

INTRODUCTION

Imperial Age: Grimoires is designed to add realism to hermetic traditions in **Imperial Age** Magick campaigns. Unlike the stereotypical fireball-throwing fantasy wizard, hermetic disciples performed elaborate rituals (or incantations) to produce magickal effects. Many of these rituals were interpreted, duplicated, and translated from ancient sources and codified in a book, or grimoire, from which other members of an occult society could study and implement.

This supplement describes the basics of ritual magick, enhancing the material found in **Imperial Age: Magick**. It also details four grimoires which can be used as-is or modified for your **Imperial Age** campaign. For your convenience, this supplement also contains a complete **Imperial Age** spell and incantation list compiled from the Modern SRD to be used in the creation of your own grimoires.

MAGICKAL DISCLAIMER

While there is no doubt that the average gamer realizes that this work is for game purposes only and not a true book on magickal rituals, it is still necessary to point out that all of the grimoires, incantations, and occult societies in **Imperial Age: Grimoires** are fictional. None of them are workable magick and performing them would no more make one a mage than running through a d20 combat would make one a soldier.

Sample file

**Imperial
Age:
Grimoire**

by
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GRIMOIRES AND MAGICKAL RITUALS

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

The study of this Book is forbidden. It is wise to destroy this copy after the first reading.

Whoever disregards this does so at his own risk and peril. These are most dire.

Those who discuss the contents of this Book are to be shunned by all, as centres of pestilence.

All questions of the Law are to be decided only by appeal to my writings, each for himself.

There is no law beyond Do what thou wilt.

Love is the law, love under will.

The priest of the princes,

—Ankh-F-N-Khonsu (a/k/a Alister Crowley)

Grimoire comes from the Old French *gramaire* and has the same root as grammar. Like grammar, a grimoire contains a set of symbols and instructions on how to assemble those symbols to create a desired end, whether it be a sentence or a spell. The grimoires of the Imperial Age bear little resemblance to the spell books of fantasy RPGs or popular fiction beyond their preoccupation with summoning of spirits. These works rarely contain lists of spells, nor is their aim the working of flashy magicks; rather they are books of instruction that are as much about achieving spiritual goals as they are working one's will in the world. Indeed, the two are inseparably linked.

Such works have existed throughout Western history, or so their adherents would claim. Some notable grimoires date back as far as the 13th Century and include *The Aim of the Sage*, *The Grand Grimoire*, *The Greater Key of Solomon*, *The Lesser Key of Solomon*, and the *Black Pullet*. During the 19th century esoteric groups like the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn rediscovered or reinvented many of these works. Collecting, editing, and translating (or more often deliberately mistranslating) them into English while adding their own efforts into the mix. It takes only a few moments with an computer and an internet connection to discover these texts.

While these works might make for interesting plot points in an Imperial Age game of intrigue and occult politics, they would have little actual mechanical effect in game. To make grimoires more interesting for Imperial Age campaigns featuring magick, what follows is a description of occult symbols found in actual grimoires available during the period and how they can be applied to Incantations that can be used in the game.

FINDING A GRIMOIRE

Typically learning of the existence of a specific grimoire requires a Research check whose DC is equal to the incantation it contains Knowledge (arcane lore) DC minus 15, while finding the incantation itself is equal to its Knowledge (arcane lore) DC minus 10. It is unlikely, however, to be that easy. Occult means "hidden" or "secret" and many of the authors and translators of these works deliberately left sections of their content out, mistranslated words, or added meaningless text to foil the uninitiated. If a GM so desires she can add an element of risk to the research and use of incantations found in grimoires.

Upon discovery of an incantation a character may make a Knowledge (arcane lore) check whose DC is equal to that of the incantation in question to determine if it is authentic or not. The GM may wish to make this check in secret granting a circumstance modifier of up to +/- 4 as warranted.

Further results may be applicable in certain situations. Many grimoires are not meant to be read by the neophyte but should be perfectly comprehensible by an initiate. On such texts allow a character who beats the DC by 5 or more to determine that not only is the text faulty but also what would happen if it was attempted. On a check that beats the DC by 10 or more allow the character to determine what changes need to be made to correct an occluded text.

PLATE IV.

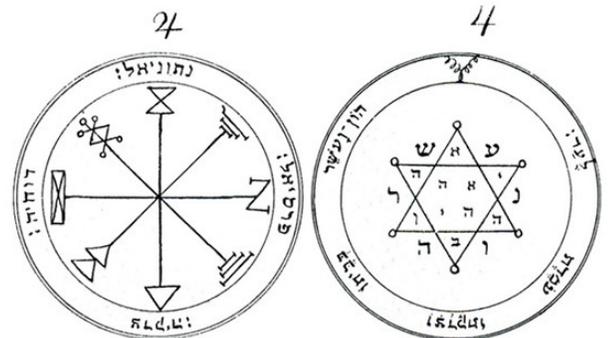


Fig. 18.

Fig. 19.

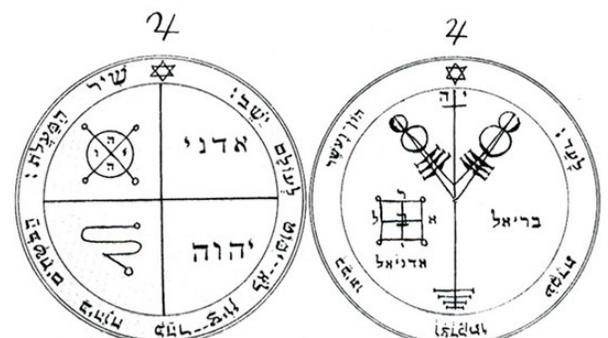


Fig. 20.

Fig. 21.

Attempting to perform an inaccurate incantation most often results in nothing more than the loss of time and effort needed to perform the ritual. However, some are designed to deliberately produce results equivalent to a Failure, even if the instructions are followed exactly. It is up to the GM to determine if such "trapped" incantations exist in her setting.

PREPARING THE MAGE FOR INCANTATIONS

Casting ritual magick through Incantations is quite different than traditional fantasy spell casting and involves many careful preparations. Although different grimoires recommend different specifics the basic preparations are generally the same. The first of which, essential for the incantation to work, is the physical and spiritual preparation of the practitioner or practitioners, although most rituals are solo affairs multiple participants are possible. To enter into a condition where he can conduct the ritual the mage must separate himself from the world, typically for a period of three to seven days but longer or shorter periods are also possible. This separation can involve fasting or specialized diets, typically meaning no intoxicating substances nor meat, and physical isolation from the world; but most frequently it requires a period of chastity. This is necessary to not only remove any possible emotional or spiritual contaminants from the mage but, more importantly, abstinence allows the mage to store the spiritual energy needed for the ritual, energies that are released in sexual congress. Some sources recommend that the mage also refrain from sleep, and while this can result in an altered state of perception it is as likely to result in sloppy action later in the process that can result in failure and even death and as such is generally not a good idea. The same can also be said for the ritualized use of alcohol, other drugs, sex, and even self-wounding or self-mutilation. The preparation period ends with a physical cleaning just before the rite is to begin. This cleaning may involve ritualized ablutions or it may simply be a good bath.

Emerging from his cleansing naked, the mage has divested himself of attachments and entanglements with the mundane world and is now ready to engage the spiritual world. While some recommend performing rituals naked, the standard practice is that one should be robed. The robe may be of any colour, except brown or black, but white is recommended. Names of power or sigils or other signs, in appropriate colours, may be stitched onto the robe. The robe should be otherwise simple and have no buttons, hooks, knots, or other clasps. Such things may block spiritual energy needed for the incantation. In addition to a robe some sources allow for white, preferably silk, undergarments, hats, hoods, crowns, and even slippers as desired. If the mage cannot make the robe and accessories himself a suitable set can be commissioned (Purchase DC 10 for a simple robe, DC 12 for a robe prepared with names and signs of power).

PREPARING THE SPACE FOR INCANTATIONS

Incantations are difficult and time consuming to prepare and perform; and need a ritualized space in which to be conducted. It is best that this space be as secluded as possible. The further from human habitation the better but many mages do not have the luxury of country estates. If performed in an urban environment an interior room is best, lacking windows. If there are windows they should be locked and covered so that no light can come in or out. Doors should be locked by the mage upon entering. The room itself should be unadorned and devoid of furniture. Thus it is best that the room be set aside for ritual use alone, but if necessary black clothe may be draped upon walls and floor to hide any distractions or potential contaminants to the ritual.

Many grimoires suggest that the space be cleansed before any ritual begins. This can be accomplished by burning a mixture of laurel leaves, camphor, salt, white resin, and sulphur in the room prior to beginning preparations. Incense and other aromatic materials have also been suggested and may be used as desire or availability permits (purchase DC 3). The purpose is to purify the area, removing any lingering hints of either previous rituals or mundane uses.

The mage is now ready to begin construction of the ritual circle. All incantations take place in a circle. This is done both to harness and focus the power of the ritual as well as to protect the mage from the forces invoked. There are numerous types of circles that can be drawn but a basic version is as follows:

Draw a circle, nine feet in diameter, with the point of a ritual sword or knife (see below) in the earth, or chalk or charcoal may be used, beginning at the East and proceeding deosil (clockwise), or widdershins (counter clockwise) if the working is dedicated to the Devil or other dark powers. Occasionally vermilion paint, as it usually contains sulphur and mercury, or salt is recommend. Draw a second circle, eight feet in diameter, within the first. Between the two names and signs of power may be writ and ritual objects (see below) may be placed. Typically these objects are placed equidistant to one another at the cardinal points with which their elements are associated; however other arrangements are possible when more or less than four objects are used. Some grimoires suggest that the mage should further adorn the circle with an outer or inner square, a triangle (associated with the appropriate element), a pentagram, a Seal of Solomon (the six pointed star also known as a Star of David), or in some cases the sigil representing the being to be summoned. For most workings, however, the basic circle with appropriate symbolism is sufficient.

RITUAL OBJECTS

In addition to the robe and materials for marking the circle, several standard objects are also needed. Some grimoires describe the construction of these objects in such elaborate detail that it would be almost impossible to do so accurately. It may be assumed that such descriptions are deliberately included to foil the reader, or to make the author appear all the more accomplished. What is most important in all cases, however, is that the objects be new. Failure to do so can taint magickal forces, offend spirits, or otherwise create unintended consequences. If the mage does not have the talent or inclination to craft these items they may be purchased or, more likely, commissioned. Listed below are the most common ritual objects, although specific incantations may require other items or variations on the following.

Brazier: A small metal charcoal brazier, often constructed with symbolic elements related to fire or the being to be contacted, is called for in many rituals. While the symbolic value of certain metals can be important in some incantations, typically a brazier of ordinary materials such as iron will be sufficient. The smoke of burned materials is often associated with Spirit. (Purchase DC 5)

Candles: The use, colour, and composition of candles receive a great deal of attention in some texts. Generally they are ordinary candles of tallow or beeswax either un-dyed or white. Such candles are cheap and easy to acquire. While coloured candles, which may be associated with certain signs of the Zodiac or spirits, are somewhat more difficult to find but still cheap and readily available. Candles made of unusual materials, such as the emphasis baby fat of the darkest of rituals, will likely have to be made by the mage himself. Candles typically are made in pairs, but regardless of their number count as a single component of the incantation.

Cup: The cup or goblet is the symbol of Water and is necessary for invoking spirits associated with the element. If the cup is not constructed by the mage one of fine quality should be purchased, made of crystal or precious metals. (Purchase DC 4)

Knife and Sword: A ceremonial knife and sword are necessary for many incantations. They should be forged or bought on a day or hour associated with Jupiter during the waxing of the moon and ritually consecrated before use. In some incantations a knife is used as a symbol of Air. (Purchase DC is equivalent to a masterwork knife or sword).

Pentacle: A silver pentacle, a circle containing a star or pentagram, is often used to symbolize Earth. The symbol should be about the size of the mages palm or slightly larger. (Purchase DC 5)

Wand: The wand is one of the main symbols of the magickal power and the use of ceremonial wands, staffs, or rods dates back to ancient Egypt. The standard wand is made of hazel and, according to the Grand Grimoire, should be nineteen and one half inches long, cut at sunrise with a ceremonial knife stained with blood. Pointed steel caps should be placed on both ends of the hazel wand and magnetized with a loadstone. The wand must be ritually consecrated before use. While used in most ceremonies, some rituals require a second rod to symbolize Fire. (Purchase DC 4)

RITUAL OBJECTS IN USE

As an optional rule, the Game Master may wish to apply modifiers based on the origin, quality, or history of the objects used in a ritual. If so consult the table below for appropriate adjustment for each Knowledge (arcane lore) check made during the incantation.

The Object Is...	Knowledge (arcane lore) DC modifier
New	-2
Constructed by performing mage	-2
Made of unusual but sympathetic materials	-3
Used in a previous incantation	+4
Used previously for mundane purposes	+2

When multiple objects are used only the single best and single worst modifiers should be used. For example, a mage uses for items in a ritual. Three of them are new. Of these he purchased a pentacle, carved the cup of wood himself, and made a set of candles of the fat from a white buffalo calf. The effort spent making these last two items has caused him to run short of time and he finds that he must make do with his letter opener for a dagger and a wand he used in a previous incantation. The modifiers for each item would be as follows: -2 for the new but purchased pentacle, -4 for the new and constructed cup, -7 for the unusual handcrafted candles, +2 for the letter opener, +4 for the wand. When the game master tabulates the adjusted DC for the ritual he ignores everything but the -7 and the +4, as the best and worst modifiers respectively, altering the DC of the ritual by -3.

Alternately, the game master may decide that the use of inappropriate materials results in failure of the incantation or a shorting of the effects duration or other variable effects. Similarly the use of extraordinary materials might reduce or eliminate backlash, or the effects of failure, or helpfully increase variable factors in the effects of the incantation.

RITUAL GESTURES AND STANCES

A wide variety of ritual gestures are used in incantations. Most are to be made either with the tip of the wand, sword or dagger or with the thumb of the right hand held between the middle and index fingers. In addition to those described below, specific signs for various spirits, the Zodiac, and elements exist. Those for the zodiac are well known while the ones for the elements are simple. Air is an equilateral triangle pointing up bisected horizontally while Earth is the same sign inverted so that the triangle points down. Fire is an unadorned equilateral triangle pointing up and Water is the same sign inverted. Spirit is a circle bisected four times so that eight equal pieces are formed, like cutting a pie. Signs for various spirits are unique and beyond the needs of the current text, but some grimoires contain almost nothing but these signs.

PENTAGRAMS

There are four pentagrams of Spirit and two each for the other four elements. It should be noted that while these are described in many grimoires, the details occasionally vary. Usually the upright version is for invocation and the inverse is for banishing, but again different texts describe different process. What follows is a standard compiled from several sources.

Air Pentagram: This sign has one point up and two down. It is drawn starting at left most point and going horizontally to the right.

Earth Pentagram: As the air pentagram but drawn starting at the continuing down at a diagonal to the left most point.

Fire Pentagram: As the air pentagram but drawn starting at the top and continuing down at a diagonal to the right most point.

Inverse Air Pentagram: This sign has two points up and one down. It is drawn starting at left most point and going horizontally to the right.

Inverse Earth Pentagram: As the inverse air pentagram but drawn starting at bottom middle and going diagonally up and right.

Inverse Fire Pentagram: As the inverse air pentagram but drawn starting at bottom middle and going diagonally up and left.

Inverse Water Pentagram: As the inverse air pentagram but drawn starting at right most point and going horizontally to the left.

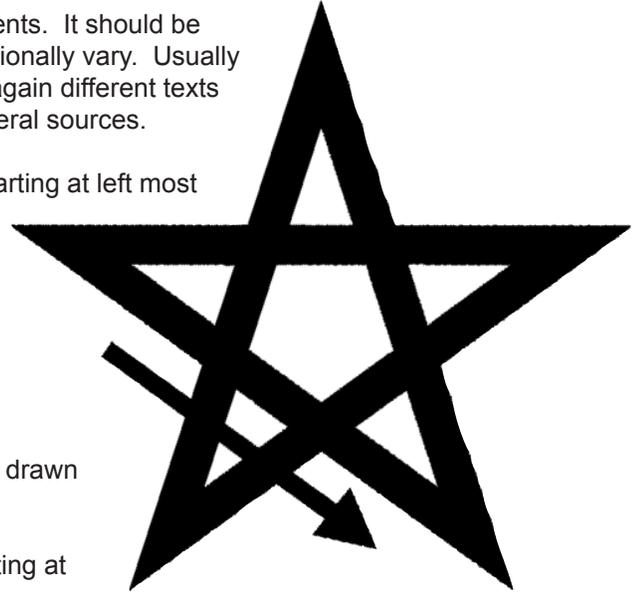
Spirit Pentagram of Active Banishing: This sign has two points up and one point down, drawn starting at the left most point and continuing diagonally to the upper right.

Spirit Pentagram of Active Invocation: This sign has one point up and two down. It is drawn starting and the bottom right and continuing up at a diagonal to the left most point.

Spirit Pentagram of Passive Banishing: This sign has two points up and one point down, drawn starting at the right most point and continuing diagonally to the upper left.

Spirit Pentagram of Passive Invocation: This sign has one point up and two down. It is drawn starting at the bottom left and continuing up at a diagonal to the right most point.

Water Pentagram: This sign has one point up and two down. It is drawn starting at right most point and going horizontally to the left.



Sample file

