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Introduction

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

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

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

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

Alas, the fall of the Roman Empire, and the growth of the Dominion, have seen the glories of the past fade; the secrets and lore that once saw mages ascend to godhood or gain immortality were lost in the centuries of ignorance, war, and decay called the Dark Ages. The secrets of the ancient

wizards were lost as these practitioners died and took their knowledge to their graves. The mystical continuity of a thousand years was broken, never to be replaced.

Welcome to Ancient Magic

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

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

Each of the distinct forms of magic in this book is inspired by the myths

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

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

How to Use This Book

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

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

What Ancient Magic is Not

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

Furthermore, *Ancient Magic* is not an adventure book. Although it does

contain numerous story hooks and saga seeds, as well as locations for characters to visit and explore, they are offered as the beginnings of ideas that can be used to build and develop your own stories, rather than as ready-made scenarios. They detail many possible quests and obstacles that may stand between a Hermetic magus and the lost secrets of the ancient world.

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 4: FERTILITY MAGIC. The relics of an ancient fertility cult

hold the key to affecting the traits of the unborn, and even ensuring that they are born with The Gift.

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

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

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

CHAPTER 8: HYPERBOREAN MAGIC. The sages of Hyperborea could heal and create enchanted items without vis; magi who study their rel-

ics may be able to reproduce those and other great feats.

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

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

Ancient Magic and the Order of Hermes

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

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