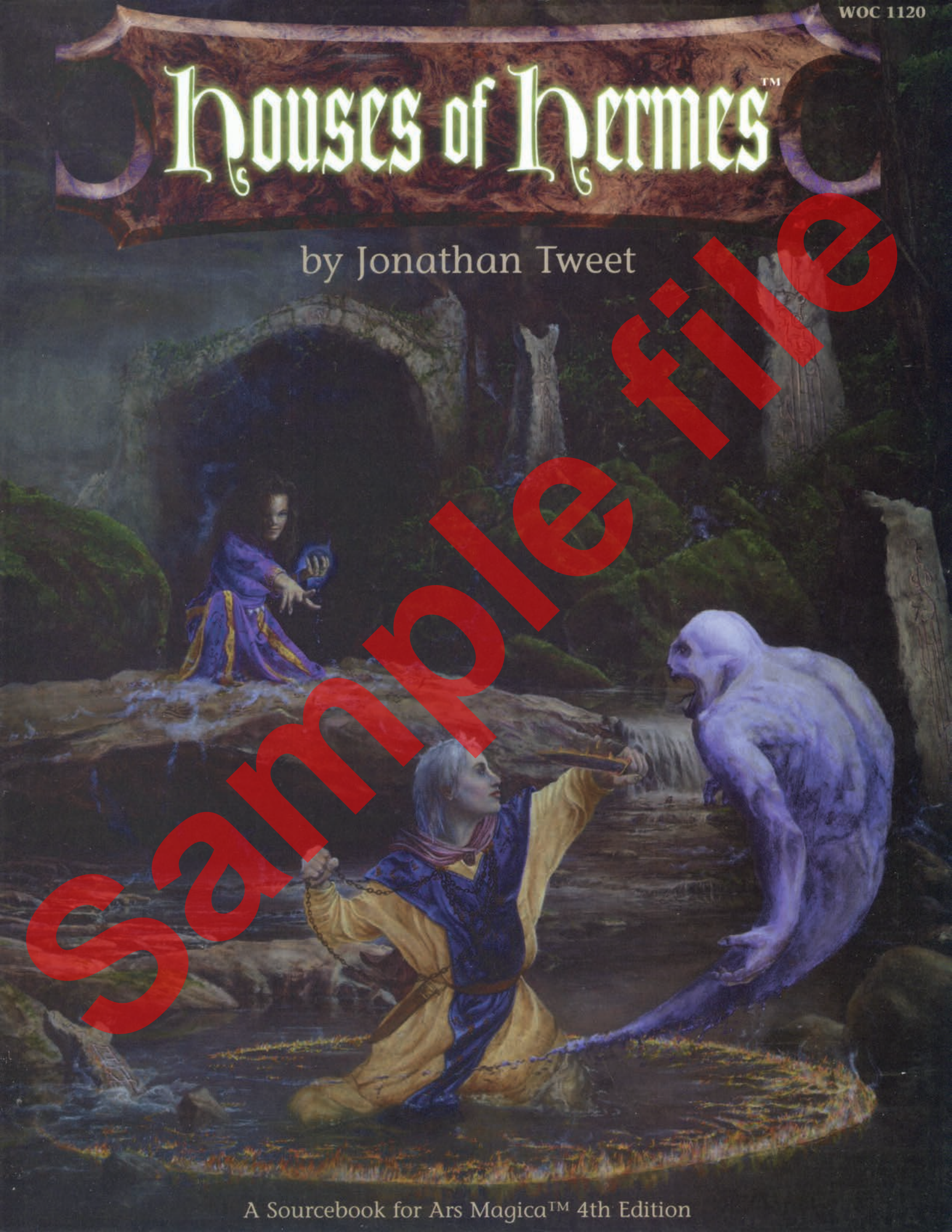


Houses of Hermes™

by Jonathan Tweet



A Sourcebook for Ars Magica™ 4th Edition

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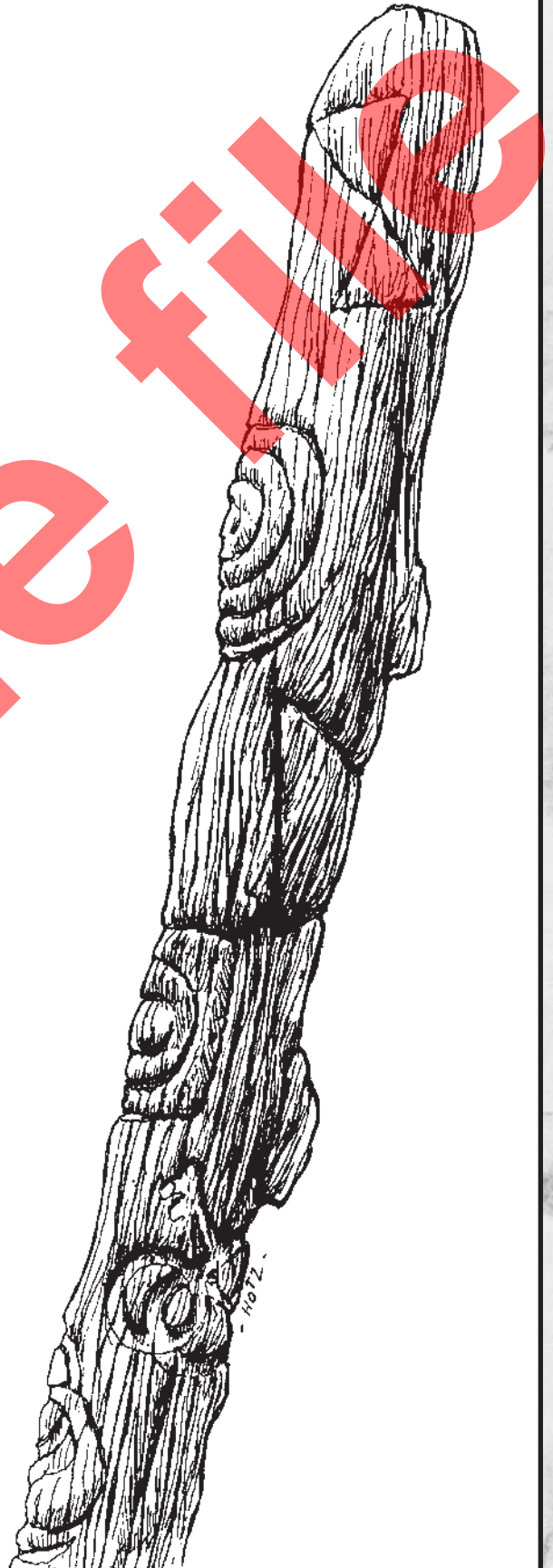
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The cover depicts Agnes Ex Miscellanea summoning a spirit against Rulia of House Flambeau.

Note changes to Latin in 4th edition:

Córporem=Corpus

Imágonem=Imáginem.



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*CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION*

Sample file

"I, BONISAGUS, HEREBY SWEAR MY LIFELONG LOYALTY TO THE ORDER OF HERMES AND ITS MEMBERS.

"I WILL NOT DEPRIVE NOR ATTEMPT TO DEPRIVE ANY MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF HIS OR HER MAGICAL POWER. I WILL NOT SLAY NOR ATTEMPT TO SLAY ANY MEMBER OF THE ORDER, EXCEPT IN A JUSTLY EXECUTED WIZARD WAR. I UNDERSTAND THAT A WIZARD WAR IS AN OPEN CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO MAGI, WHO MAY SLAY EACH OTHER WITHOUT BREAKING THIS OATH, AND THAT SHOULD I BE SLAIN IN A WIZARD WAR, NO RETRIBUTION SHALL FALL ON THE MAGUS WHO SLAYS ME.

"I WILL ABIDE BY THE DECISIONS MADE BY FAIR VOTE AT TRIBUNAL. I WILL HAVE ONE VOTE AT TRIBUNAL, AND I WILL USE IT PRUDENTLY. I WILL RESPECT AS EQUAL THE VOTES OF ALL OTHERS AT TRIBUNAL.

"I WILL NOT ENDANGER THE ORDER THROUGH MY ACTIONS. I WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH THE AFFAIRS OF MUNDANES AND THEREBY BRING RUIN UPON MY SODALES. I WILL NOT DEAL WITH DEVILS, LEST I IMPERIL MY SOUL AND THE SOULS OF MY SODALES AS WELL. I WILL NOT MOLEST THE FAERIES, LEST THEIR VENGEANCE CATCH MY SODALES ALSO.

"I WILL NOT USE MAGIC TO SPY ON MEMBERS OF THE ORDER OF HERMES.

"I WILL TRAIN APPRENTICES WHO WILL SWEAR TO THIS CODE, AND SHOULD ANY OF THEM TURN AGAINST THE ORDER AND MY SODALES, I WILL BE THE FIRST TO STRIKE THEM. NO APPRENTICE OF MINE SHALL BE CALLED MAGUS UNTIL HE OR SHE FIRST SWEARS TO UPHOLD THIS CODE.

"I SHALL FURTHER THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ORDER AND SHARE WITH MY SODALES ALL THAT I FIND IN MY SEARCH FOR WISDOM AND POWER.

"I REQUEST THAT SHOULD I BREAK THIS OATH, I BE CAST OUT OF THE ORDER. IF I AM CAST OUT, I ASK MY SODALES TO FIND ME AND SLAY ME THAT MY LIFE MAY NOT CONTINUE IN DEGRADATION AND INFAMY.

"THE ENEMIES OF THE ORDER ARE MY ENEMIES. THE FRIENDS OF THE ORDER ARE MY FRIENDS. THE ALLIES OF THE ORDER ARE MY ALLIES. LET US WORK AS ONE AND GROW STRONG.

"THIS I HEREBY SWEAR ON THE THIRD DAY OF PISCES, IN THE NINE HUNDRED AND FIFTH YEAR OF ARIES. WOE TO THEM WHO TRY TO TEMPT ME TO BREAK THIS OATH AND WOE TO ME IF I FALL TO THE TEMPTATION."

—BONISAGUS, SPEAKING THE OATH OF THE ORDER IN A.D. 767. HE WAS THE FIRST MAGUS TO DO SO.

Houses of Hermes describes the twelve Houses (that is, magical lineages) that make up the Order of Hermes. These Houses provide more material for you to develop magi characters and their stories. *Houses of Hermes* serves both players and storyguides.

FOR PLAYERS

The material in this book can help you develop more-detailed characters and help you understand the Order of Hermes better. Here you will find history, politics, legends, secrets, and conflicts that your magi have inherited through their Houses.

Each House has a special feature for players: a sample magus who can serve as your character's former master. When you create a new magus character, you can choose one of these magi to be the wizard from whom your character learned magic. The master's philosophy, lifestyle, and theory of magic reflect on your character, and you can use the wizard presented here to help you develop ideas for your own magus.

Some of the material here is primarily for use by the storyguide, especially the saga and story ideas. Still, reading this material will not ruin the saga for you. Even if you're familiar with a saga idea that your storyguide is using, how that plot develops depends more on the storyguide than on the idea, so you won't "know too much."

FOR STORYGUIDES

Knowing the material in *Houses of Hermes* helps you run a saga that plays to the loyalties and attitudes of the players' magi. This material can bring the various groups of the Order and their respective histories to life.

Many Houses have secrets that they do not share with "outsiders." For instance, the Bjornaer magi do not tell others what they do at the Gathering of Twelve Years. Other Houses may even have secrets that are not mentioned in this material, because out-

siders don't even know these secrets exist. You can determine the nature of these secrets for your saga (though you may want to consult with the players who run magi from the respective Houses).

Especially important to you are the saga and story ideas that accompany each House. These are for you to use, reinterpret, or ignore as you see fit. Certain saga ideas reveal secret agendas or events. Be sure to keep in mind that these saga ideas are not official background; they are suggestions for things you can incorporate into your saga. For example, the saga idea for House Verditius specifies that the House has secretly been preparing for a

Magi of the Order of Hermes

ca. 1359 in the Age of Ariës (A.D. 1220)

House	Followers
Bjornaer	46
Bonisagus	29
Criamon	61
Ex Miscellanea	125*
Flambeau	79
Jerbiton	85**
Mercere	101†
Merinita	66
Quaesitor	51‡
Tremere	64
Tyталus	29
Verditius	62
Total	798

*Approximate

**Five of these are "Larta magi." See *House Jerbiton* for details.

†Sixteen of these are Gifted.

‡Not including twenty-three quaesitoris of other Houses

Remember, there's a difference between what you, the player, know from reading this book and what your magus knows. Many magi are poorly informed about their sodales in other Houses.

HOUSE FORMAT

The next twelve chapters each describe a House. Each chapter includes the following information:

Motto: The motto chosen by the founder.

Symbol: Likewise chosen by the founder. Magi traditionally mark their important belongings, such as grimoires, with these symbols.

History

The history of the House, from its founder to the present. Some Houses have gone through major changes in the 400 years that have passed since their founding.

Notable Magi

A few notes on important magi from the House's history.

Current Status

Membership: The number of magi in the House. Medium-size Houses have about fifty members.

Domus magna: The head covenant of the House and its location.

Primus: The current leader of the House.

Current concerns: What the House is doing currently. A description of the House as it is today, including the nature of its members, their customs, and their relation to the Order in general.

Magi

This section is for players who are developing magi of this particular House. Your magus need not conform in all areas. In fact, having a misfit magus can add interesting conflicts to your character's development.

Mentality

How you have been trained to think about yourself, magic, and the Order.

Priorities

What these magi hold to be valuable.

Outlook

How these magi tend to see magi of other Houses and other important groups, such as faeries or the Church. The opinions given here are extreme, and many magi have more moderate views, even if they are along similar lines. Despite their differences, magi of different Houses can get along because they have more in common with each other than with the non-magical population.

Intra-House Relations

How you get along, or are expected to get along, with others in your House.

Magic

The spells and kinds of magic that are common in the House.

The House in Play

Saga Idea

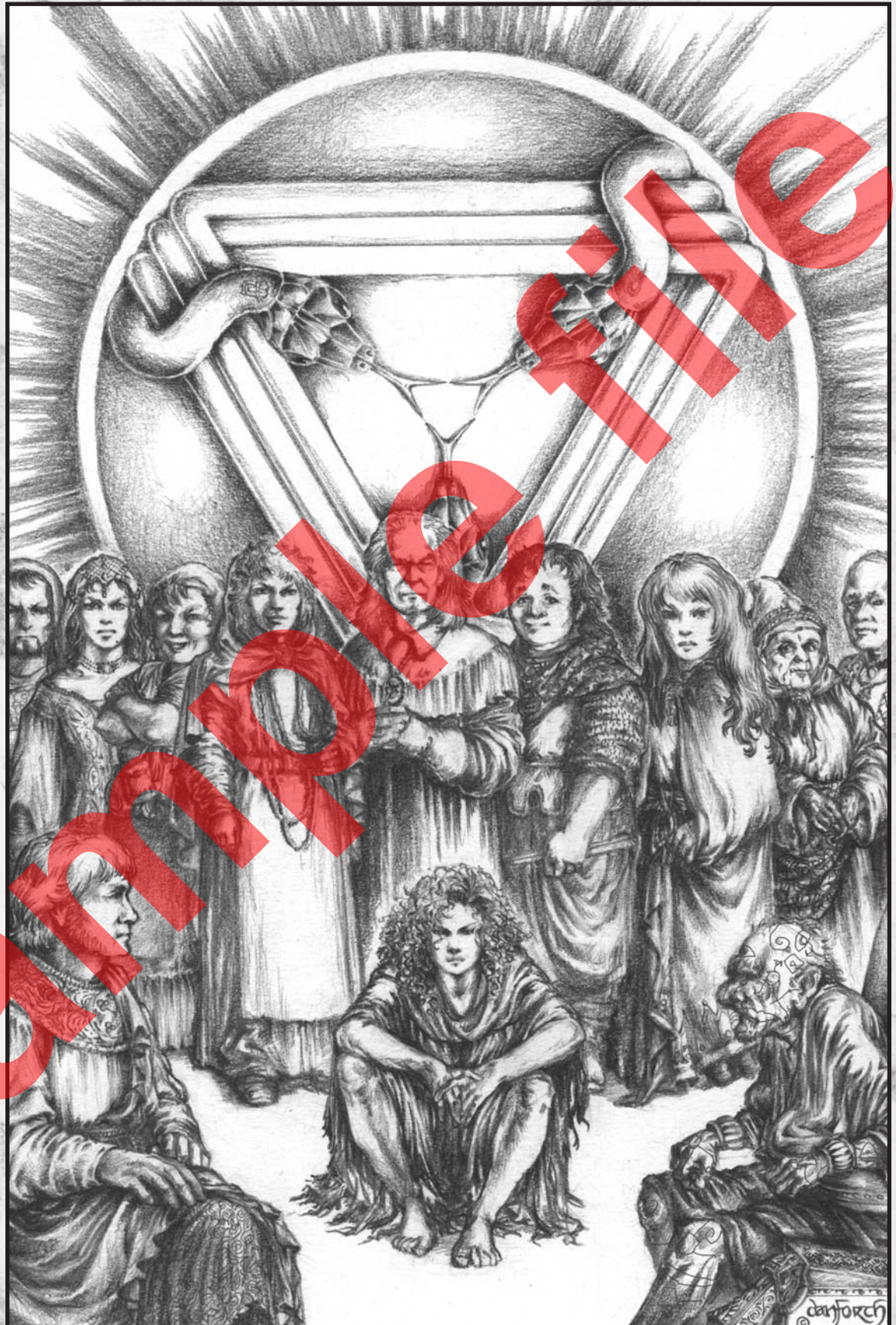
This is a single, big idea, something that could serve as the focal point of an entire saga or as a dramatic background against which your saga is played out. These are world-altering plots. These ideas represent what could happen, but they are not true unless the storyguide implements them. For instance, the saga idea for House Jerbiton posits that Primus Andru has engaged in secret negotiations with the pope. This detail is not an official part of Mythic Europe; it's described here in case the storyguide wants to make it part of the saga.

Story Ideas

Ideas for stories that involve the House.

There was once a thirteenth House in the Order, House Díedne. See *History of the Order*, Chapter Fourteen, for more information.

Each House is typically named for its founder. Since no one recorded exactly how the founders pronounced their names, and since they've all been dead for hundreds of years, the "true" pronunciation of the House names is sometimes in doubt.



The twelve existing Houses of the Order of Hermes embody various forms of knowledge and power.

Example Wizard

This section describes a particular magus of mid-level power. Each magus is powerful and old enough to have had a single apprentice. Your troupe can use these characters for any of several roles:

Pater/Mater: As a player, you can choose one of these magi as the master your character had as an apprentice. You can then design your character accordingly. Your character may be very much like the master or may be quite different, just as children can be similar to or different from their parents. You may change details that describe the magus to let you create the character you want. (For instance, a master must have an Art score at least as high as that of his or her apprentice. You may need to increase the pater's scores to let you have the score you want for your magus's Arts.)

Player character: The storyguide may have the players select from among these magi as their player characters. This method allows for a higher-level saga and for very quick character generation.

Non-player character: The storyguide can use the characters as non-player characters who may be more or less closely involved in the player characters' lives.

Model: The characters can serve as models for mid-power magi whom the storyguide designs.

Apprentice

This section describes how the character might train an apprentice. Depending on how the character is used, these details might apply to a current apprentice, to a player character's past, or to a non-player character's past.

Filius

Each character has a filius, who may be a player character. This section describes how this filius may relate to the character.

Story Idea

An idea for using this magus in a story.

HERMETIC GLOSSARY

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The following are terms that magi use frequently when discussing Houses. Many of them are Latin words or phrases. Players can choose to use English equivalents for simplicity.

Amicus [AH-mee-koos]: "Friend." Used only among magi who have become particularly close. It is also sometimes used for Companions who are especially trusted by the magi. There are many magi who call no one "amicus." Plural is *amici* [AH-mee-kee].

Apprentice's gauntlet: An ordeal that an apprentice must survive or a test that one must pass to be accepted as a magus. Various Houses and individual masters define their gauntlets as they wish. Sometimes it is loosely interpreted as the rivalry and conflict among apprentices at a covenant, sometimes as the trials of apprenticeship in general.

Consors (KAHN-sors): "Cohort." A title sometimes used to indicate a non-wizard who holds a position of status and respect in a covenant. Plural is *consortes* [kahn-SOR-tays].

Domus magna [DOH-moos MAHG-nuh]: The head covenant and political center of a House, where the primus lives. Plural: *domi magna* [DOH-mee MAHG-nye]. Note: "Domus" is an irregular feminine noun in Latin.

Exotic: Referring to magic that is non-Hermetic, as in "an exotic spell" or "an exotic wizard."

Filius [FEE-lee-oos]/**filia** [FEE-lee-uh]: "Son/daughter." The term designating one's former apprentice, now a magus. Any natural child a magus may have is referred to as a "vulgar" son or daughter. Plurals are *fili* [FEE-lee-ee], masculine, or *filiae* [FEE-lee-eye], feminine.

Follower: A member of a House. This term is used because the first magi in the Houses considered themselves followers of the founders rather than members of organizations.

Founder: One of the twelve original magi who swore to abide by the Code and there-

The pronunciations here follow classical rules. Magi in various parts of Mythic Europe, however, pronounce Latin differently, often following the habits of the local vulgar tongue.

by formed the Order of Hermes, plus Pralix, the founder of House Ex Miscellanea.

Hermetic name: The name given an apprentice upon becoming a magus. Most magi use the names their vulgar parents gave them only when traveling incognito.

House: All those wizards (followers) who claim descent from a single founder.

Master: The magus training an apprentice. After the apprentice becomes a magus, the former master is now called a *pater* or *mater*.

Mortal: A mundane.

Mundane: A human who lacks the Gift, the special ability to work magic. Most grogs and Companions are “mundanes,” as are the vast majority of persons in general.

Parens [PAH-rents]: “Parent.” One’s former master, either male or female. Plural is *parentes* [pah-REN-tays]. See **Pater/Mater**.

Pater [PAH-tare]/**mater** [MAH-tare]: “Father/Mother.” One’s former master, used once one becomes a magus. One’s natural parents are referred to as “vulgar.” Plurals are *patres* and *matres* [PAH-trays and MAH-trays]. When referring non-gender-specifically to a pater or mater, one uses the term *parens*. See **Parens**.

Primus [PREE-moos]/**Prima** [PREE-muh]: Short for “primus magus” (or “prima maga”), which is “the first magus.” A magus who is the head of a House. Each House has its own method for choosing its primus, though technically the acting primus has the full right to designate any member of the House as his or her successor. Plural is *primi* [PREE-mee], masculine, or *primae* [PREE-mye], feminine.

Renunciation: Being cast out from one’s House or from the Order. A magus renounced from his or her House must be adopted into another House within a year, or be expelled from the Order altogether. A magus renounced from the Order is no longer protected by the Code, and it is considered the duty of Hermetic magi to shun or even attack the outsider. A primus may renounce members from the House; only a tri-

bunal may renounce a magus directly from the Order.

Salve sodale [SAHL-way soh-DAH-lay]: “Greetings, fellow member.” Traditional greeting between magi, never used for those outside the Order, not even amici. When greeting more than one magus, one uses the plural phrase “*Salvete sodalibus*.” [SAHL-way-tay soh-DAH-lee-boos]

Sanctum: The specially designated private chambers of a magus that, by Hermetic law, can be defended to the point of killing an intruder.

Sodalis [soh-DAH-leez]: “Comrade, fellow member of an organization.” A fellow member of the Order. Plural is *sodales*.

Vulgar: Not relating to the Order or to magical ways. For example, one’s “vulgar name” is the name one had before apprenticeship.



The circle-and-square symbol identifies the room behind this door as a wizard's sanctum. The symbol below identifies the sanctum's owner: in this case, Martin of Bonisagus.

CHAPTER TWO: HOUSE BJORNAER

Motto: *Potentia super ipso potentia
super aliis.* (Power over self is
power over others.)

Symbol: A cone viewed obliquely
from above

Bjornaer: BYORE-nayr