in the Sovereigns' society by the time the Gift arrived.

The Sovereigns still keep to this tradition today. Robes and hoods are still common clothing. Beards are almost unheard-of. The vast majority use the Trickery-nature to further conceal their identities. Sexuality is important amongst the Sovereigns - indeed, it is quite valued - but a Sovereign's sexual identity is something that they only reveal to their closest associates.

Spotlight: Independence

When people care to list the positive aspects of the Sovereigns of Hell, one particular phrase is most commonly listed: "Fiercely Independent." Sovereigns won't let anyone tell them what to do, and they'll go to substantial lengths to make sure that they're not even in a position where they'd have to obey orders.

Some of this comes across as stubbornness, an "I'll do it myself" mentality that appears even when "do it myself" means "call forth a demon to do it for me." Sovereigns work well in parallel, and they're excellent improvisers, but they're more likely to throw out a plan that seems poor and attempt to do things their own way. They learn a lot this way. Sometimes they're only able to learn from these moments because they're immortal.

The Sovereigns' personal independence also leads to some unexpected consequences. For instance, Sovereigns rarely borrow. When they do, they always pay their debts - and quickly. For them, a debt is a chain that vanishes into the fog. You never really know who will be on the other end. They also write very clearly delineated contracts, with well-defined deliverables. (Their entire legal system, such as it is, consists of contracts, plus the occasional vendetta against oathbreakers.) Their independence also keeps the number of Sovereigns in the Archive low - sure, they're interested in the world's secret history, but then they might have to kowtow to some know-it-all higher up the academic hierarchy, and who wants to live like that?

Hallmarks

- Children playing with demons
- Adults lounging and sipping cocktails
- Researchers or generals directing several square miles of spirits
- Networks of imps working according to a plan on large, complex projects
- Swarms of minute homonculi that congregate to serve as assistants, squires, apprentices, and nursemaids
- Kilometer-wide lenses focusing the light of the Nine Deathly Moons of Hell for enhanced magical potency
- Arcs of lightning, fire, and other energy displays that convey mystical power and demon-spirits from place to place

- Servants called from the Worlds Beyond with bold-colored skin, extra limbs, wings, insectile or piscine features, and nimbuses of dark power

Core Values

The Sovereigns have learned over centuries that holding to tradition won them nothing but pain and suffering. **Transgression** is what broke them loose from eons of abuse. Holding to the beliefs of the past is not valued in the Sovereignty; one must blaze new paths and throw antique moralities to the side if they stand in the way.

On their coming-of-age day, the young folk of the Sovereignty are told: **You Need Prove Nothing**. If outsiders demand that you show what right you have to command the demons, if your friends press you to perform tricks for them, if someone tells you that dues must be paid in order to participate, you owe them nothing. They have lowered themselves by asking. Each person born after the Gift is a dictatorship unto themselves if they wish to be, and none may make demands of its ruler.

Traditions

Devilpower: C3 I5 M3 S3 T5 W5

The Sage's Path: C3 I5 M5 S5 T3 W3

The Silent Path: C5 I3 M5 S5 T4 W3

The most common route to power among the Sovereigns is known as **Devilpower**, or, in more flowery language, **The Fearless Path**. It coerces the denizens of hell to act as Patrons, calling forth expressions from the fount of Invocation. From household tasks to construction to battle, the Sovereigns call demons to do their work for them, one chore at a time. A Sovereign might call upon:

- Minor imps and foul spirits, to do their daily chores
- Ungheta Gall-Of-Fire, to build walls of solid flame and darkness
- Korgarrath the Barren Mind, to cloud thoughts and lure the unwary
- 'Angu the Twice-Strong, to curse their foes with weakness

Not every Sovereign wants to have their actions seen by their ancient enemies, and so **The Sage's Path**, also known as **The Coward's Path**, is still commonly practiced. It takes the path of Geometry to the fount of Invocation, creating similar effects but concentrating more on understanding than on the arts of war. Master sages have been known to:

- Bend the eye and trap the mind with clever patterns
- Create simple animals through extensive manuals of geometric description
- Write forbidden formulae that open a hole to the Red Space
- Build the first mile of a road in such a way that it will, from that point, build itself forever forward

Once practiced only in secret, but now a darling of the avant-garde set, **The Silent Path** steps from Reagents to Necromancy. It is known as a spy's art, but it also sees use by Sovereign healers and investigators who need a greater knowledge than devilpower can afford them. Those on the Silent Path have been said to:

- Steal coins from the eyes of the dead that grant supernatural vision
- Disappear in a cloud of smoke and incense
- Send ghostly messengers across the dimensions
- Use powder made from a dozen undead creatures in perfect proportion to temporarily invigorate the living

Benefit

Most Sovereigns are protected by a myriad of visible and invisible demonic spirits. Reduce the teamwork bonuses that others receive against them in conflicts by one, including when facing opponents with Infrastructure.

Those Above the Sky

History

The Interregnum lit the Great Basin like match to paper, but there were some areas less affected than others. The nation of Kawandalei ("Those of the Sacred Tree"), for example, dealt very well with the Gift until local warlords turned pointed attentions their direction. The rulers there asked their people to build strong stone castles. The warlords vexed them with earthquakes. The rulers had the castles levitated above the ground. The warlords pounded them with meteors. The rulers ordered a measured retreat from their homeland. Slowly the entire nation of Kawandalei moved itself down the beaches, across the ocean, farther up into the sky, and out of the Great Basin's atmosphere entirely.



It was there that they discovered the Attic Lines. With careful manipulation of the energies there, they were able to not only survive in the vacuum of space, but also to choke those warlords out of mana and regain their homeland. Many returned, but certain individuals, who saw the opportunity for power and importance, did not. They abandoned their old name and became Udabalei, Those Above the Sky. They use their expertise to fracture off portions of the Attic Lines, directing refined or specially-aspected mana to their customers across the world. Other lines they combine or heal, taking care of the maintenance of this old but robust system of mana distribution. Some lines deliver polluted or chaotic mana to "dumps" near the edge of the Basin, where it will eventually flow out into the void. Those Above are not well-loved for their role in the Basin, but none have wanted to challenge them for their territory.

Those Above the Sky follow an anarcho-capitalist model with strong libertarian leanings. Each castle and its surrounding "village" handle one particular line, and they negotiate with each other and lean on one another to determine territorial boundaries.

Spotlight: Competition

A love of competition is considered important amongst Those Above. They compare themselves to one another on all manner of measurable and unmeasurable things - money, territory, deal-making, creativity, and more. This frequently manifests through braggadocio, put-down contests, and overacting. On-the-spot ceremonies are often conducted with a wink and a nod.

It's understood that these things are temporary. This helps to protect the ego. Victory is fleeting, limited to a particular arena or a particular time. Fame is easy-come, easy-go. There's a constant need to defend one's standing, but standing changes so often that only repeated losses really begin to sting. (Usually.)

This leads to a collision of expectations with other civilizations. Those who make deals with Those Above must tolerate constant bragging and insults. They'll say "It's only a joke" and "Oh, you'll be fine tomorrow," but at the same time, Those Above feel hurt when people hold things against them for more than a day. They're also insulted when someone keeps to a contract out of long-term loyalty rather than immediately accepting a newer, better offer. Overall, Those Above are considered fairly childish by other civilizations.

Spotlight: Diligence

Life in the space beyond the Basin is hard. Humanity was created (literally) to live within the Basin, to benefit from its protection and its life-giving nature. Moving beyond those confines is difficult. To minimize the effects of void-essence and increase their own survival rates, Those Above the Sky have a meticulous set of guidelines that they memorize and practice. Their own minds and bodies are at stake.

This same meticulous nature has spread into other aspects of life above the sky. People know not to be caught alone, so one always has traveling companions. Everyone keeps careful track of their belongings; therefore, borrowed things are returned promptly.

Because many of these practices are ingrained in Those Above at a young age, it's hard for them to break bad habits. This helps to explain why there are so few of Those Above in other lands - they just don't adapt as well to environments that require constant adaptation instead of constant diligence.

Hallmarks

- Copious warning signs
- People traveling in groups
- Industrial vats of reagents awaiting use
- Non-fatal birth defects are fairly common
- Rows upon rows of golems making ritual inscriptions
- Ley Modulators that send signals through the Attic Lines
- Glowing arcs of power like water running down a window
- Eyes and skin shaded grey due to the low-mana surroundings
- Notably low sexual drive - romance exists, but children are rare
- Friends and acquaintances separated across tens of thousands of koss
- Castles floating in the void, with cubes, spheres, and more inventive shapes orbiting them, serving as homes
- Dictionary-sized "factories" that can quickly bud and grow various objects as part of their mana transmutation cycles

Core Values

Young adults of this civilization start to **Seek Independence** early. They learn the paths of conjuration so that they will not go hungry, walk the roads of the self so that they can withstand physical hardship, and seek to strike out on their own as soon as they are able. Despite their connection with so many economies across the Basin, Those Above the Sky hate to depend on others, or even on the land itself.

At the same time, they seek to **Take Responsibility** - in a somewhat unusual sense. Yes, they stand up for what they have done and attempt to right wrongs (when they can admit them), but they also seek *positions* of responsibility. For Those Above, responsibility is not something bestowed upon you, it's something you stand up and take on.

Traditions

The Starlit Way: C5 I3 M5 S3 T5 W5

The Home-builder's Art: C3 I5 M5 S5 T3 W3

Those Above the Sky followed **The Starlit Way** to reach their current position, using the path of Reagents to draw power from the fount of Alchemy. An art of insight, augury, and strategy, this is what guided them beyond the world, and what let their now-distant cousins retake their homeland. Walkers on the Way have been known to:

- Brew potions of invisibility and intangibility
- Heal with elixirs and draw poison from wounds with crystals
- Set specks of star-stone into a flat wrist-mounted orrery for divination
- Build dozens of warrior-automata, then miniaturize and bottle them, ready to be deployed at a moment's notice

To keep their homes in working order in such a hostile environment, **The Home-builder's Art** is employed. It walks the path of Geometry to the fount of Elementalism. Practitioners draw architectural patterns to conjure new structures, some of which they live in, some of which they use to encase or adjust the Attic Lines. It predicts fluxes in power, determines the source of new flows of mana, and lets the citizens protect their forms. A well-practiced Home-builder might:

- Scribe a perfect square that lifts a cube of stone out of a mountain
- Trace geometric spirals that emit breathable air
- Redirect flows of mana via perfectly symmetrical formulae inscribed over and over
- Drop a rope embroidered with mathematical expressions that becomes a mystic circle, turning its bearer into an elemental being

The Home-Builder's Art is much more heavily employed in this day and age, but The Starlit Way is not uncommon. It provides long-distance communication, which Those Above the Sky badly need if they are to stay intact as a civilization.

Benefit

Those Above the Sky have learned additional techniques for conjuration and other physical magics. They have competitive advantage in Industry.

The Unroyal

History

Long ago, in a distant part of the Kaleidoscope, a powerful family had magical powers that they used to enslave a hundred thousand people. They walked from world to world through wild magic zones, so that their captives found the outside world horrible and dangerous. They stole their slaves' freedom, their dignity, and sometimes even their very thoughts, all so that they could live in luxury. They called themselves the Royals.



Then, one glorious day, their reign ended. Thousands of people snapped out of mind control. Tens of thousands more drank the wild magic like cold pure water and rained angry fire on their oppressors. Some of the Royals no doubt escaped, but their control had been broken, and the so-called "common folk" were free. Free, and surging with unexpected and uncomprehended power.

They banded together and named themselves in defiance of their former rulers: The Unroyal. Slowly they learned the magic of their oppressors in addition to their own, turning it to righteousness, introspection, and construction rather than excess and domination. After decades of seeking through the Kaleidoscope, they returned home to their own world, the Great Basin of humanity. There they found a new homeland, where they sought to end the Interregnum. They worked to teach love and respect, to sue for freedom when they could and fight for it when they could not, so that no one would ever suffer what they had.

Unlike the Hearth-Kin, the Unroyal have been back in the Basin for over three hundred years already. They've had time to sculpt a homelands however they like - but for the most part they haven't. They've been out in others' lands, building up the infrastructure there, working with the locals, helping them fight against autarchs and create their own nations.

Because their citizens are often on the move, much of the Unroyal's technology is focused on things they can bring with them. The most common devices are relics and enchanted objects that funnel wild magic or represent their beliefs. When they help with infrastructure, they concentrate on building things that can be handled by small groups working on their own. As the Guild and Those Above clearly show, one can wield power through more than just a rod, and economic control is still control.

The Unroyal are a representative democracy.

Spotlight: Role-Changing

During their long subjugation, the public personas of individual Unroyals were designated by the Royals. This included not only dress, but their behavior: outgoing or timid, active or retiring, rough or tender, in ways that matched the Royals' own societal roles. The Royals could be very particular about this, punishing their slaves for acting out of character, and assigning roles that they themselves found demeaning.

After they obtained their freedom, most Unroyals felt uncomfortable in the roles that had been designated for them. To free their minds, many intentionally swapped roles with others. Enterprising leaders trained and then became humble servants. Stern guards relaxed to take the role of friendly socialites. Most people quickly settled into positions and roles where they were comfortable - but a hundred years later, as the truth of immortality began to set in, the Unroyals returned to frequent role-changing as a way to keep their minds flexible. Someone who presents as hyper-masculine one day might be awkwardly effeminate a month later, or gracefully feminine, or masculine in a more compassionate way.

In some ways, these changes (and their own overly busy lives) blind the Unroyals to the plight of others when it comes to certain types of discrimination. When someone complains that they aren't able to do what they want because of their role in society, an Unroyal citizen is likely to suggest that people change who they are rather than to deal with a societal issue. If it's not tyranny, it's not so big that you can't change yourself to handle it. It takes the Unroyal some extra time to remember that other people value a long-term static self rather than a more fluid identity.

Spotlight: Courage and Service

Being Unroyal requires a certain amount of grit. Their children learn it at a young age - along with the difference between tenacity and just plain stubbornness. They also learn the importance of service. There's no way that the Unroyal are going to rid the Basin of tyranny without everyone working together. While the gigantic Nova Commonwealth scatters its seeds far and wide, and mighty Diadem wastes the majority of its citizens' talents, comparatively tiny Unroyal makes sure that everyone's pulling in the same direction.

Children among the Unroyal are taught teamwork as a means to an end. They don't have to love it, but it's how you get things done. One common metaphor is that when you want to shine bright, teamwork is the only oil for that lamp. Not all Unroyals enjoy cooperation, but all of them *value* it.

Most teams amongst the Unroyal don't have a single leader. With people taking on new personae on a regular basis, you can't rely solely on strong or compatible personalities to hold things together. Instead, they have experts for various situations. Being an expert is considered

its own kind of service: when people need what you know, you can't stubbornly hang on to a personality that's counterproductive. You need to step up now, and if you need to bow out gracefully, you wait for the danger to be over.

Hallmarks

- Eyes lit from within
- Features taken from animals
- Well-traveled allies from distant lands
- Danger is presaged by wind and thunder
- Strange occurrences that flout probability
- Councils with the great spirits of the world
- Bizarre plants with a hundred fascinating purposes
- Bottles full of chaotic mana for use when things are dire
- Mirrors that store the viewer's magical signature and intentions
- Paths that lead wanderers to the destination their heart desires - or deserves

Core Values

Just because the Gift frees all living beings from mind control doesn't mean no one can subjugate you. There are a thousand ways to control, all of them bad. **Let None Rule You.** You can work with someone, you can go with a vote you don't agree with, you can even take orders if you think someone knows better than you, but you do *not* bow your head - nor ask anyone to bow their head to you. The age of kings should be over, and the Unroyal will be the first people to tell you that the Interregnum is far from done.

Shine Brightly. Go into the dark places and bring the light. Whatever you can do best, do it, and do it to bring joy and life and freedom to the world. Don't let anyone stop you.

Traditions

The Key of Freedom: C5 I3 M3 S5 T3 W5

The Key of Courage: C3 I5 M5 S3 T5 W3

The first magic of the Unroyal was **The Key of Freedom**, which walks the path of Wild Magic to the fount of Earthpower. It is a personal and an interpersonal art, whether that means communication or battle or self-understanding. Importantly, it is never *impersonal*. The practitioner is never merely a conduit for power. Instead, the power is connected to who they are, have been, and will be. Bearers of the Key of Freedom have been known to:

- Flow with the roiling mana of battle to pull meteors from the sky
- Carefully piece together a Rapport by resonating with another's mana

- Listen to the wind and the weather to understand what is coming for them tomorrow
- Adapt to local spaces: become quiet in a quiet place, or hard and gnarled in a grove of ancient trees
- Use the mana of pain and suffering to call to the energy of healing, letting people transform themselves in moments of hardship to what they wish they had been

The art that the Unroyals took from their captors was **The Key of Courage**, which walks the paths of Belief to the fount of Invocation. It requires a Core Value pertaining to hierarchy, control, and command. The Unroyal's own *Let None Rule You* CV is most common, but any interpretation of those concepts will do. Bearers of the Key of Courage use it to:

- Use their own unquenchable nature to prevent the haughty from noticing them
- Trap a curse in a metaphorical labyrinth made of the strength of one's convictions
- Understand the Travel lattice's relationship to power, and thereby open it
- Recite catechisms to raise a wall of thunder between the worthy and the unworthy

The Key of Courage has been substantially reinvented and altered since its early days to cut out that which was most painful. There were arguments early on as to whether it was appropriate to learn at all, or whether it would lead to repeating the mistakes of the past. Those arguments are mostly gone now, but there are still some who refuse to learn it because of its history, calling it the Key of Folly.

Benefit

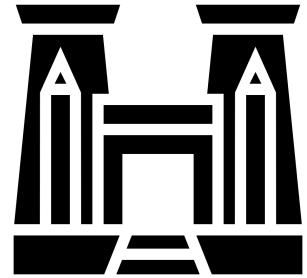
Once per session, when they achieve an Advantage through conflict or Theme use that frees or inspires others, Unroyals may raise the level of that advantage by one (for instance, from Minor to Moderate). In addition, when enchanting others with the Gift they move one step faster on the time ladder.

The Worldbuilders

History

The origin of the Worldbuilders is in great dispute, for reasons that will become apparent soon.

The Worldbuilders are an alliance of city-states spread across a long coastline and the surrounding lands. They are quite sparsely scattered, and in fact some Worldbuilder city-states have been discovered nestled within nearby nations, hidden on high plateaus, deep under lakes, or in inhospitable deserts. They appear in hard-to-find locales that were once considered uninhabitable.



Worldbuilder cities spread very quickly. They employ terraforming technology to reformat the land at the edge of their territory into a beautiful (if eclectic) cityscape, complete with parks, fountains, utilities, and more. This expansion is easiest for them near existing ruins, because their terraforming selectively brings buildings forward through time and restore them to their original pristine state. With the Basin's billions of years of history, there's *always* a ruined city to be found if you dig far back enough.

When the Worldbuilders alter a land, they generally don't ask permission. They simply move ahead and begin the process. If someone mounts a strenuous enough opposition, they roll back time until before they started and build in a different direction. Individuals in the affected area during the rollback remember both the original timeline and the rewritten one. However, those *outside* the affected area (whether inside a Worldbuilder city-state or halfway across the Basin) don't know about anything but the final sequence of events. Ideally only a small group of Worldbuilders within the affected area will remember every timeline, so that they can direct the terraforming appropriately.

This practice is what erased the Worldbuilders' understanding of their own origins. They retroactively destroyed any evidence of the nation they once were. All that's left now is a thousand tangled timelines.

Each city-state rules itself as it chooses. Most are representative democracies or oligarchies. They send ambassadors to a central city, Lorshier, to vote on binding and non-binding referendums. Each city-state is on its own when it comes to dealing with local Unruly Lands.

Spotlight: Nature Spirits

The Great Basin is a place of wonder and magic, where many important places are homes to spirits. Instead of offering tribute and friendship to nature spirits, the Worldbuilders offer them power.

Worldbuilder magic drags the cities of the past into the present. These places were once occupied by spirits now long dead - city-mothers, glade-fathers, river-captains. Each small god had its place, and those places provided some of the form and personality of those beings.

When an area is terraformed, powerful local spirits who complain are offered a choice. The Worldbuilders can roll back the change and the world will be as it was, or the spirit can stay, be transformed, and become an ally to a powerful and fast-expanding civilization. Spirits who choose to stay what they were usually return to rest (sometimes resentfully), deep in the ground and far up in the sky. Those who "join the cause" are given substantial resources and enjoy the veneration of thousands. They transcend what they were, via their will and the rituals of the Worldbuilders, and become city-gods of an ever-growing empire.

Some of these transformed spirits just want to show up old rivals. Others want a voice in where the Basin is headed. All of them are ambitious.

Spotlight: Community

Each civilization has its outlets for extroverts. The Guild has social clubs. The Hearth-Kin have taverns. Worldbuilders have neighborhood centers.

People bring their friends, families, and loved ones out into streets and alleys, rooftops and communal gardens. The Worldbuilders' cities are sparsely populated, but everyone knows where to go when it's time to relax. They play sports, or referee for their children. They talk about the week. They cook food, not because they can't conjure it, but because it feels good. There's a real sense of community in every neighborhood.

As far as introverts go, community isn't limited to crowded in-person events. The Worldbuilders are famous for innovative uses of the Universal Repositories. People write short stories back and forth to each other, publishing indexes of them so that others can read them. Sometimes these carry on for years on end, with multiple people using the same characters in different ways. There are enormous books, massive tomes, that are nothing but discussions of these things, with the marginalia trailing on extensively.

Hallmarks

- Children are born intersex
- A jumble of architectural styles
- Women scout and direct; men build
- Cities in dangerous or remote locations
- Strenuous arguments between close friends
- New towers rising in the distance with each new dawn
- Everyone has a job, and nearly all of them revolve around the city
- Work crews reshaping buildings for greater symmetry and utility
- Visitors browbeaten into actions to which they might not normally agree
- Frequent holidays, each spent venerating one of a vast pantheon of powerful local spirits
- The ever-evolving Great Plan by which the Worldbuilders work to build their place in the Basin

Core Values

The Worldbuilders know how to **Be Relentless**. They don't take no for an answer easily. When they *give* a no, on the other hand, they're going to stand by it no matter what. Other cultures see them as stubborn, with all the pros and cons that come with that.

Worldbuilders also **Plan for the Future**. This is one of the roots of their terraforming strategy: they realize that the Great Basin is finite, and lifespans are not. If their children are going to have places to live, they need to start claiming those places now. The Worldbuilders aren't looking to colonize the *entire* Basin, but they're hoping for over half of it. Not every plan is quite so ambitious, but the Worldbuilders do appreciate having things to do and an approach to take.

Traditions

Parelthonia: C3 I5 M4 S5 T3 W5

Symmachis: C5 I3 M5 S5 T5 W3

When the Worldbuilders' time-shifting magic delves into the past, it calls on the soul of the world itself, the ghosts of the hills and the spectres of lost cities. This is **Parelthonia**, which uses both Artistry and Geometry (especially drafting and architecture) to evoke the power of Necromancy. Its masters use this power to:

- Draw the land in chalk as it was in the past and make it so in the present
- Carve a simple line across the landscape to strike with murderous force
- Trace a portrait of an ancestor to take on some of their traits
- Sketch a strange, impossible place in rare pigments, and then burn it to move from this world into another

Characters who practice Parelthonia pay the cost for both Paths, even though they are in the same Tradition.

As they reformat the land, the Worldbuilders also make deals with nature spirits. Those who would rather become city-gods are their Patrons, who empower them with Elementalism. This is an art they call **Symmachis**. A Worldbuilder might call upon...

- The Lamplighter, to light a path or project mind-twisting patterns of flame
- The Flag-whip, who reveals cloud patterns that can shift one's body into air itself
- The Hundred-faceted Eyes of Stone, to produce crystals with ornate magical etchings that reveal secrets
- The Pharaoh of the Avenues, whose intricately-woven city streets direct flows of health and vigor to heal the weak

Nearly all Worldbuilders know both of these Traditions, and blend them together freely. They might open a window into the past with Parelthonia and give the ghostly phantoms they see forms with Symmachis. They might take on forms of burrowing or swimming creatures with Symmachis, but use Parelthonia to make them into ancient forms now extinct. Because of the way that the Worldbuilders train their citizens, women tend to be better at Symmachis for its applications to scouting and prediction, and men tend to be more familiar with Parelthonia for its building applications. You may decide for yourself whether to represent this in your character's attributes.

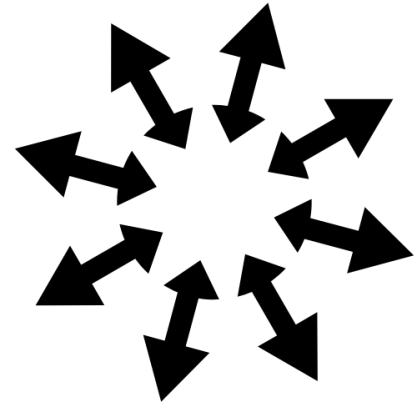
Benefit

Worldbuilders are used to thinking in the twisting ways of time that others find so confusing. Once per session, when they achieve an Advantage through conflict or Theme use that involves time-winding magic, Worldbuilders may raise the level of that advantage by one (for instance, from Minor to Moderate).

The Unruly Lands

History

Many nations of the Great Basin fell apart immediately following the Gift, beginning the period known as the Interregnum. Thousands upon thousands of nations have not yet found peace. These states undergo constant upheaval, warring with one another, raising terrifying defenses as their governments fail, or hiding in hopes of survival.



Much of the status quo in these lands is thanks to the actions of previous civilizations. The Army of Unity and the Universal Consortium fought proxy wars with one another, propping up one nation against another. The law-and-justice-oriented Guardhouse took issue with the free and unrestrained Legion of the Incomparable, and fought them for decades across continents. Rulers were propped up, knocked down, paid off, and undermined. It demolished the citizenry's confidence in their own rulers and the trust of outsiders. Military actions also polluted the local mana with aspects of strife, battle, and treachery. This makes it even harder to break the cycle.

Resources vary wildly from land to land. Nations low on Industry still mine and log their lands. Certain aspects of mana are hard to come by. Rare mystical gemstones like moxes and cintamani have often been mined out dozens or hundreds of years ago by interlopers, and will take decades more to replenish. Those Above charge heavy prices for new ley lines of carefully-aspected mana, and the cost has left more than one nation in inescapable debt.

Each land is ruled differently. Monarchy and oligarchy are common. To this day, rulers in these lands often rise quickly and are deposed just as quickly. Sometimes this is the result of internal squabbles. Equally often, however, it is due to the actions of more powerful nations or civilizations, who see something to be gained by manipulating their less-technologically-advanced cousins. The Geometer's Guild empowers rulers who are favorably disposed toward its scholastic and cultural domination. The Hearth-Kin crash into the Unroyals' carefully laid plans, both of them trying to overthrow the same tyrant. Nova researchers and Sovereign sybarites come in, do what they want, and leave.

Examples

Each of the Unruly Lands is a nation unto itself. Their customs, appearances, Core Values, and Traditions vary from nation to nation. Some examples are given below.

The Bight and the Brand - A fractious kingdom divided along gender lines, with men as warriors and explorers, and women as healers and researchers. They believe that a terrible Dark One will return to destroy the world. **CVs:** Prepare For Battle, Seek Balance. **Tradition:** *The Power*, Belief -> Elementalism, C3 I4 M4 S3 T5 W5

Ever Starward - Here on the very edge of the Basin, the ships built on the shores of nothingness sail no ocean. Instead, they float through the void and its strange islands, where there is much glory and treasure to be found. **CVs:** Show No Fear, Exploration. **Tradition:** *The Wind And The Sail*, Reagents -> Alchemy, C3 I4 M4 S5 T4 W5

The Blasted Sea - Someone's wars turned water to silt, and this scorching desert-sea is sailed across by odd ships and filled with odder fish. Vicious god-kings provide their templars with power. Giant cloud-rays float through the sky. **CVs:** Survival Is All, Take What Is Yours. **Tradition:** *Authority*, Patrons -> Elementalism and Patrons -> Invocation, C4 I3 M4 S3 T5 W5

Shore and Glade - An outwardly peaceful land, but one where children are tempted away from their homes by the Fair Folk and goblin armies raid from some strange world. The inhabitants have rallied in the past, but never won, and are terrified of retribution. **CVs:** Honor the Fair Folk, Hide That Which You Value. **Tradition:** *The Knack*, Artistry -> Invocation, C5 I4 M5 S4 T4 W3

The Spines - Instead of living together in fragile settlements, the people of this land are spread across a thousand different places. Only by Travel do they connect with one another, and in truth some of them spend almost as much time on the bridges of the lattice as they do in the Basin. **CVs:** Many Eggs in Many Baskets, Keep a Watch. **Tradition:** *The Keys*, Language -> Oneiromancy. C4 I4 M4 S5 T4 W4

The Clawed Land - Questing warrior-wizards awoke a thousand dragons, who were none too pleased to discover that they had not received the full portion of the Gift. The land is marked by frequent wars between humanity and its scaled opponents. **CVs:** Trust No Dragon, Hold The Line. **Tradition:** *Sorcery of the Towers*, Language -> Invocation, C3 I4 M5 S4 T3 W5

The Mists - An ancient enchantment that kept outsiders from intruding has been reversed, and now this fog-covered land is almost impossible to leave. Undead creatures come here to escape destruction elsewhere and then become enraged that they cannot leave. **CVs:** Watch Your Back, Hope is an Anchor. **Tradition:** *The Foul Art*, Blood Magic -> Necromancy, C4 I3 M5 S5 T5 W3

Dissonance - Humanity shares this mountainous realm with uplifted animals, all of whom also have the Gift. A queen sends knights and explorers out to explore and find allies. They seek peace but are unable to find it between their warring neighbors. **CVs:** All Life is Worthy, Beware Power. **Tradition:** *Mentalism*, Discipline (mind) -> Oneiromancy, C5 I3 M5 S5 T4 W3

Benefit

Many Unruly Lands have not had the opportunity to develop in a continuous manner. Their inhabitants have had to build up what they do best and leave other tasks by the wayside. They typically have competitive advantage in a particular Nature, though certain nations have other benefits instead.

GM Notes: Civilization or Unruly Land?

((This will eventually go into the Advice section or a sidebar, but it's important enough to write it here now.))

No civilization's hands are clean. Every civilization meddles in the Unruly Lands.

And every civilization is an Unruly Land.

There is no true difference between the "civilizations" and the rest of the Basin. There is no inferiority that is somehow inherent to these nations, and no instability there that the larger and wealthier civilizations do not own. The Unruly Lands are just nations like any other, held down by bad luck, resource scarcity, and the actions of the powerful.

The very terms "Unruly Lands" and "Interregnum" are a way that the major civilizations talk down to smaller nations, as if they too were not knee-deep in wars, coups, and instability.

All of this is subtext in the descriptions of the civilizations and the Unruly Lands, but I wanted to pull it out here explicitly in case someone missed it.

Returner Cults

History

When Aum's Gift spread across the world, it brought chaos, destruction, and death. It is any wonder so many people sought to reject it? In some places, entire generations taught their children to fear magic and be ashamed at their own potential. Those who displayed mystical talents were exiled or worse. In others, thousands of people moved into naturally occurring null zones, even fighting over the territory. Even when the Interregnum came to an uneven, stuttering end, many cultures continued to reject sorcery. The term in common use at this time is "Returner" - someone who would rather be able to return the Gift.



If not for the power differential, Returner cults would be dangerous. Occasionally they capture someone who can't protect themselves, or manage to drag a more powerful group into a null zone with them. As it is, though, most other civilizations simply give them a wide berth and let them live in their mana-drained wastelands.

Technology among the Returner cults is low. Most of them won't shun agriculture and the written word, though you never know. A few, mostly in null zones, have worked their way up toward steam engines, but even that seems untrustworthy to most cultists.

Many Returner Cults are aristocracies, though some involve an elected balance to the hereditary rulers. Some are anarchic communes, dealing with money only to handle external matters.

Spotlight: Emotion

Everyone in the Basin knows that emotions are tied to magic. That's why so many Returner cults deny that emotions are real.

Returners who live deep in Null Zones can afford to accept emotion more easily. When magical energy is more available, however, maturing children tend to manifest the Gift in instinctual, emotion-driven ways. Intent and need drive magical manifestations, but emotions - especially habitual or longstanding emotions - shape those manifestations into visible and comprehensible expressions of one's Nature. Emotions are the gateway to hundreds of Traditions and thousands of mystic techniques.

Returner cults therefore teach young children to reject their feelings. The most common method is to simply declare that emotions are "lesser" than rational thoughts, which are themselves considered lesser than physical reality. If emotions are "just emotions", then taming or ignoring

them can be presented as easy. Admitting to one's emotions, or especially displaying them, is considered shameful across many Returner cults.

Hallmarks

- The absence of magic
- Signs warning sorcerers away
- A culture that values temperance and logic
- Superstitious signs made against unusual events
- A distrust of any sort of power, even the purely mechanical

Core Values

All Returner cults have a belief that keeps them from embracing the Gift. Common examples are **Magic is Harmful**, **Magic Heralds Ruin**, **Things Were Better Before**, **Temperance is Holy**, or strict interpretations of **Simplicity**.

The Returners' second Core Value varies from one cult to another. Many deal with rational thought or emotion in some way.

Traditions

Returner cults follow no magical traditions. Those who do manage to learn magic typically follow a Path that they can use without alerting others around them, such as Belief, Discipline (mind), Patrons, or Blood Magic.

Benefit

Returner cultists take no penalty for using their Professions in null zones. (see page xx)

Societies

((I'll expand these some more in the Beta. I'm just so tired of writing today.))

Archivists

Longtime or particularly committed members of the Archive (see page xx) should probably have this society. Not all their employees do. This society is not a requirement for any character.

- **Core Value:** Knowledge for the sake of _____ (fill in your own reason)
- **Tradition:** None. Archivists bring their own native Traditions to their role rather than passing on a common one.
- **Benefit:** Archivists have access to the Magical Archaeology profession, which covers both Linguistics and Historian.

Fire and Scale

Who *wouldn't* want to be a dragon? As it turns out, sometimes, people who want to be cats. And those folks get along surprisingly well. Pick this society if you want to play a giant magical scaled creature or a soft-but-pointy ball of fluff that sits on top of them. You don't technically need to spend your whole life as a dragon or a cat, but most Society members do.

- **Core Value:** Hedonism. Enjoy yourself - you have eternity.
- **Tradition:** The Languid Art (Belief -> Elementalism, C4 I5 M5 S5 T5 W3)
- **Benefit:** Once per session, when they gain an Advantage that ties into a draconic or feline form, members of Fire and Scale may raise the level of that Advantage by one (for instance, from Minor to Moderate).

The Fellowship of Truth

Sorcery has always been a part of the Basin - just not such a ubiquitous part. Long ago, before the Gift, the Fellowship was created by a group of sorcerers who to worked together to collect and share incantations. Now they think things were better before the Gift. They're doing their best to undo it.

- **Core Value:** The Old Ways. The world is chaos and war; things were better before.
- **Tradition:** True Wizardry (Language -> Alchemy, C3 I5 M4 S4 T4 W5)
- **Benefit:** The Fellowship are trained in ancient languages, the better to decipher spells from olden times. They recieve Scholar: Alchemy 3 for free.

Peacewalkers

The Peacewalkers are a society of pacifists. They believe that there is no longer any need for humanity to harm any being. Many Peacewalkers work as mediators or activists. People are often surprised at the conviction and power with which they speak. They eat only conjured food, and refuse to work with warlike or violent organizations except to encourage their disarmament. Some of them even believe that the Gift's removal of mind control was the beginning of a process by which Aum would create a new universe, one without the War-nature, and that acceptance of this change will make things easier in the new world to come.

- **Core Value:** Non-Violence. Peacewalkers use this CV to try to convert others to their way of thinking, and to work towards a peaceful resolution when violence seems imminent.
- **Tradition:** The Peacewalkers do not teach a specific tradition.
- **Special:** All Peacewalkers live disconnected from the War-nature.
- **Benefit:** Peacewalkers study non-violent means of conflict resolution extensively, practicing constantly. Once per session, when they use an Advantage or Complication to move someone away from violence, they may raise the level of that effect by one (for instance, from Minor to Moderate). They may also use the conflict escalation rules (SA page xx) without making a situation feel more stressful or dangerous.

The Protean Society

There was a time when no one trusted a shapeshifter. The Proteans banded together to have a place to be themselves without suspicion. Now everyone who wants to be is a shapeshifter, so the Proteans are more of an artistic society.

- **Core Value:** Freedom of Form. Not only is it a crime to lock someone into a body just because they were born in it, everyone should be able to change their bodies the way they change their minds if they see fit.
- **Tradition:** Proteans have no one specific magical tradition that binds them together. High Self scores are very common.
- **Benefit:** Proteans use shapeshifting for more than most people do. They have Competitive Advantage in the Self-Nature.

The Soulpack

The soul is eternal. It is universally considered sacred among all the civilizations of the Basin. However, many people's souls are trapped in awful afterlives or in soul repositories, effectively jailing the innocent. The Soulpack is a group that seeks out trapped souls and uses necromancy to rescue them.

- **Core Value:** Redemption. No one deserves an eternity of hell. In an immortal life, everyone can be redeemed. That doesn't mean it's easy, and it doesn't mean you have to forgive those who aren't seeking redemption, but it means you don't seek permanent punishments for temporary crimes.
- **Tradition:** The Diamond of the Soul (Discipline (body) -> Necromancy, C4 I3 M5 S5 T5 W4)
- **Benefit:** Members of the Soulpact have, appropriately, a great deal of experience dealing with souls. They receive the profession Theurge: Necromancy 3 for free.

((From SA2, import High Society, the Explorers, Organized Crime, and Wargamers. Would also be good to have a mercenary guild, and the Groundbreakers who are trying to beat Those Above by going downward with the Basement Lines. Also need a society that thinks AI will save them - maybe an Ægis splinter group.))

Cosmology

The Great Basin

Most of this game takes place in The Great Basin, a dish-shaped world of earth and water that is humanity's home. It is like our home, but flat, and much, much wider. The Basin is a million koss in width, which makes its surface area over 15,000 times that of the planet Earth. All of it is covered with continents, oceans, islands, and glaciers. Regions of hot and cold are well-separated, but rely more on the presence of elemental wellsprings than on the incidence angle of light. All of the biomes of our world can be found there, and more besides.

The Basin has one sun and one moon. Eclipse of the sun are not one passing before the other, but the Eye of Aum rotating to face the world and peer at its surface. Eclipses of the moon are moments of great magical potential, where the element of the Void is temporarily ascendant.

The Basin's atmosphere extends upwards for about a thousand koss until it thins out. There above the world one can see the calm flow of mountain-shattering power in the Attic Lines, ley lines driven upward and out of a chaotic atmosphere, into a void where they could flow quiet and safe.

Geology in the Basin

((placeholder for talking about ore, gems, volcanoes, earthquakes, etc.))

((describe the centerpoint of the Basin - is there a peak?))

The Kaleidoscope

Humanity's home is but one world in The Kaleidoscope, the common name for the worlds that are myriad (perhaps infinite?) variations on the Basin. These worlds can be reached via Travel. They are different universes, and traveling through space will never reach them.

The Basin is held in the hands of the Great God Aum. Other worlds of the Kaleidoscope find themselves similarly cradled by one or more manifestations of Aum, which look somewhat like one or more of the primary intelligent species of that world. Many have different numbers of suns and moons. One Basin sits on the back of a great golden stingray with a million eyes, for the people who live there are intelligent rays. Another thirty-mooned world is held in the belly

of a golden-haired sloth with the deepest and softest of fur, and lo and behold the people there are slothlike in their appearance. Still another is gently supported above the heads of three tentacle-faced beings, their wings folding and unfolding in mystical patterns. It has no sun. Some Basins are empty of intelligent life, and there Aum seems sad for that lack.

Humanity is by far the dominant intelligent species in the Basin. There are communities of other beings, but each one traces its origins back to elsewhere in the Kaleidoscope. Likewise, there are communities of human beings elsewhere in the Kaleidoscope, and even farther away. There is much conjecture that parts of the Kaleidoscope occasionally intersect, that magic was common in the past as well, or that the Travel lattice is not as secure as one might otherwise imagine.

The Worlds Beyond

Speaking of farther places, The Worlds Beyond are places outside of the Kaleidoscope. They range from elemental planes to heavens and hells to jungles of orange fungus without end. Many of them are infinite in extent. Each has a series of Realms that are commanded by various powerful rulers, commonly referred to as a "pantheon". The Worlds Beyond sometimes touch the Basin, and sometimes must be reached via Travel. When human beings visit the Worlds Beyond, the gods and their servants seem humanoid. When creatures from elsewhere in the Kaleidoscope visit, they fit the form of those visitors instead. Each person sees the Worlds Beyond through their own lens.

Those humans who were in the Worlds Beyond at the time of the Gift did not receive the capability for magic; only the portion that broke magical bonds was passed to them. It is not known why. Some worlds still have enclaves of humans who know nothing of the Gift.

A small sampling of the Worlds Beyond:

- *Hell*, of the Sovereigns of Hell. One of many.
- The once-vacant *Heaven* that now serves as the headquarters of the Golden Ægis. Again, one of many, not all of them vacant.
- The five *Elemental Planes*, infinite expanses of infinite variations on the components of the world. Genies dwell here, and elementally-touched beings that might once have been human.
- A dozen or more worlds touched by those elements, from the sky-realms full of airships to a dark underground of lava and dwarves.
- *The Grand Chasm*, which might have once been like the Plane of Earth if an entire civilization had mined it for a billion years and then left only their dwellings behind.

- *The Forever City*, once linked via Travel to a thousand destinations. Whatever supplied its mana ran out, and now the doors here only work sporadically, and the city is full of fugitives and squatters, but the city-gods are still strong in this place.
- *The Fool's Scriptorium*, a tiny world composed of a single shed-sized room. Every space is filled with scrolls, and every scroll is filled with nonsense. The god of this place laughs eternally.
- *The Museum Labyrinth*, where artwork showcasing previous ages of the Great Basin is kept in a place that few have managed to escape.

The Dream Worlds

Whereas the Worlds Beyond are physical in nature, the Dream Worlds are cognitive and emotional. They are home to concepts and ideals as well as actual dreams. The Dream Worlds are invisible but ever-present - they exist *between* all living beings. Entering them is the domain of the Communion Nature. They have Realms as the Worlds Beyond do, but their pantheons are sometimes missing, sometimes uncaring, sometimes all-too-interested in visitors. Where the Worlds Beyond seem different to each sentient species, two visitors to a Dream World will agree in every detail on what they saw.

A small sampling of Dream Worlds:

- *Khai'Gholam*, where the nightmares that dreamers escaped burrowed into the soil and became the world itself, vicious and hungry.
- *Aum's Shadow*, a dark mirror that touches our own world but harbors no life of its own. Used for Spirit Walking by certain traditions.
- *Inwolath*, which transforms all who enter it into a fishlike form so they can swim in its currents and rest in its waters.
- *Berit'tuni*, where shapes with impossible angles fall from the sky and one cannot help but count them.
- *Ushendi-loves-Bendar*, the sort of realm to make young lovers blush.
- *Qli-thak-kos*, in which all tends towards its opposite until roles and hearts are reversed, and then flows back. One must use caution when deciding when to leave.
- *Fiasha An*, a place of unrequited longing. The moon hangs forever in the sky, and the land is littered with scenic overlooks and lone trees under which to sigh over loves that cannot be.
- *Nunto Karak*, broken realm of dreams interrupted. Waves of nonexistence sweep the world, and only visitors remain unchanged when they pass.

GM Advice

Conflict Timescales, or, Death and Better Fates

Most people are used to a world where death is an ending. Players familiar with other RPGs, especially, have seen worlds where killing your enemy finishes the threat they posed. That's not the case here. When players realize that, they often seek some way to *make* an ending - some way to incapacitate an enemy in a semi-permanent fashion. Cutting off their head, dropping a mountain on them, throwing them into the Red Space, even breaking their immortality and killing them.

All of these are Critical Complications. While it's true that critical complications *can be* permanent, it's by no means guaranteed that any of them *are*, and the physical ones are particularly temporary in this setting. Anyone with Communion 4 or 5 can resurrect people very effectively. Mystery and Trickery can peek into the Red Space to look for survivors. Physically removing someone from the field of play forever is effectively impossible. There's *always* a way for them to come back.

However, you're already dealing a critical complication. Other fates on the list of critical complications include "All Core Values changed" and "Friends' allegiances reversed."

It's true that you can't inflict those kinds of complications quickly in this game. It's not like Sufficiently Advanced, where Metatech enables high-speed social interaction. You could violently force a Rapport with someone using War, and then overwrite someone's values using War and either Trickery or Self, but the mind can heal from such assaults, and the damage remains visible to others, at least on a psychic level. You could trap them and brainwash them, but that's still an assault. The moment your enemy enters Rapport with someone who knew them, the injury will be clear.

Changing your opponent's Core Values is by far the most effective way to end the threat they pose. It's not fast. The timescale will not be minutes, but weeks, months, possibly years. You'll have opposition from their allies. Once you win, though, the change can't just be "fixed" by healing them, because it's not a wound. It's not an injury. It's what they truly believe, a new part of their Self-nature, and healing makes you want you want to be.

Mechanically, this sort of contest is generally done using Communion or Self against your opponent's Self or Trickery score. Because critical complications are difficult to inflict, you may

need to wear down your opponent's CVs or Natures with a series of contests before you can plant the seed of a more permanent change.

Using the Civilizations

None of the civilizations in Sorcerously Advanced are intended to be mere caricatures. Each of them does some good and wonderful things, and some rotten things. You can use any of them in a more negative and antagonistic role in your game, or in a more sympathetic or positive role. Here are some suggestions for how you could emphasize some aspects of them, tone back others, and tweak each group for use in your own story.

The Cult of the Empty Grave

Positive: Play up the way they help others. Show them tending to those unable to control the Gift. Show them working to reform those who hurt them in the past. It doesn't matter who you are; if you come to the Cult they'll take care of you.

Negative: Emphasize the Cult's "greatest generation" problem. Their morality is stuck in the low-magic past, with no idea how to handle the high-magic present. Alternatively, crank up the alienation factor within their own citizenry. Cult members who don't want to be a specific kind of beautiful are ostracized, treated like freaks. This becomes problematic long before they start expecting it of outsiders.

Diadem

Positive: The citizens of Diadem care greatly for their families. Show those ties. Show them reaching out for one another and taking great risks to preserve their families. Diadem is also able and willing to lead, and if there's a coalition of civilizations they're clever and well-connected enough to bind it together.

Negative: It's hard to get away from Diadem's aggressive colonization of the Unruly Lands. This includes the way they treat people there like toys and their customs like trinkets. Diadem claims to love other cultures, but it's the same way a child loves a doll and drops it off a bridge the next day. Accentuate the deep divides in their civilization and their economic blackmail of sovereign nations. Don't let the characters pass through Diadem cities without reminding them that there are *servants* here in a way that there simply *aren't* elsewhere in the Basin.

The Geometer's Guild

Positive: The Guild is a champion of education. They've done more than any other civilization to increase the general level of scholarship in the Basin. The same goes for their legal code. Portray them as wise and clever, aware of the faults in their methodology.

Negative: In the same way that Diadem uses money, the Guild uses knowledge to take over Unruly Lands. Remind players that they're erasing local Traditions, and some knowledge of magic will disappear forever when they're done. In addition, men and women are treated very differently by the Guild, and they're completely black-and-white about the separation. Have them demand that people explain themselves if they're not "acting properly."

Glimmermere

Positive: At its best, Glimmermere has unlimited potential for growth. They have a love of both truth and wisdom. They're good at both improvisation and planning. Really, all you need to do to play up Glimmermere's strengths is to paper over its weaknesses. Unfortunately...

Negative: At its worst, Glimmermere falls into in-fighting and endless drama and *never gets anything done*. They ran from the Basin when things got hard. Imply that they'll do it again - or even show them starting to retreat when danger rears its head. You might also set up a situation where a Glimmermere resident is in an abusive relationship and their elders simply shrug and say "that's the way of love," underestimating how bad things are.

The Golden Ægis

Positive: The Ægis has a view of honor that's almost universal in the Basin. They're driven to improve the world around them, and to improve themselves as well. To show them in a positive light, you just need to give them a little flexibility. If they're allowed to learn from their mistakes, the Ægis can do wonders.

Negative: Conversely, without that flexibility, the Ægis runs easily toward despotism. This sort of Ægis swarms nations and overthrows them because they aren't being properly respectful, or don't have the right idea of righteousness. In D&D terms, play them as aggressively Lawful and you'll have a fine antagonist.

The Hearth-Kin

Positive: When others hesitate or wring their hands, have the Hearth-Kin step in and act. Show them taking care of others, both individually and as a nation. Have them express the change of heart they had about leaving the Basin and their willingness to learn about the way it is now. The Hearth-Kin also understand nuance well, which makes them a good mediating factor for some of the more extremist civilizations.

Negative: The imperative to get out there and do something can really blow up in your face when you do the wrong thing - especially if five hundred of you all get together to do it. Play up Hearth-Kin's ignorance of the general state of affairs in the Basin. Have them blunder into other civilizations' efforts and ruin years of planning. Make them a bunch of nosy, ignorant busybodies who barge in and explain what the characters are supposedly doing wrong. Then have them fail to come to a decision as to how to fix it as it falls down around their heads. If you really want a cherry on top of this, have them ignore anyone who doesn't have children because they obviously don't know anything about anything.

Nova Commonwealth

Positive: If there's any civilization that has a place for anyone, no matter how odd, it's Nova. Emphasize their responsibility, their commitment to avoiding harm, and the Million Ways, and you should have a pretty solid protagonist/ally civilization here.

Negative: Don't just show the more extreme cults - those make great villains in any game regardless of how you want the Commonwealth as a whole to look. Instead, make Nova's sense of responsibility less kind and more callous. Show how the mainstream allows extremists to continue with what they're doing because they're "not really hurting anyone..." except for the people who "should have known better" or "should have been able to take care of themselves." A negatively portrayed Nova can have a real "blame the victim" mentality.

The Sovereigns of Hell

Positive: Sometimes you need a friend who doesn't give a flying fuck what anyone else says. Someone who will happily scare the daylight out of your bully, or help you realize that anyone who gives you shit is nothing compared to you. Sovereigns are rarely nice, but they can take a metaphorical machete to your self-doubt and leave you stronger afterward.

Negative: Let's point out things beyond the obvious "what if the demons are taking control" and "what if they turn out to be just as bad" scenarios. The Sovereigns have been caught in a cycle of abuse, passing down what was done to them. If they're not just having trouble changing, but are unwilling to try, that casts them in a more sinister light. They also have issues with not being able to let go of things. Portray them as a nation of revenge-junkies who use positions of power to step on those who laughed at them.

Those Above the Sky

Positive: Those Above are very good at seeing opportunities and capitalizing on them. If you give them a bit of compassion they could make a very good ally for many civilizations, even helping smaller nations develop and become more self-sufficient.

Negative: That compassion? Toss it. Play Those Above as hardline money-grubbers who'll put you in the worst spot they possibly can. Play up their fragile competitive nature while you're at

it. Have them brag and boast about their superior positions, then go running to you for help when things fail... because running to their "friends" in their own civilization would just put them further in debt, and they think they can manipulate you into a better deal.

The Unroyal

Positive: There's a lot of potential good in the Unroyal. They could make an excellent sponsor for a group of characters if you don't want to have them working for the Archive (or if the team decides to leave the Archive for some reason). Give the Unroyal the wisdom of their experiences.

Negative: The Unroyal are, to borrow a phrase, single-issue voters, and that single issue is "no tyrants." It's a great issue to vote along... so long as they can clearly discern who is and isn't a tyrant. If they can't, then they're probably out there ruining nations and refusing to admit it. A more extremist Unroyal wouldn't get along with any civilizations with top-down leadership, including not just the Sovereigns, the Guild, and Diadem, but the Ægis and the Cult as well.

The Worldbuilders

Positive: The feeling of togetherness in Worldbuilder cities is contagious. Accentuate that sense of community. Have individual Worldbuilders reach out to others, to be friends and allies or just as a check-in. Have them arrange parties and gatherings. As a civilization, they're also an interesting way for sedentary old spirits to take on a new life and move up their social ladder.

Negative: It doesn't take much to see that the Worldbuilders, both as a civilization and as individuals, need to learn to take no for an answer. There are many, many places this could turn foul. In addition, it's not hard to play up their dishonesty. The Worldbuilders lie as a matter of course when it comes to their time-shifting activities. Odds are good they're lying (to others and to their own citizens) about a lot more.

Bonus entry: The Archive

We won't present every Society, but the Archive is so important to this game's default scenario that it's worth taking a few extra paragraphs to talk about them. Every organization in this game is a mix of positive and negative, and the Archive is no exception.

Positive: They pursue knowledge. They help to arbitrate disputes. They work together in a diverse community that values wisdom and truth. The Archive's neutrality helps them help others to reach consensus and avoid destroying the relics that might bring a new age of enlightenment to their world. Truly, the light of Aum shines upon them.

Negative: The Archive, as a group, are not good listeners. They don't cooperate well with other authorities. They're taking their own interpretations of the past and encoding those into Universal Repositories for all future time. Some of them are even the tomb-robbers and king-makers they're accused of being. They are, after all, only human.

Glossary

Attic Lines: Ley Lines that were driven upward long ago and which cascade through the empty space above the sky. Here the world is less changing and there is nothing to disrupt their flow. They are the most reliable way to transport highly aspected mana long distances.

Canon of Form: The catalog of objects, plants, animals, and archetypes that provides the shapes for conjured things. Individuals have their own Signature Canon formed by experience and upbringing, while regions have a Consensus Canon formed by the city-wide communal subconscious.

Dream Worlds: Worlds where concepts and ideals, as well as actual dreams, form the basis of reality. Whereas the Worlds Beyond are physical in nature, the Dream Worlds are cognitive and emotional. The Dream Worlds are invisible but ever-present - they exist between all living beings. Entering them is the domain of the Communion Nature. Many have Realms as the Worlds Beyond do.

Fount: One of the sources of magical power, each with its own unique character and approaches. The founts described in this book are Alchemy, Arete, Earthpower, Elementalism, Invocation, Necromancy, and Oneiromancy.

Gift, the: Broadly, the ability to do magic. More specifically, the moment when everyone in the Kaleidoscope was simultaneously granted that ability.

Interregnum: The period of war and chaos that followed the Gift. It has lasted approximately 400 years to the present day. In the estimation of many historians, the Interregnum has not ended.

Kaleidoscope: The myriad of worlds, each of which is an equivalent and coequal of the Great Basin. These can be reached via Travel (q.v.).

Ley Lines: Rivers of mana that flow through the Basin. Ley lines can be tapped, redirected, or fractured into many smaller streams, all of which takes a fair amount of effort and know-how.

Nature: The six components of one's identity that shape how magic is created. The natures are Communion, Industry, Mystery, Self, Trickery, and War. Some supernatural beings have idiosyncratic seventh natures that are connected to their unique identities.

Null Zone: A place where very little mana enters the Basin, and magical tasks are difficult or impossible to accomplish.

Path: One of the many means by which magical effects can be created. Examples include receiving power funneled from a supernatural patron, combining and applying reagents, or chanting words of power.

Red Space, the: A vast space parallel to all points in the Kaleidoscope, used for storage.

Travel: The opening of doors into a bridge-filled space that connects all points in all worlds. See page xx for more detail. Travel is the fastest and most reliable means of crossing large distances.

Soul Repository: A place or device that attracts the souls of those who die in the local area, retaining them in the Great Basin rather than allowing them to continue on to an afterlife in the Worlds Beyond.

Universal Repository: One of several omnipresent knowledge stores. Each fount has its own, and its own way of storing knowledge in it.

Worlds Beyond: The supernatural realms beyond the Basin. Each has a series of realms that are commanded by various rulers, often called "pantheons". The Worlds Beyond sometimes touch the Basin, and sometimes must be reached via Travel. Examples include the Hell of the Sovereigns of Hell, and the Elemental Realms reached via the Elementalism fount.

Units

- The *koss*, a unit of distance. 1 koss ~ 2 miles ~ 3 km.
- The *ratti*, a small mass used for reagent measurement. 1 oz ~ 30 gram ~ 250 ratti
- The *maund*, a larger mass used for people and animals. 1 maund ~ 40 kg ~ 80 lbs
- The *nadika*, a unit of time, of which there are 60 in a day. 1 nadika ~ 24 minutes
- The *breath*, the time it takes Aum to breathe once. 1 breath ~ 7 years.
- The *kalpa*, 4.32 billion years.

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