

Chapter 15: Ritualism

Practitioners of ritualism, called ritualists or wizards in equal measure, bend the forces of magic to their will by shaping runes of power. They gather ritual scrolls with these runes, competing fiercely with other ritualists for knowledge and power. Ritualists power their magic with internal reservoirs of energy, called Fatigue. As a form of magic, Ritualism offers a wider range of effects, particularly unusual utility effects, than any other magic. Unlike other magics, ritualists must have ritual formulas in order to cast their spells, and can cooperate to cast more powerful spells. Rituals have a chance of failure and backlash based on the player's ability to shape the rune successfully with the bones available to them. Many rituals offer more than one activation of a spell upon completion of the ritual in exchange for this risk.

Ritualism has no concept of advancement by Circle or tests to elevate, only the Master's Rite of the Scarred Soul to initiate them. Failure in the Master's Rite of the Scarred Soul causes a severely fatiguing backlash for the master, and varying amounts of memory loss for apprentice being initiated.

Bones

Ritualists form the runes of their spells with a double-six set of domino bones. Objects other than domino bones are possible with Plot permission, though standard dominoes make cooperative casting with other players much more convenient. Players store bones in pouches or other containers from which they can draw bones at random when they cast spells. A ritualist's set of bones is a tagged item and can be stolen, but once a ritualist has created his first set of bones, it is trivially easy to create another; a ritualist can create a new set of bones at no cost once per event and once per BGA. (Do not harass Production marshals for more tags unnecessarily.)

When a character spends character points on ritualism, this is referred to as buying bones or buying Fatigue. The meaning is the same: the character is able to draw more bones for the purpose of casting rituals. As a character accumulates Fatigue, the number of bones she can draw out of her pouch diminishes. For example, Miranda has advanced to fifteen bones. When she begins her first ritual in a day, she draws out fifteen (of the twenty-eight in the bag). She decides to cast the Sigil of Imperious Authority, and successfully completes this ritual. She puts all fifteen bones back in her bag. The Sigil of Imperious Authority has a Fatigue cost of one, so when she begins her next ritual, she draws out fourteen bones.

Focus

Many rituals imbue spells into a ritualist's focus. All foci must be phys-repped, and the phys-rep must be approved. You must always carry the tag for your focus. A focus is immediately recognizable as such by any ritualist, or by any character with the Magic Sense Advantage.

A ritualist creates his first focus during his initiation, a ritual known as the Master's Rite of the Scarred Soul. Any initiated ritualist can create a new focus with a BGA, up to once per set of BGAs. Spells stored in one focus are not accessible through other foci. Foci are personal, and cannot be traded from one character to another. Spells imbued into a focus are available only to the ritualist attuned to that focus. Attuning someone else's focus requires a BGA. A ritualist may attune a second focus when he purchases his sixth bone, his third focus when he purchases his eleventh bone, his fourth when he purchases his sixteenth bone, and his fifth and final focus when he purchases his twenty-first bone.

As tagged items, foci can be made resistant to destruction with rituals or alchemical formulations. If a focus is broken or destroyed, all spells that had been imbued into it are lost.

Activating Spells from a Focus

To activate a spell out of a focus, the caster must touch her focus, speak the spell's tagline on activation (as specified in the ritual formula), and throw a gray packet. The tagline typically takes the form of "Activate (Source) (Effect)," though some spells add descriptors such as Poison or Mental. See Chapter 17: Effect List for more information on Taglines, Sources, Effects, and Descriptors. Ritualists do not require any additional incant to activate their spells. If struck during the delivery of the tagline, the spell is lost, in keeping with the normal rules for spellcasting (see Chapter 16: General Rules for Play).

Casting Spells Alone

In order to cast a ritual, the caster must have the ritual formula in plain view. The ritual formula shows the pattern that the caster must form with domino bones. From her bag of domino bones, the caster draws out as many as her Fatigue score allows, less any Fatigue she has already spent so far in the day. Even if she has bought more than twenty-five (25) Fatigue, however, she never draws more than twenty-five bones; additional Fatigue acts as a buffer against Fatigue lost to rituals. She must match up 0-ends to 0-ends, 1s to 1s, and so on, until she completes the ritual's rune. If successful, she imbues spells into her focus or casts effects directly on targets, as shown in the Description of the ritual formula. If the spell is not imbued into her focus (such as Skin effects that target multiple individuals), she must spend all effects before leaving the ritual. Unused effects are lost. She takes the listed amount of Fatigue, reducing the number of bones she draws when casting spells later in the day.

As they are unable to initiate a ritual, homunculi can never cast spells alone.

Backlash

If she cannot complete the ritual (because the bones she has drawn make it impossible), walks away from the ritual without completing it, suffers a Disrupt effect before completing it, or falls unconscious before completing it, she immediately suffers the backlash described in the ritual formula. She does not take the normal Fatigue for casting the spell. In cooperatively cast spells, the whole ritual backlashes if any of the characters casting it walk away from the ritual without completing it, suffer a Disrupt effect before completing it, or fall unconscious before completing it.

Casting Spells Cooperatively

To cast cooperatively, anywhere from two (2) to nine (9) characters who can contribute bones to a ritual work together. The characters must agree on the numerical position of each contributing caster, as this provides an additional cap on the number of bones that each character can draw. These numbers, shown in the table below, are included in a table that is a required part of every spellbook.

Position	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eighth	Ninth
Maximum Contribution	25	24	24	23	22	20	17	12	4

The caster designated as First (also called the Prime or *Ensi*) will receive any activations of the spell or distribute effects from the spell upon completion of the ritual. The primary caster must have the ritual formula in plain view. The primary caster suffers any listed backlash if the ritual fails, unless the Backlash in the formula specifies otherwise. To be named as the primary caster, the character's daily allotment of bones must be at least three-quarters of the minimum number of bones to complete the ritual (round fractions down), or twenty-five (25) bones, whichever is lower. A caster must also be able to draw at least one (1) bone in order to hold any position in a ritual other than being its target.

When a caster who has accumulated Fatigue from previous rituals enters a cooperative casting, her maximum contribution is capped first by her own ability to draw bones, and then by the contribution limit of her position in the ritual. For example, Tova can normally draw 23 bones, but has accumulated 10 Fatigue over the course of the day. When she takes the sixth position in a ritual, she can contribute 13 bones (23-10), rather than being capped at 10 (20-10). If she took the eighth position instead, she would contribute 12 bones.

Distribution of Fatigue in a cooperative ritual is more complicated. Before drawing out bones, the casters should agree on one of the two models of Fatigue distribution: the even-spread model and the master-apprentice model. The charts detailing these two models are also a required part of every spellbook. The even-spread model distributes the Fatigue of the spell as evenly as possible among the casters, with higher-ranked casters taking more Fatigue when it cannot be divided evenly. The master-apprentice model shifts as much of the fatigue as possible onto the lowest-ranked casters. Both models suffer from a small amount of inefficiency as the number of spellcasters increases, but it may still be desirable to work with a large number of casters for very difficult spells or when all of the involved casters are very low on remaining energy.

Book of Ritual Formulas

Every spellbook must include a page, provided by the Dust to Dust staff, with the cooperative casting charts described above. Beyond this, a character who starts with Initiate Ritualist starts with five (5) spells, one of which is the Novice's Sign of the Tethered Star. The character also receives a free book binding, if desired. The rest of their spells are chosen from the following list. Ritualists from certain cultures have additional options. Characters can purchase additional ritual formulas from the open list with their starting money, at a cost of five (5) silver towers or dinar per bone required to cast the spell. The phys-rep for a book of formulas should accommodate sheets of 8.5" x 11" paper.

Common Starting Spells

Mark of the Queensguard: 6 bones, 1 Fatigue, Ice Skin 2 to three targets

Rune of the White Hand: 5 bones, 1 Fatigue, caster's focus gains two activations of Fire Accelerate Healing

Sign of the Bitter Blade: 6 bones, 1 Fatigue, Razor's Edge 1 to three edged weapons

Rite of Wisdom: 10 bones, 0 Fatigue, Fire Identify Magic Item

Rune of Threefold Flame: 6 bones, 1 Fatigue, caster's focus gains five activations of Fire Dart

Mark of the Bondsman: 4 bones, 0 Fatigue, target homunculus target gains Fire Strength

Sigil of Winter's Grip: 7 bones, 1 Fatigue, caster's focus gains two activations of Ice Foot

Rite of Avelmar's Discernment: 5 bones, 1 Fatigue, caster's focus gains one activation of Light Sense Magic Ties

Sigil of Imperious Authority: 8 bones, 1 Fatigue, caster's focus gains two activations of Shadow Decree

Sign of the Western Wind: 8 bones, 1 Fatigue, caster's focus gains three activations of Storm Drop

Bloodmark of the Tempest's Rage: 12 bones, 1 Fatigue, caster's focus gains one activation of Storm Lance

Rune of Healer's Mercy: 3 bones, 1 Fatigue, caster's focus gains three activations of Fire Stabilize

Novice Sign of the Tethered Star: 3 bones, 0 Fatigue, creates a Light Glow

Uncommon Starting Spells

Oresund:

Glyph of the Glacier's Heart: 7 bones, 1 Fatigue, target gains an Ice Ward against Fire

Sigil of the Boreal Hunger: 9 bones, 1 Fatigue, caster's focus gains three activations of Ice Arrow

Sigil of the Carven Oak: 7 bones, 1 Fatigue, target gains a Storm Ward against Ice

Tharicia/Tarsikka:

Bloodmark of the Bondsman: 10 bones, 1 Fatigue, target homunculus gains Fire Troll Strength

Tharici:

Mark of the Half Mask: 10 bones, 2 Fatigue, Shield against Mental to three targets

Ton Isiq:

Sign of Utmost Hardening: 6 bones, 1 Fatigue, three objects gain a Shield against Destruction

Mark of the Samonian Wall: 14 bones, 1 Fatigue, Ice Ward against Magic to two targets

True Names and Ritualists

True Names are of particular importance to ritualists. In addition to the protection offered by having a True Name, ritualists can simplify their rituals with the inclusion of their True Names. At character creation or upon receiving a True Name thereafter, the character will be told the combination of bones that spells out her True Name. This string of bones is a valid combination for her, even though they

would not be otherwise. Of course, this runs the risk of showing the character's True Name to others, who may be able to discern the sounds indicated by that combination of bones.

Gaining New Spells

Ritualists gain new spells by trading with other ritualists, in which case they will need scribes to duplicate spells for them; through research of new spells or old spells that have been lost, which requires some combination of money, Lore skills, BGAs, and additional resources; or through capturing the spellbook of an enemy ritualist, certainly the riskiest of the three options. There are far more rituals available in the world than the list shown above. The text included in ritual formulas may offer clues about rare rituals, lost rituals, and rituals that could be created new.

Spell Types

There are two (2) types of spells: Battle spells and Enchantment spells. All spells are defined as being one (1) type, but never both types.

Battle spells generally require the invoker to successfully strike the target of the spell with a spell packet for the spell to take effect. Any spell that does not require this will state so clearly in the spell's description. When casting a spell, the spell packet must leave the invoker's hand within two (2) seconds of completing the spell's verbal component. No packet may be thrown until the spell's verbal component has been completed. Battle spells may only be "touch" cast if the spell specifically requires it.

Enchantment spells are touch-cast, and the intended target of the enchantment must be present as the ritualist ends the spell. The ritualist may sit and wait for people to approach, but if he ends the ritual by walking away, falling unconscious, or becoming Disrupted, any unused charges are lost, but this does not backlash the ritual.

Packet Color

Ritualism uses gray spell packets.

Types of Spells

Protective Spells

These spells protect the subject of the spell from certain effects. They can offer protection from anything from Poisons, to weapon strikes, to specific effects. The spell description describes the exact nature of the protective and it is up to the recipient of the spell to be aware of the effect of any protective spell he currently has upon him. Once a protective spell is in place, the protective allows the recipient to ignore the effects of the first instance of the appropriate nature. Only Resist spell protectives may be held and used at the desire of the player. Protective spells will always end at sunset if they have not been used.

If struck by an effect that could be stopped by two (2) or more types of protectives, the more specific protective is used first. For example, Karl has a Shield against Mental and a Ward against Magic active and is hit by a Magic Enslave, the Shield against Mental would be expended and the Ward against Magic would remain in place.

When using the spell protective, the player must call out the category of the spell protective, Shield, Ward, Resist, Triggered, etc. There is a visible effect for all protective spells that allows all around to witness that a protective spell was activated, thus calling out the name of the protection is considered to be in-play. Protectives must be called within two (2) seconds of being hit with the effect. If the protective is not called, it is not expended and the character is subject to the effect.

Protectives do not have any effect on weapons or items held or carried unless specifically designated in the spell description.

Stacking Protective Spells

The following is a list of restrictions on spell protectives and Enchantments:

- A character cannot have Enchantments active from opposing Realms.
- A character may only have one (1) Skin active, unless it is stated otherwise specifically.
- A character may only have one (1) Ward active, unless it is stated otherwise specifically.
- A character may only have one (1) of each type of Shield active, unless it is stated otherwise specifically.
- A character may have an unlimited number of Resist spells active, as long as they are not of opposing Realms.
- If player decides to accept a conflicting Enchantment, she may decide which Enchantment to keep.
- A character may only have one (1) Triggered spell per triggering action active at any time. Triggering actions include being hit, bleeding to death, etc.
- Forms do not oppose and will work with any other Form and any Realm.

Weapon Enchantments

Weapon Enchantments of the same type may not be stacked. Different Weapon Enchantments may be in place on a weapon, as long as the effects are not from opposing Realms. A spell that adversely affects a weapon does not in any way affect the Weapon Enchantments cast upon it, unless the spell description states otherwise. If at any a weapon is broken or otherwise damaged, all Weapon Enchantments active upon it are dispelled, even if the weapon is later repaired.

Mental Spells

Mental spells have an effect upon the mind or will of the target. These spells can be defended against by a Ward of the appropriate type, or any Shield against Mental. Characters with the Weak Will Disadvantage are affected by these spells for double the normal duration, and characters with the

Strong Will Advantage are affected by these spells for half of the normal duration. All Mental spells are listed appropriately in the spell descriptions.

Walls and Circles

Before a Wall or Circle may be invoked, an appropriate phys rep must be laid in place to represent it. This phys-rep must be a length of cloth at least six (6) inches in width laid out where the Wall or Circle will be. The phys-rep should be the appropriate color of the magic type (gray for Ritualism), or have a packet indicating the type of magic attached to the phys rep so that the type of Wall or Circle is readily apparent. All Walls and Circles are completely transparent and nothing may pass through them; specific exceptions are listed within individual spell descriptions.

A Wall must have two (2) clearly delineated end points, which cannot be more than ten (10) feet apart. Concentration is required to maintain the Wall. The player must remain within five (5) feet of the Wall and must keep one hand raised and facing the Wall at all times. The Wall may be dropped by the invoker lowering the arm, moving further than five (5) feet away, or dying. A Wall of the opposing Realm may destroy the existing Wall.

Circles have dimensions specified in the spell descriptions. Walls and Circles may never overlap, though they may touch each other, forming a longer, solid Wall. If a living being is crossing the Wall or Circle at the time the verbal is completed, the spell fails to take effect, though all mana spent in the casting are lost. Walls and Circles are completely frictionless and may not be leaned upon.

Packets that Strike Clothes, Weapons, or Shields

A packet that strikes any part of an individual or object he is holding or wearing is considered to affect the target. A spell packet that strikes a target's sword, shield, cloak or any other garment is considered successful. If the spell is of a nature that it would affect a certain area of the body and it strikes an item of clothing such as a cloak, then the target of the spell should take the strike in the area closest to where the spell packet struck. Spell packets may be avoided, but they may only be blocked if specifically stated elsewhere.

Example Ritual Formula

The next page shows an example ritual formula. The three bones that come together in the center of the rune must all be the same number.

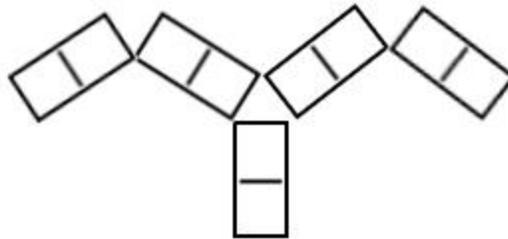
THE RUNE OF THE WHITE HAND

THE RUNE OF THE WHITE HAND IS THE MOST WELL-KNOWN AND TREASURED OF MAGIC, SUFFICIENT TO SAVE A MAN DYING OF ALMOST ANY WOUND. IT IS PROBABLY THE MOST ANCIENT OF SPELLS, THOUGH RECORDS INDICATE THAT IT WAS LOST FOR A TIME FOLLOWING THE RUIN OF THE HALL OF SEVEN BONES, AS MORE WAS LOST THAN WE NOW POSSESS. IN SEEKING THIS SPELL, I FOUND THE FOLLOWING IN A TEXT ON THE MYSTERY FAITHS OF THARICIA:

IN TARGOVISHTTE WHICH STANDES HARD BY THE SEA, THE COMON FOLKE DO GO TO THEM THAT DWELLE YN THE CAVES, WHERE THE IVORIE LAUNCE SHINETH AND THE HAND ALL OF WHITE MAY BE SEEN, FOR THE CURINGE OF THEIR HURTES. THE OLDE KNIGHT TAKES DOUN HIR LAUNCE AND DOTH INVOKE THE HAND, AND ALL HURTES BE MENDED.

I CAN FIND NO OLDER REFERENCE THAN THIS IN ALL THE SCROLLS AND PARCHMENTS THAT ADARGEAS BROUGHT OUT OF THE RUIN OF THE HALL, NOR IN ALL THE SPELL-LORE THAT HIS MASTER OROLDEA SET DOWN IN HER LONG YEARS OF ISOLATION.

-BANION OF SEVEN BONES



Type: Battle (touch)

Duration: Instant

Number of Bones: 5

Fatigue Cost: 1

Tagline on Cast: Imbue with Fire Accelerate Healing

Tagline on Activation: Activate Fire Accelerate Healing

Description: This spell imbues the caster's focus with 2 activations of Accelerate Healing.

Backlash: If the caster begins this spell but cannot complete it, he suffers 1 Fatigue and dispels all Healing effects currently imbued into his focus.