

Ars Magica

The Cradle & The Crescent



by Christie, Dahl,
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& White

The Cradle & The Crescent

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ARS MAGICA FIFTH EDITION TRADE DRESS: J. Scott Reeves

PUBLISHER'S SPECIAL THANKS: Jerry Corrick & the gang at the Source.

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ture references that they don't get. Niall would like to thank his co-authors and the line editor for all their help, and in particular for picking up the magic lamp that he dropped; and also Guy Le Strange and Muhammad ibn Jubayr, invaluable guides through the desert. He would like to dedicate his portion of this book to three people: to Matt Ryan, for setting this genie free; to Angus MacDonald, for much sheik, rattle, and roll; and to Steph van Willigenburg, for being his Water of Life.

Erik Dahl lives in a strange, far-off land with its own rules of magic and its own order of exotic wizards who are surely secretly plotting to take over Mythic Europe. His contributions to this book were inspired by and dedicated to the participants of Grand Tribunal America 2008, which took place August 15–17 in Berkeley, California, and included: Jerry Braverman, Paul Briscoe, Toshi Casey, Niall Christie, Mark Faulkner, Sally Hutchinson, Kurt Konegen, Angus MacDonald, Mark Pascual, John Post, Thomas Scott, Chris Van Horn, Eric Vesbit, and Debbi Winslow. Many thanks to all of you, for your help in establishing such a memorable and enjoyable magical tradition! ARS MAGICA AWESOME EST.

The jinni known as Jarkman (**Lachie Hayes**) hails from far beyond the Mountains of Qaf, in a city where it always rains and seasons change within a day. Perhaps one day he'll master the Travel magic to attend a Grand Tribunal, but until then he'll stick to Storytelling. Lachie thanks Niall for summoning him into this circle, then letting him loose to make mischief. He also thanks his other co-authors Alex, Erik, and Mark for their help and support along the way. Special thanks to Timothy Ferguson for inspiring Lachie to start writing seriously and helping him understanding faeries, which was invaluable for the Jinn and Silk Road chapters. Apologies to Marko and the Light of Andorra crowd for disappearing without explanation just as the saga got going — now you know why. Lachie would most like to thank his wife, for putting up with Middle Eastern medieval madness. This is his first book for *Ars Magica*.

Mark Shirley is the descendent of Robert Shirley who, with his brothers, sold cannons to Shah Abbas of Persia on behalf of Queen Elizabeth I. Robert married the Shah's ward, Teresia, a Circassian princess, and became the shah's ambassador to Christendom. Mark feels his Persian bloodline, though many generations diluted, enhanced his enjoyment of writing for this project.

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Chapter One

Introduction & Sagas

Ablan wa sablan! Welcome to *The Cradle and the Crescent*, the guide to the Mythic Middle East for *Ars Magica Fifth Edition*. This book explores a part of the Mythic world beyond the control of the Order of Hermes, including the lands known in the modern day as the “cradle of civilization,” from which our earliest records of human civilization stem — the lands to the east of the Hermetic Tribunal of the Levant, lands known in Europe only through occasional accounts of pilgrims and other travelers, supplemented by a multitude of (at times wild) rumors and speculations.

In this book we present this region as a setting for *Ars Magica* sagas. We describe the geography and history of the area, including in particular many of its mystical sites and supernatural denizens. We also give particular attention to Mythic Middle Eastern magic, the jinn, Mythic Zoroastrianism, and the *Subbar Sulayman* that is also known as the Order of Suleiman.

How to Use This Book

This book is intended as a full-blown setting for sagas and adventures, with the expectation that it will be a source for stories set within the region. The text assumes that there is no existing Hermetic presence in the area but, throughout the book, you will find story seeds that are intended to draw Hermetic magi and their followers away from their covenants and lead them to the lands of the Middle East. The following are just some of the possibilities that this book offers to players of *Ars Magica* sagas.

First, you may simply use the rules

here to develop exotic characters to supplement your covenant’s membership, be they spirit-summoning sahirs, impetuous jinn, or mysterious Zoroastrian mobeds (see Chapters 3, 4, and 5, respectively).

Second, this book provides tools for you to build an exotic story arc, or exciting adventures set in the region or the supernatural realms it contacts, as a diversion from a conventional Europe-based saga. You may also choose to use the information on Middle Eastern magic and the Order of Suleiman to develop powerful non-Hermetic antagonists or allies for your saga.

Alternatively, you may wish to set your entire saga in the region, in the form of a new covenant of Hermetic magi striking out into lands previously unexplored by the Order, encountering the various challenges and magical traditions of the area.

Finally, and most adventurously, you can cast Hermetic magi aside entirely, playing a group of Middle Eastern mages and their companions seeking to make a name for themselves, and immersing your troupe entirely in the region.

We have not given full details on every place, creature, or supernatural item found within this book. We have given suggested statistics for some of these, but in many cases the precise statistics will depend on the power level of your saga. Thus our main emphasis has been on providing the legends and stories that may be used as inspiration.

On the Setting

In the minds of the people of Mythic Europe, the Middle East is a distant and strange place, home to all manner of monsters, spirits, sorcerers, and kings — full

of great wonders for those who are brave enough to seek them out. This book reflects this perception by heightening the level of supernatural activity in the region. Most people of the Mythic Middle East have no less respect for the supernatural than do their counterparts in the West, but they are also much more used to encountering such elements. By adopting this vision of the region we will frequently be doing violence to the historical realities of the period, though many of the supernatural elements that we mention are based on beliefs and ideas expressed in historical sources from the time. However, it is important to remember that this is not a book on Middle Eastern history; it is instead a supplement for the *Ars Magica* roleplaying game that merely draws inspiration from the historical texts.

Strangers in Foreign Lands

Broadly speaking, characters who are members of other faiths living under Islam follow the usual guidelines for character creation, although very few are members of the nobility, and none may be members of the religious classes. Many Christians living under Islam are involved in the civil administration, while many Jews are merchants.

The Jews are, for the most part, orthodox Rabbinites, though some Karaites do still live in the region. The Exilarch — the spiritual head of the Jewish community — lives in Baghdad, making it an important city for the Jews, at least in theory.

The situation with regard to the Christians is rather more complex, as there are a large number of different Christian groups living in the region covered by this book.