

# The Order of Hermes

## Basic Information

**History:** The Order of Hermes was founded in the year 767 Anno Domini, after the famous wizard Bonisagus agreed to share his knowledge of magic with fourteen other wizards. All of these wizards, with the exception of his apprentice Trianoma, became the basis of the Twelve Houses of Hermes. All wizards who the Order discovered were told to join or die, as the Founders believed that all mages should share a common code.

In the year 817, Pralix created a thirteenth house, House Ex Miscellanea, after threatening to secede from the Order and form her own competitor. Since that time House Ex Miscellanea has existed as an alternative to conventional Hermetic practice, and most mages who do not wish to adopt standard spellcasting either join House Ex Miscellanea and syncretize their practices, or swear allegiance to Ex Miscellanea and then choose to retreat to isolation to be left alone.

The most recent crisis of the order was the genocide of House Diedne, which occurred due to their renunciation of Christianity, rumored practice of human sacrifice, and repeated refusal to obey the Code of Hermes. The last known member of House Diedne died in 1012 and most members of the Order believe that any who remain are so deep in exile that they will never trouble the order again.

**Benefits:** The Order of Hermes offers several benefits to those who join. The simplest and most straightforward is that the Order of Hermes is the largest group of magi in Europe and is able to destroy armed resistance, so most wizards do not have a choice but to become members of the Order. While this is violent, this also serves to protect the members of the Order both socially (as other wizards may interfere with mundanes and draw the ire of the nobility and church) and physically (as other wizards may attack Hermetic mages).

There are also several magical teachings the Order has unlocked that no one else has access to. There is a ritual known as Parma Magica which is only taught to members, which anyone with the Gift of magic can learn to use. Parma Magica prevents the use of magic on the one who performed it, save by the user of Parma Magica themselves. There is also the longevity ritual which allows magi to live for up to about 150 to 200 years, at the cost of infertility.

Lastly, the Order has immense social resources. Most covenants, the basic social units of the Order of Hermes, are relatively wealthy and have lower class mundanes called grogs who work for the magi in return for living space, safety, and a salary. Magi often make money from industry, moneylending or similar tasks.

**Law:** All members of the Order of Hermes are subject to the Code of Hermes, which is a legal system that they agree to follow in return for participation in the Order. The penalty for breaking the Code of Hermes is usually something like a fine or forced labor, but the Wizard's March, which renders a mage an outlaw with no legal rights, is something that can be declared for any purposeful and indisputable violation.

The following are laws:

- Any action which generally endangers the Order or other magi is frowned upon.
- The deprivation of the magical power of another member is strictly forbidden. This is subject to interpretation, but removing another mage's Gift usually means death.
- Members of the Order are not allowed to interact with demons and the Infernal Realm, except to kill them. There is no rule against dealing with the Divine but this is avoided by most sensible magi.
- "Molestation of the faeries" is a crime, but this principle is notorious for being difficult to enforce and different Regional Tribunals have totally different ideas of this concept.
- Interference in the affairs of mundane people is discouraged. While the Order governs covenants which rule small tracts of land, they are to deal with the nobility and church only when necessary. Using magic to influence politics is illegal. Because of this law, most mundane power structures have cold relations with the Order of Hermes and are either passively hostile or ambivalent.
- Scrying, or using magic to spy on, another member, is illegal and strictly punished. Magi are not allowed to use Intellego magic on each other for this reason.
- All magi are obligated to train apprentices and are responsible for their conduct. Members of House Bonisagus are technically allowed to demand transfer of an apprentice to them by right but this practice is rare in modern times.
- A Wizard's War can be called only if one declares war on a night of the full moon, and fighting can only begin on the next full moon after. The reason for this is that it gives the covenant that is attacked a month to prepare to avoid being wiped out quickly. Wizard's War is generally discouraged and almost every regional tribunal has laws which can be invoked against excessive warring.
- The rulings of a tribunal are final and are part of the Peripheral Code, a system of precedent similar to civil law. There is a Grand Tribunal for all magi once every 13 years, Regional Tribunals for all magi in a given region, and other tribunals for special occasions such as emergencies or House policy.

# Houses

**House Bjornaer:** House Bjornaer is considered suspect by the other Houses because their practice is Germanic, not Roman. They have the ability to shapeshift into an animal called a Heartbeast, but cannot take a familiar. House Bjornaer is among the rarest houses and most of their members are Germanic or Slavic.

Character: Mystery Cult

Founder: Birna, a woman from the Gothic tribes and a witch who discovered the Heartbeast and was one of the last to join the Order of Hermes.

Domus Magna: Crintera, Rhine

**House Bonisagus:** House Bonisagus is the largest House and most prestigious in the Order. The members of House Bonisagus are important academics and leaders in the Order, and are usually the political leaders of the Order. They also have the legal right to claim other magi's apprentices due to their important duties.

Character: True Lineage

Founder: Bonisagus, an Italian wizard originally from Florence who formed the basics of hermetic theory. Trianoma is also occasionally counted as the second founder of the House and her lineage is still prevalent.

Domus Magna: Durenmar, Rhine

**House Criamon:** House Criamon is a secretive group which operates autonomously from the rest of the Order in order to discover the Enigma, which is a grand secret that is key to knowing the truth of the universe. Their behavior is considered strange by other magi and they are usually only called upon to solve mysteries no one else can.

Character: Mystery Cult

Founder: Criamon, a mysterious tattooed man of unknown origin. No records remain of who he actually was beyond what was kept by the other Founders.

Domus Magna: The Cave of Twisting Shadows, Greater Alps

**House Ex Miscellanea:** House Ex Miscellanea is the house where magi who don't fit into any other house go. This includes both mages initiated into the Order of Hermes from other practices and mages whose speciality is so distant from other magi that it fits in no other house.

Character: Society

Founder: Pralix, an apprentice of Tytalus from the same tradition as him and Tremere. She is not considered one of the original founders, and in fact later deserted the Order of Hermes due to their intolerance of other magi, and her actual practice takes a backseat in the house.

Domus Magna: Cad Gadu, Stonehenge Tribunal

**House Flambeau:** House Flambeau is the most militant house, and is the house which is most involved in warfare. Anyone who is interested in combat is allowed to join them, and they are notorious for their deadly feuds. Many have special proficiency in fire magic, which is the most destructive.

Character: Society

Founder: Flambeau, a wizard from Gascony and a devout Christian who taught himself fire magic and waged war against the sahiris of the Muslim world.

Domus Magna: Castra Solis, Provençal Tribunal (Originally, Val Negra, Provençal)

**House Guernicus:** A respected lineage of magi who invented the Quaesitor tradition. Most are involved in the judicial process of the Order of Hermes in some way, though not all are Quaesitors, and all of them are respected.

Character: True Lineage

Founder: Guernicus, a wary but forthright member of the Order from Italy who was the last Terrae-magus, a master of earth and metal. He was the first Quaesitor and was always deeply skeptical of the Order of Hermes as an institution.

Domus Magna: Magvillus, Roman Tribunal

**House Jerbiton:** House Jerbiton generally prefers to be among the company of mundanes, and most of them possess the Gentle Gift. Usually, they are trusted to negotiate with mundanes more than other magi, and have more interactions with outsiders than is normal.

Character: Society

Founder: Flavius of Jerbiton, a Rhaeto-Roman who was deeply invested in the welfare of the Eastern Roman Empire and the welfare of the Church.

Domus Magna: Valnastium, Greater Alps Tribunal

**House Mercere:** House Mercere is a predominantly nonmagical house which has the special right to train Redcaps, people without the Gift who deliver messages, handling accounting and business, fighting in war, or other tasks. The Redcaps are legally treated as wizards despite being nonmagical.

Character: True Lineage

Founder: Mercere, a Mercurian mage from Italy who would later lose his gift in a mysterious accident. He only trained two Gifted apprentices, those being his children, and the rest were the first Redcaps.

Domus Magna: Harco, Roman Tribunal

**House Merinita:** House Merinita is the house specialized in dealing with the fairies, and has access to strange magics which are not widely accessible to the Order of Hermes.

Character: Mystery Cult

Founder: Merinita, who was a teacher of nature magic from far away. Her apprentice Quendalon was the one who discovered the secrets of the faeries, and his decisions influenced the character of the house. Followers of Merinita's original teachings are few and usually shunned by the House, and usually are members of Bjornaer or Ex Miscellanea instead.

Domus Magna: Irencillia, Rhine Tribunal

**House Tremere:** House Tremere is the most cohesive house, which obeys laws and power structures which are not observed by other members of the Order. House Tremere has a strong influence in Transylvania and desires to reform the Order into something which can function as a cohesive whole.

Character: True Lineage

Founder: Tremere, a wily magi who used cunning and diplomacy to make his own house by inducting the mages of Dacia. He was trained alongside Tytalus in Naples.

Domus Magna: Coeris, Transylvanian Tribunal

**House Tytalus:** House Tytalus is the polar opposite philosophically of House Tremere. Whereas House Tremere believes in strength through unity, House Tytalus believes that liberty and conflict are the things that enrich life the most.

Character: Society

Founder: Tytalus, a necromancer who was cursed with leprosy by his mentor, who he murdered. He was a political philosopher, warrior and a complicated figure overall.

Domus Magna: Fudaras, Normandy Tribunal

**House Verditius:** House Verditius is the most gregarious of the mystery cults, and is a group devoted to the crafting of magical items. They have a much more sophisticated understanding of investing magic into crafted objects, but do not share this outside their confraternities.

Character: Mystery Cult

Founder: Verditius, a Corsican who was taught the secrets of the Cult of Vulcan and was able to create magical

Domus Magna: Verdi, Roman Tribunal

# How Magic Works

The full rules of how Hermetic magic works are too complicated to explain here in full, but there are some things you absolutely have to know about magic.

## The Four Realms and Their Impact

There are four realms of power, manifestations of living energy, which are Divine (order, purity and human faith), Infernal (wickedness, pain and destruction), Faerie (chaos, legend and dreams), Magic (mystery and nature). Each one has a special aura and can grant mystical powers, and the Order of Hermes draws power primarily from the realm of Magic.

Each realm projects an aura, which enables its own power and disables the powers of others. In the case of the magic of wizards, the Magic realm enables Hermetic magic, the Faerie realm makes it strong but unreliable, the Divine makes it difficult to cast, and the Infernal is generally so bad that casting is not really a concern. It should be noted that unless an area is somehow devoid of any life, it has an aura of some kind.

The magical realms also produce vis, which is an energy for spellcasting (Hermetic mages usually use Magic vis but can also theoretically use other vis), and have creatures associated with them, such as the Divine's angels or Infernal's demons. In the case of the Magic realm, a mage can bind a magical animal to themselves as a familiar.

## Hermetic Spellcasting

**The Limit of the Divine and the Limit of Essential Nature:** There are two principles that no magic can get around- the power of God and the power of the Essential Nature. These are widely believed to be natural to how the world works, and cannot be overcome.

The first is that the Divine, which Christians, Muslims and Jews would say is the power of their god, isn't possible to circumvent. No matter what, you cannot defy the direct will of God using magic. The other implications are that magic works poorly under a Divine aura (most urban settlements have a weak one and churches have a much stronger one) and cannot be effectively used on people who are holy (Jesus, Muhammad, etc.) or angels.

The second is the limit of Essential Nature, which makes a little less sense to modern audiences. Without getting into Greek philosophy, in brief everything is believed to have an essential nature in medieval times, which cannot be circumvented permanently. For instance,

you can turn someone into a frog, but there is no way to turn someone into a frog with Hermetic magic for longer than a year.

There are some other flaws in the Hermetic theory that are difficult to overcome. Most Hermetic mages need an Arcane Connection, a symbolic association with something, to cast a spell on it. Hermetic magic using Creo (such as healing) is not permanent without vis. Hermetic magic cannot affect things past the Lunar sphere (what we could call outer space), the flow of time, or true love. Hermetic magic cannot restore vital energy or cure aging, and is rarely effective against the Infernal.

**Spellcasting in Practice:** There are three types of spellcasting which are taught to Hermetic magi- spontaneous, formulaic and ritual casting. In brief, formulaic spellcasting relies on spells that the caster actually knows, spontaneous spellcasting is made up on the fly and is usually much less effective, and any spell which is known may be cast as a ritual. Hermetic magic usually requires magic words (all incantations are in Latin) and magic gestures in order to be focused. Usage of vis can also empower a spell.

It should be noted that in order to affect a creature with magic resistance (such as Parma Magica) you need to cast the spell with enough force that it penetrates the magic resistance. This is very difficult for a weak or untrained mage to do, hence why Parma Magica is so effective. However, spells which indirectly affect a target (e.g. dropping a rock on their head) do not need to penetrate.

It should be noted that spellcasting can be very dangerous. Excessive use of or exposure to magic can lead to warping, which causes negative health effects on those who are exposed, and Hermetic mages can also accidentally force themselves into Wizard's Twilight, which will cause their minds to leave the mortal plane and experience strange mental images. This can be comprehended for positive effects, but just as often leads to mystical deterioration.

**Certamen:** Lastly, the practice of Certamen should be discussed. In short form, certamen is a demonstration of magical ability through the projection of dramatic spell effects, which take the form of mystical avatars. This can be used to settle minor disputes that do not require the attention of a Quaesitor, and the results are binding. This is also considered a popular sport in the Order of Hermes, and members of the Houses Tremere, Tytalus and Flambeau tend to be leaders in the pursuit of it.

First, the challenge is made. By tradition the aggressor chooses the Technique, and the defender chooses the Form. Then, each side projects a magical avatar, and the avatars begin to fight each other, which causes physical strain to the magi who project them. The contest ends with one of the magi losing focus and their projection failing, one of the magi falling unconscious and being unable to continue, or one of the magi forfeiting the contest.

**The Drawback of Magic:** Lastly, there is one problem with Hermetic magic, that being the Gift. While magi are powerful, the Gift makes interactions with mundane people difficult, to the point



where some wizards are driven mad from isolation as their peers refuse to speak to them. The Gentle Gift which does not disturb others is very rare.

## **The Fifteenth Arts**

All Hermetic spells are cast using two of fifteen arts, those being one Technique and one Form. Put simply, the Technique is how the subject is being manipulated, and the Form is what the subject is. For instance, the famous Pilum of Flame spell, which creates a javelin made from fire, uses the Technique Creo (to create) and the Form Ignem (fire).

### **Hermetic Techniques:**

Creo: This allows the creation or restoration of a given subject. It should be noted that spells using Creo are of limited duration unless some vis is expended.

Intellego: This allows the use of magic to detect or analyze something related to the Form's phenomenon. Interestingly, this is the only Technique which can be used on something that is not known to the caster.

Muto: This allows the caster to transfigure or alter a given target. Due to the Limit of Essential Nature, Muto magic is never permanent, even with the use of vis.

Perdo: This allows the caster to destroy or damage a given target. This is always permanent, but it cannot be used to remove flaws or otherwise make a target more effective.

Rego: This allows the caster to control something. By virtue of its effects, Rego requires the caster to set a duration for the spellcasting.

### **Hermetic Forms:**

Animal: Animal is used to manipulate the beasts, birds and fish of the world, and can affect both the body and mind of a given creature. Some common spells include The Wizard's Mount (Creo, create a horse unaffected by the Gift) or Mastery of the Unruly Beast (Rego, control the actions of a given animal)

Aquam: Aquam is used for natural liquids, including water, poisons or ale. Some common spells include Touch of the Pearls (Intellego, detect poison in a drink) or Lungs of the Fish (Muto, allows transmutation of inhaled water into air, granting the ability to breath underwater)

Auram: Auram is used for air and other gasses, as well as lightning. Some common spells include Sailor's Foretaste of the Morrow (Intellego, predict the weather of the next day) or the Incantation of Lightning (Creo, shoot a lightning bolt which annihilates a target)

Corpus: Corpus is used for the human body, and can heal, harm and control in equal measure. Some common spells include the Surgeon's Healing Touch (Creo, heal minor injuries) and Seven League Stride (Rego, transport self from one location to another within seven leagues that can be seen or where an Arcane Connection exists).

Herbam: Herbam allows control of plant life as well as wood and fungus, and is highly valued for agriculture and crafting. Some common spells include Pass the Unyielding Portal (Muto, makes a wooden door weak and allows it to be broken easily) or Coils of the Entangling Plants (Rego, traps a target in place with grass and vines)

Ignem: Ignem allows for the control of fire, as well as temperature and light. Some common spells include Pilum of Fire (Creo, throw a flame in the shape of a javelin as a weapon) or Gloom of Evening (Perdo, darken a single room to make it difficult to see).

Imaginem: Imaginem controls the senses and allows manipulation of the appearance of objects, including sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Some common spells include Prying Eyes (Intellego, see inside a room through touching a wall) or Veil of Invisibility (Perdo, become invisible, albeit still casting a shadow)

Mentem: Mentem governs the human mind, which is much more complex than that of a simple animal. Some common spells include Thoughts Within Babble (Intellego, understand the intention behind all language) or Black Whisper (Perdo, drive a target completely insane)

Terram: Terram is the Form of stone, earth, and metal. Some common spells include Wall of Protecting Stone (Creo, create a large wall of granite which cannot be easily broken through) and Hermes' Portal (Rego, create a portal which transports anyone who speaks a codeword between the connected locations instantly)

Vim: Vim directly controls magic, and can also affect faeries and demons. Some common spells include The Invisible Eye Revealed (Intellego, Detect scrying from another caster) or Aegis of the Hearth (Rego, prevent the use of spellcasting or entry of magical beings within a covenant or similar settlement)

## **Laboratory Activities**

All Hermetic magi are on some level expected to perform laboratory activities, and all of them are trained in magical theory to the point where they can effectively perform them. Generally, at least a season is devoted to lab work, often wintertime due to the difficulty of getting things done in the biting cold. Some basic laboratory activities include fixing Arcane Connections (which requires a pawn of Vim vis but involves little risk), transferring vis from one item to another (which only takes a single day), and reading or writing books (which is somewhat time consuming but relatively simple).

Another common activity is the development of a longevity ritual. Basically, this is a potion created in a laboratory which grants the ability to resist aging. This is not true immortality, but rather allows one to prolong resistance to the effects of old age. Many magi also create longevity rituals for each other in return for payment.

A magical animal can also be taken on as a familiar, a beloved companion who is somewhere between a pet and a best friend. A familiar makes the magi more resilient, and becomes a companion who can aid in all things. Another close bond is the teaching of an apprentice, which most magi take very seriously.

Lastly, the creation of magical items should be discussed. A mage can infuse an object with vis in order to grant it the effect of a spell, and there are several paths to this. A rudimentary charged item can be made, which is easier but also can only be used a limited number of times. A lesser enchantment may be made to grant an item a single permanent power. Lastly, an item may be invested with multiple powers, but this is costly and requires time and vis.

## Mystery Cults

The last thing that should be discussed is the Mystery Cults of the Order of Hermes, as their secretive beliefs, rites and powers are often considered bizarre by outsiders. Presented below are the four House Cults along with the most common mystery cults in the Order of Hermes, which are adhered to by a significant minority of members of the Order.

Importantly, the Order of Hermes is much more religiously diverse than any other society in Mythic Europe. Western Christians are a slim majority, with significant pockets of Eastern Christians, Jews and Muslims in some areas. Furthermore, the Order of Hermes retains elements of Greco-Roman, Germanic, Slavic and Celtic paganism that are mostly extinct elsewhere, and a few of its members are secular or even atheistic.

**House Bjornaer and the Heartbeast:** House Bjornaer's customs are rooted in the spiritual beliefs of the Gothic pagans, specifically from the region that 21st century people would call Pomerania. They believed in living in harmony with nature and that their heartbeast (an animal form they can shift into) is a reflection of their spirit.

All members of House Bjornaer can shift, but they cannot bind familiars due to the Ritual of Twelve Years preventing this kind of bond. A heartbeast is indistinct from a mundane animal, and Hermetic magic effects Bjornaer magi with Animal while heartbeast form. Some Bjornaer magi are also initiated into the Inner Heartbeast, which further refines the Heartbeast and allows them to shift into a more powerful form.

**House Criamon and the Enigma:** House Criamon is probably the smallest and least influential House of the Order of Hermes, and is also arguably the most distant from the rest of the Order. They are widely considered to be strange due to their belief in a concept called the Enigma, which supposedly can grant them access to secrets beyond our reality.

Their goal as magi is first and foremost to seek the Enigma, and over time many spiritual Paths have opened which grant them knowledge of the true nature of the universe. Criamon magi are usually only called upon by the wider order for mysteries too strange for other magi, especially relating to Wizard's Twilight.

Criamon magi tend to enter Twilight more often, though they are experts at dealing positively with Twilight. They also are usually pacifist, egalitarian, and abstain from worldliness. Due to the nature of Enigmatic Wisdom, they usually consider Christian religion to be irrelevant to them. Due to frequent exposure to twilight, their body eventually develops stigmata, giving them a mutated appearance.

**House Merinita and Faerie Magic:** House Merinita is the house specialized in dealing with the Faerie Realm, and as such has exceptionally close relations with the fae. Due to this, they can use faerie auras and faerie vis without penalty, and have access to special durations with their magic. They also tend to be better at sympathetic magic, and often have special affinity with illusion magic.

As a special aside, the practices of Merinita the Founder are preserved primarily in House Bjornaer and House Ex Miscellanea. The practitioners of Nature Magic are often shunned by members of House Merinita, who view them as old fashioned relics of a bygone age. The nature magi have unparalleled knowledge of the natural world and can in their homelands do things such as speak to animals and plants without spellcasting.

**House Verditius and the Cult of Vulcan:** House Verditius is an organization devoted to the crafting of magical items first and foremost, and while they originate from the Cult of Vulcan (with some additional teachings from other magical crafters), they are primarily devoted to their art of construction. For reasons which are not entirely clear, those initiated into the House cannot cast formulaic magic without casting tools, such as staves or ritual versions of crafting tools, which are specially made by their own hand.

Using special means not clear to others, Verditius magi can create special items out of mundane materials which take better to enchantment. They can also create more powerful mundane items or enchant their casting tools. Perhaps the most awe-inspiring craft of House Verditius is the automaton, essentially a magical servant which serves the creator.

**Other Mysteries:** The most common secrets outside the four mystery houses are Mercurian, with many magi, especially Gifted Merceres and Bonisagi, being trained in Mercurian magic. Mercurian mages are specially skilled at ritual magic in groups, and many teach special variations on existing spells. Many also know ancient secrets of the roads, as taught by the Cult of Mercury.

Many Hermetic magi are also initiated into the secrets of alchemy or astrology, which are taught as sciences in Mythic Europe. Many use astrology to aid in crafting magical items during

auspicious times, and many use alchemy to enhance material bonuses in crafting. Some are further invested into these arts, with alchemy aiding in the extraction of vis and in the longevity ritual, and astrology enhances the precision of one's magical casting based on the correspondence of the time of casting with astrological movements.

## The Tribunals

For the last part of this encyclopedia, we must discuss the regional differences between different magi. Each tribunal has its own laws, customs and population, and because of this there are pros and cons to operation in each tribunal. Presented below are the thirteen tribunals of Hermes, their area, their Peripheral Code, their strengths and weaknesses.

## Not Tribunals

Notably, some areas of Europe do not have their own tribunal despite being culturally unique enough to theoretically warrant a tribunal. Some are folded into other tribunals, but others are not for a variety of reasons. Three are presented with explanations below.

**The Low Countries:** The Dutch speaking regions of Europe are not yet considered important enough to warrant their own tribunal, as they are currently a nascent region of swamps which is only beginning to become wealthy and influential. Because of this and a lack of a divergent Hermetic population, they do not have their own tribunal, and are instead split between the Normandy tribunal (including most of what will become Belgium) and the Rhine tribunal (including part of Flanders, Holland and Frisia). A few notable magi in both tribunals want to create a Lotharingia tribunal which covers these regions, but there does not yet exist enough political backing to actually do this.

**Africa:** If the Levant Tribunal exists, why is there no African tribunal in the regions of similar proximity? This is because the Levant Tribunal is really most of a historical formality, and the Order of Hermes only has a few covenants which are actually based there. There is no significant Hermetic presence in Africa, with Egypt, the Maghreb, and the Sahara being too hostile, Nubia and Ethiopia being too distant, and much of Sub Saharan Africa being untouched by Europeans at this point. Hermetic magi in Africa are on their own.

**Scandinavia:** Although at this point the Viking Age has been over for hundreds of years and most of Scandinavia is at least in theory Christian, Scandinavia remains a region of feuding Norse tribes who have little to do with the rest of Europe. The Order of Hermes has almost no members here, with the closest covenant being in Schleswig. According to some travelers to the region, the Nordic magi have their own traditions of magic, based on the teachings of the old god Odin, and do not tolerate Hermetic meddling.

Under Hermetic law, there is no accounting for anything that happens in Scandinavia and any magi who goes there is on their own. The lands of Norway, Sweden and Lappmarken are in practice governed by no one and any Hermetic mage foolish enough to set foot here will be totally isolated. Aside from a few members of the Lineage of Pralix in House Ex Miscellanea, few bother to visit and fewer bother to stay.

## The Stonehenge Tribunal

At this point in history, England is nowhere near the center of Europe. It is a lowly fiefdom ruled by French nobility whose eyes peer across the channel, and is by no means considered a major power in Europe. For the Order of Hermes, the Stonehenge Tribunal is much more valuable, however, for this the tribunal of Merlin, the Hermetic foothold in the British Isles, and where the secrets of the druids may lay untapped.

**Lands:** England, Wales and Cornwall. Although Wales has a much lower population overall, the distribution of covenants heavily favors the Welsh, due to the history of local wizards and the efforts of Cad Gadu.

**Laws:** Stonehenge by necessity has looser laws involving interference with mundanes than most other tribunals. Active negotiation with nobility and the church is much more normal than in other tribunals, and there have even been instances of magi using their spells to trade with mundanes in ways that would be unheard of in other tribunals, including one instance where Terram magic was used to create artificial silver to pay off debt to merchants.

**Strengths:** Relatively peaceful and organized, and not yet overburdened with magi.

**Weaknesses:** The English nobility frequently interfere in Hermetic politics, Stonehenge is not as prestigious as the continental tribunals.

## The Loch Leglean Tribunal

Untouched by Hermetic wizards for centuries, the lands north of the Stonehenge tribunal have a number of magi, especially in the Highlands, but most of those magi are either sworn nominally to House Ex Miscellanea or are part of the native gruagach tradition. Scotland has also been wracked with conflict after the war against Damhan-Allaidh, a powerful sorcerer who was only defeated by Pralix.

**Lands:** Scotland, but the Orkneys and Shetlands still belong to the Norse at this point. The Isle of Man is theoretically a part of the tribunal but no covenant exists there, making it a moot point. Most Hermetic magi are in the Lowlands, with the highlands belonging to the locals.

**Laws:** The Order of Hermes has very little actual authority over the Highlands of Loch Leglean, so the local customs remain relatively unchanged due to inability to effectively enforce Hermetic law.

**Strengths:** An untapped land, fairly easy for a young mage to get a start.

**Weaknesses:** The local magi, especially of the Highlands, are clannish and insular, and often disregard the Code of Hermes in favor of their own rules.

## The Hibernian Tribunal

Ireland is a distant frontier region for the Order, forgotten by almost all magi outside of Britain. Almost all the Hermetic magi are locals, save for a few migrant wizards from Stonehenge, and the province of Connacht is reserved for the hedge mages. The Ordo Hiberniae, as they call themselves, are almost autonomous from the rest of the Order, and have little interest in wider Hermetic politics.

**Lands:** All of Ireland, though predominantly galldach (foreign) covenants tend to observe laws according to the Stonehenge tribunal.

**Laws:** The Peripheral Code of Hibernia is bizarre to the point of being unintelligible by people who are unfamiliar. For a few examples, Wizard's War is significantly easier, magical beasts and faeries can vote in Hibernian tribunals, and covenants must steal magical treasures in order to be founded.

**Pros:** A strong local culture with many privileges that resident magi enjoy only there.

**Cons:** Almost completely disconnected to the rest of the Order of Hermes.

## The Iberian Tribunal

Iberia at this point is in the midst of the Reconquista, and the Christian north is split between Leon, Aragon, Castille, Navarre and Portugal, whereas the south is still the domain of the Muslims. Iberia is a young tribunal, as during the foundation of the Order it was still controlled by the Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba, and as a result many of the covenants are new.

**Lands:** Theoretically all of Iberia from the Pyrenees to the Strait of Gibraltar, but in practice Andalusia is currently off limits to the majority of the Order.

**Laws:** Iberian magi place unusual emphasis on the “join or die” rule due to the influence of the sahirs, and hedge mages in Iberia face intense opposition. In addition, the magi are split on whether participating in the Reconquista is a breach of the Code.

**Pros:** A relatively fresh tribunal with room for new magi to make names for themselves.

**Cons:** Unfriendly to apostates, infidels and heretics, active war in the border regions.

## **The Normandy Tribunal**

One of the oldest tribunals of the Order of Hermes, the Normandy Tribunal has a long and complex history due to influence of the French church, the Schism War, and the growing lack of land and resources in the tribunal.

**Lands:** Northern France, where the French language is spoken. Flanders is split with the Rhine tribunal, the eastern regions are split with the Greater Alps tribunal, and the Occitan-speaking regions have their own tribunal as Provençal.

**Laws:** All vis sources belong to the tribunal unless they are within a day’s march of a covenant or paid for with a seven year lease belong to the tribunal as a whole, due to the relative scarcity of vis.

**Pros:** A long and distinguished history for the Order in the region, many sources of mundane resources and wealth available for magi

**Cons:** Founding a new covenant is very difficult, there exists a regional resource scarcity for the Order, French nobles and the church frequently meddle in affairs.

## **The Provençal Tribunal**

A relatively recent tribunal, the Provençal Tribunal, which consists of the Occitan speaking lands of France, is home to high centers of art and science, as well as home to a growing religious conflict between the Church and a heretical gnostic movement known to outsiders as the Cathars, who reject the doctrines of the Church and instead practice radical pacifism and purity.

**Lands:** Southern France, where the Occitan language is spoken. This also includes the north of the Pyrenees and some of the Basque Country.

**Laws:** The Provençal Tribunal has relatively few major divergences from Hermetic custom. Most interestingly, covenant charters are enforceable by tribunal arbitration.



**Pros:** In some ways, this is the best region to found a covenant. Enough resources but not too much competition. Neither too much mundane interference nor total isolation.

**Cons:** However, this may not last, as some magi may be forced to take stances in the Albigenian Crusade against the Cathars.

## The Rhine Tribunal

Arguably the most ancient Tribunal, the Rhine tribunal is the Hermetic heartland. The Order of Hermes began in the Black Forest with Durenmar, and is considered perhaps the most important tribunal. The magi here are deeply conservative, and have established a complex hierarchy.

**Lands:** Most of the German speaking areas of Europe (with the exception of lands under the Greater Alps), as well as Bohemia, the Netherlands, and the Pomeranian and Silesian regions of Poland. The Rhine tribunal is very, very large.

**Laws:** There are many additional laws in the Rhine tribunal. Forests and wild places are always to be protected from interference. Some magi are allowed to vote more than once in the Rhine tribunal through a retired magus' sigil. Any covenant can veto the creation of a new covenant. These are just a few that are important.

**Pros:** Extensive Hermetic resources, great wealth, immense prestige.

**Cons:** A high degree of mundane interference, must deal with very old traditions.

## The Greater Alps Tribunal

The Rhine tribunal is the birthplace of the Order, but the Greater Alps Tribunal is the spiritual center. The isolation of the mountains is where the Wizards are most powerful, it is home to Houses Jerbiton and Criamon, and it is a fortress where the most trusted magical devices, libraries and secrets are stored.

**Lands:** This tribunal is borne of Hermetic politics rather than national sentiment. It includes most of old Raetia and Noricum, including Switzerland, Austria, Slovenia and some southern German and northern Italian regions. In addition, it also includes Savoy.

**Laws:** It is extremely difficult to become a permanent resident of the Greater Alps tribunal. Their process of citizenship is arcane and the local magi are clannish to a fault. Furthermore, many complex rules exist to deter conflict and prevent oversaturation.

**Pros:** The Greater Alps covenants are the most powerful in the Order.

**Cons:** The Greater Alps covenants are also almost impossible for young magi to found.

## The Roman Tribunal

The Roman Tribunal has lost much of its old resources due to the prominence of the Church, but remains a formidable force in Hermetic politics. This is where much of Hermetic history and culture originates, and in some way represents the soul of the Order. The magi of this tribunal are a proud and powerful bunch, if fewer than in other lands of Europe.

**Lands:** The Roman Tribunal includes the Italian peninsula (except for some far northern Alpine regions), as well as the islands of Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily and Malta.

**Laws:** The Roman tribunal has many archaic customs protecting the local mystery cults, especially the Cult of Mercury and the old Roman pagan practices. Ironically, the magi of this region are just as likely to be staunch supporters of the Church due to the proximity to Rome and the influence of House Jerbiton.

**Pros:** Ancient prestige and access to many mundane resources.

**Cons:** Competition for vis and magical places in the Italian peninsula is fierce, and many magi have resorted to Wizard's War in recent times.

## The Transylvanian Tribunal

The Transylvanian Tribunal is dominated by House Tremere, and is considered a place to practically demonstrate the virtues of the Tremere ethos. The laws of this tribunal are considered draconian by other magi, but by House Tremere are considered sensible regulations to prevent abuses of power by magi and strengthen the Order of Hermes.

**Lands:** The Transylvanian Tribunal includes the lands of Hungary and Transylvania, as well as the Balkans save for Greece.

**Laws:** This tribunal has a powerful bureaucracy, which holds authority on nearly every aspect of life in the tribunal. Magi are expected to pay taxes to Coeris and do useful work in service of other magi, and members of the specific oppida (the equivalent of covenants) of Transylvania are entitled to specific rights and privileges.

**Pros:** A strong system of support among Hermetic magi and many magical resources

**Cons:** Hermetic magi have many additional responsibilities in this tribunal.

## The Theban Tribunal

For years, Constantinople and the Eastern Romans were the bastion of Christendom and a worthy successor to the glory days of the city of Rome, but those times have long faded into nostalgic memory. In 1204, Constantinople was sacked and the last Romans imploded into a series of petty kings. The magi here are proud, and follow their own code based on Athenian democracy and the early magi of the region.

**Lands:** Mainland Greece, the islands of the Aegean, and the west of Anatolia.

**Laws:** The Theban Tribunal's politics are moderated by an elected Council of Magistrates, who along with the citizens of the tribunal work to ensure the common good, through policies such as community service as a punishment for minor crimes. In addition, all new covenants in the Theban tribunal need a pact with a Magical patron.

**Pros:** The Theban Tribunal operates on a principle of mutual respect and aid, and citizens of the tribunal benefit from this.

**Cons:** The Theban Tribunal also has high expectations for magi, and in addition the region of Greece is currently highly contentious among mundanes.

## The Novgorod Tribunal

The lands of the far east of Europe are almost pagan in character, being so far removed from the rest of European affairs that they might as well not be present. There are few people here, both mundane and magical, and the Order of Hermes is able to exert little influence here. The few magi who make their homes here are able to be left alone.

**Lands:** The tribunal encompasses much of Poland, all the way to the Ural Mountains. Theoretically, it also makes laws for Scandinavia, though this is ignored by almost everyone due to the lack of Hermetic presence there.

**Laws:** The Novgorod tribunal is exceptionally lenient in Peripheral Code. Only in crucial cases such as High Crimes is the Code of Hermes reliably enforced. Hedge magic is very common in this tribunal.

**Pros:** Almost no one lives here, so magi can get away with almost whatever they want.

**Cons:** Virtually no wider support from the Hermetic community, as the Novgorod magi are so scattered that they cannot draw on that aid.

## The Levant Tribunal

The Levant is currently ruled by nobles from Western Europe, but is extremely diverse in terms of religion and culture. The Order of Hermes here includes Christians (Western and Eastern), Muslims, Jews, and mystery cults, and although this is not the most dense region of Hermetic operation, it is important as the only major non-European foothold of the Order of Hermes.

**Lands:** Jerusalem, Antioch, Phoenicia and Cicilia as well as the surrounding regions. Magi in Muslim lands also usually claim the Levant tribunal as their legal residence.

**Laws:** The Levant Tribunal has very strict rules around interference with the Divine, and generally is strictly neutral as a political body in religious conflicts.

**Pros:** The Levant tribunal boasts ancient secret lore unheard of elsewhere owing to its ancient pedigree and numerous hedge magi.

**Cons:** Low Hermetic population, local magi need to contest frequently with mundane influence and the Divine.

## A Note About Language

Generally, the language of the Order of Hermes is Latin. Magi of the Order can speak, read and write Latin to a degree resembling the Romans of old, and most magi use Latin to communicate with their solades when they do not share a vernacular language. However, many Hermetic magi in the Theban, Novgorod and Levant Tribunals use Classical Greek instead, and a few older texts use other languages such as Aramaic or Hebrew.

## One More Disclaimer

Some information in this section is slightly different from official canon, especially the section on House Criamon's beliefs and the Tribunal section. This will not be the same in other sagas that are run by others, so listed here are the official stances.

**Tribunals (The Simple, the Complex and the Obsolete):** So, the tribunal books are massive, expansive and cover a lot of ground. Because of this, I chose to ignore certain material from them that I just didn't think would be worth writing in what's intended to be a relatively simple primer. I would say that the Transylvanian and Hibernian tribunals are the largest 5th Edition victim of this, because I just didn't have time to write everything.

Perhaps more crucially, some of the books on the tribunals are dated to 4th or 3rd edition, and therefore are no longer very useful. In particular, the Stonehenge, Roman, Loch Leglan, Greater Alps, Iberia, Levant and Novgorod Tribunals are out of date, especially badly so in the case of the Roman and Iberian tribunals. Because of this, I had to improvise and adapt much of the information within.

**The Teachings of Criamon ("Who is Empedocles?"):** So, this one is changed significantly because I didn't like it, not because the books involved are out of date. In the supplement Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults, House Criamon is presented as following the teachings of the philosopher Empedocles, who preaches a gnostic cosmology where all beings live infinite lives until they escape. There are several reasons why I choose to ignore this.

The first is that House Criamon to me works best as a mysterious and complex house with central beliefs that are poorly understood, and therefore, I viewed a cohesive system of philosophy as more of a hindrance than anything. The second is that I honestly don't think the House as presented in the Mystery Cults book would be that interesting for the average player, so I decided that their beliefs would be less centralized.