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1 Ambition



From *A Children's Primer of the Way*

1.1 The Path of Ambition

Though many citizens associate the Virtue of Ambition with an eye on a senator?s seat or even the Imperial Throne, this path embraces many subtler expressions also. The artisan who aspires to create something never before seen; the merchant who strives to be wealthier than any other; the youth who aspires to forbidden love ? all may be guided by Ambition to turn their dreams to reality. There are as many Ambitions as there are citizens who can dream of them, though not all possess the strength of purpose, character and will to pursue the Path of Ambition to its fullest, for the cost of doing so is often high.

1.1.1 Guidance on the Path

Through meditation on the auras of Ambition, and study of the lives of paragons and exemplars, the priests of the Way have gleaned insight into the heart of the virtue and how best to pursue it. There are collections of parables, tales, sayings and teachings that distil this for Imperial citizens to learn from. The following are a handful of teachings and sayings deemed to be essential to understanding the path:

- Aim high; pursue your dreams; nothing is beyond your grasp.
- Even the most impenetrable forest may fall one tree at a time.
- Consequences are the price of Ambition; no price is too high to realise your dreams.
- It is better, by far, to try and fail, than fail to try.
- Despise the weakness that comes from pettiness and lack of vision.

1.2 Paragons and Exemplars

Recognised paragons and exemplars of Ambition include:

- The paragon Tian, who legend claims ascended the highest mountain in all creation to steal fire from the sun.
- The paragon Aldones di Sarvos, one of the founders of the League.
- The exemplar Atuman of the Highborn, who led his people to the shores of Highguard.
- The exemplar Adelmar the Lion, founder of the School of Arms and an inspiration to weapon masters throughout the Empire.

1.3 Symbols of Ambition



Both the Throne and the Imperial Crown are powerful symbols of Ambition in the Empire.
One of the most common symbols of Ambition used in the Empire is **flame**. This is not only symbolic of the quest Tian undertook to steal the fire of the sun, but fire possesses many of the qualities of purest ambition. It is ever hungry and never satisfied, for the moment it is satisfied, it dies. Some pilgrims of Ambition even go as far as to burn a brand on their arm or hand in recognition of the price Tian paid or as a reminder of how dangerous Ambition can be.

In Wintermark, ambition is often signified by a **rook**, while in Varushka the virtue is associated with the cunning **fox**, and (in recent times) the wily **hare**. The rune **Naeve**, which represents hunger, is used by some magicians as a symbol of Ambition.

For obvious reasons the **throne** is a common symbol associated with ambition - indeed the physical throne that stands in the Senate is sometimes seen as one of the most profound symbols of ambition in the Empire representing as it does the most potent Imperial title. For similar reasons, a **crown** (along with other regalia of high office) is sometimes used as a symbol of ambition in Dawn. This image no doubt originated as a reference to the old monarchs of that nation, and later the actual Imperial crown worn by every Throne since the foundation of the Empire.

The **mountain** is also sometimes used as a symbol of ambition, or rather of the obstacles one must overcome to achieve one's goals. Tian climbs a mountain, after all, in her pursuit of fire. In Urizen the astronomantic constellation of the Mountain is sometimes used as an icon of ambition representing as it does the universal law that *things are not easy*. In a similar vein, in some parts of the League, the **ladder** is used as a slightly tongue-in-cheek icon of ambition, most likely having its roots in the rambunctious street-dramas of Tassato and Sarvos.

During the Spring festival celebrated in Urizen, Ambition is represented by a purple flower.

1.4 Further Reading

- You can learn about the various spiritual roleplaying effects created by priests dedicated to Ambition here.
- You can learn about the skills that priests can use to spread the virtue of Ambition here.

1.4.1 The Seven Virtues

- Ambition
- Courage
- Loyalty
- Pride
- Prosperity
- Vigilance
- Wisdom

1.4.2 Religion

- The Way of Virtue
- Imperial Theology

- Synod
- Religious Skills
- Recent History

2 Courage



From *A Children's Primer of the Way*

2.1 The Path of Courage

Courage is a popular virtue amongst the soldiers of the Empire who must face bloodthirsty foes and the spectre of death. However, the Virtue of Courage has lessons for those in all walks of life. Courage calls for citizens to stand firm in the face of all that would cause them to falter. The senator whose conscience compels them to vote against the populist measure; the proud leader who must face the shame of a secret exposed; the general who must pass on ill news to their people ? all of these must draw on the Virtue of Courage in their time of trial. It is easy for many citizens to pay lip service to the Virtue of Courage but harder to cling to when the challenge finally comes.

2.1.1 Guidance on the Path

Through meditation on the auras of Courage, and study of the lives of paragons and exemplars, the priests of the Way have gleaned insight into the heart of the virtue and how best to pursue it. There are collections of parables, tales, sayings and teachings that distil this for Imperial citizens to learn from. The following are a handful of teachings and sayings deemed to be essential to understanding the path:

- The Virtuous face unwelcome truths as boldly as any barbarian charge.
- Do not fear to act; only be shamed by inaction.
- Cleave to what you know is true, even where others wish you to doubt.
- Never accept defeat; adapt your strategy and try anew.
- Despise cowardice which steers the spirit to weakness and inaction.

'I shall despise the cowardice that steers me to weakness and inaction. I shall face unwelcome truth as boldly as any barbarian charge. I shall not fear to act; only be shamed by inaction. I shall never accept defeat; I shall adapt my strategy and try again. I shall cleave to what I know to be true even when others wish me to doubt.'

A Highborn Litany of Courage

2.2 Paragons and Exemplars

Recognised paragons and exemplars of Courage include:

- The oldest recorded paragon, Korl, whose legendary learned the secrets of metal in the darkest places of the world and used them to craft the first axe, with which he drove back the dark forest and slew the beasts who dwelt within.
- The exemplar Permion of the Highborn who opposed the wicked power of the corrupt Patrician?s Council and empowered the Assembly of the Virtuous in its place.
- The exemplar Gilda Ashwine of Dawn whose fortitude and commitment freed her family and brought down the corrupt earl who had enslaved them.
- The exemplar Inga Tarn of Wintermark whose fearlessness and forthrightness inspired generations to seize the opportunities life presents.

2.3 Symbols of Courage

Common symbols of Courage across the Empire are those associated with the iconic tools or weapons of favoured paragons and exemplars. One of the most common and prevalent is the **axe**. This is symbolic of the axe created by Korl as both a weapon and a tool with which to tame the wilderness and overcome obstacles. Axes and hatchets are popular weapons among priests and pilgrims dedicated to the path of Courage for this reason. The **hammer**, the iconic weapon of Inga Tarn is likewise favoured as a weapon by pilgrims, and is especially popular among those dedicated to Courage in the southern Empire especially the Marches - a common saying is that a pilgrim in the south is much more likely to encounter problems that can be solved with a hammer than with an axe.

In Wintermark, courage is often signified by a **jackdaw**, while in Varushka the virtue is associated with the strength of the **boar** and the **bear**. **Jotra**, the Rune of Battle which represents challenges to be overcome, is used by some magicians as a symbol of Courage.

Those who take a less martial approach to the virtue use the **Blue Rose** as a symbol, in honour of Gilda Ashwine. During the Spring flower festival celebrated by the urizen by contrast, crimson and scarlet blossoms are associated with this virtue, perhaps representing shed blood.

2.4 Further Reading

- You can learn about the various spiritual roleplaying effects created by priests dedicated to Courage here.
- You can learn about the skills that priests can use to support the virtue of Courage here.

2.4.1 The Seven Virtues

- Ambition
- Courage
- Loyalty
- Pride
- Prosperity
- Vigilance
- Wisdom

2.4.2 Religion

- The Way of Virtue
- Imperial Theology
- Synod
- Religious Skills
- Recent History

3 Loyalty



From *A Children's Primer of the Way*

3.1 The Path of Loyalty

It is easy for citizens to claim Loyalty but, as with many of the virtues, its proof lies in the testing. For those that claim to be loyal, or to inspire Loyalty, all may seem well in times of peace and prosperity. It is in hardship, when errors are made, that temptation arises, if not to betray, but to doubt and undermine. Time and again, history has shown that when Loyalty is needed most, it is most scarce. The Empire stands on the foundation of the Loyalty of its citizens. If they be not loyal, then the Empire surely cannot stand. Day-to-day loyalty is seen in the student to their teacher, in the soldier to their commander, between lovers and spouses, and between the citizens and the Empire.

3.1.1 Guidance on the Path

Through meditation on the auras of Loyalty, and study of the paragons and exemplars, the priests of the Way have gleaned insight into the heart of the virtue and how best to pursue it. There are collections of parables, tales, sayings and teachings that distil this for Imperial citizens to learn from. The following are a handful of teachings and sayings deemed to be essential to understanding the path:

- Know your heart and what commands its devotion above all else.
- Even the wicked can be loyal when times are prosperous and judgements are unfailing; the truly virtuous are loyal even through hardship and misfortune.
- Loyalty is not displayed by words or deeds alone, but by the unity of both.
- The Virtuous build up their fellows; they do not tear them down.
- Despise treachery; even the strongest may err, but deceivers will lie again.

3.1.2 Paragons and Exemplars

Identifying the paragons and exemplars of Loyalty has taxed the theologians of the Synod and the Highborn before them for they rarely act alone. Furthermore, in some incarnations the paragons and exemplars inspire great Loyalty; in others, they demonstrate exceptional Loyalty to another. Recognised paragons and exemplars of Loyalty include:

- The legendary paragon known as The Marked, a group of tattooed slaves who came together and swore the First Oath to one another.
- Lady Elayne Silverlark, an extraordinary troubadour gifted in many arts, of Dawn. Lady Elayne Silverlark devoted her life to travelling alongside Lord Endric Castrovalva - a questing knight whose skills and reputation were rarely more than adequate on a good day according to all the histories. Elayne Silverlark serves as an example of someone who knows their heart and what commands its devotion above all else.
- Bolstering Bill, a character generally believed to have been a Marcher - if he existed at all - who appears in a number of comic songs, stories and poems in various parts of the Empire. He (or very occasionally, she) is presented as a simple yet well-meaning soldier, usually wielding a polearm, whose companions encounter any number of amusing or hair-raising scrapes and who survive or triumph with the aid of their companion, Bill combines good humour, honest camaraderie and more than a little tough love with an absolute commitment to never leaving a friend behind. While the truth behind these tales is contested, the character of Bolstering Bill is often considered to be an exemplar of Loyalty. Even the critics of the Bolstering Bill stories note that it is likely that many of them recount the adventures of real people, and have simply been ascribed to Bolstering Bill by later generations of storytellers to make them more accessible to their audiences. (see also the Good

Neighbour, a polearm occasionally called a *Bolstering Bill*).
- Cora Holdfast, a Navarri Brand (and later guide) who was instrumental in establishing the Anvil Hospital and the Imperial School of Medicine. Her no-nonsense approach to the problems she found in Anvil in the aftermath of Empress Britta's death made her a powerful agent of change, and where a challenge was greater than she could handle, she organised others to join her. After her account of a traumatic Pure Liao Vision, she attracted pilgrims of Loyalty faced with hard choices. She was murdered only a few years into this work, but her work lives on at her Inspirational Shrine at High Chalcis.

One figure whose status is somewhat unclear is Ruth of the Seven Stars - a paragon of Loyalty in pre-Imperial Highguard, possibly recognised as an exemplar in 82YE, but who has never been officially included on lists of inspirational figures.

3.2 Symbols of Loyalty

The Path of Loyalty has many symbols across the Empire, but one of the more common is a **chain**. This symbolises not only the humble origins of the earliest paragon as a slave, but is composed of single links given length, strength and purpose by being inextricably linked to others. Along similar lines, a **rope** of many strands is a common symbol. Some priests and pilgrims dedicated to this path wear chains around their necks, or either a chain or rope around their waist indicating their ties. Although the exact description of the slave tattoos of the Marked is lost to time, several priests and pilgrims will be tattooed, often with some reference ? obvious, oblique or symbolic ? to that which holds their Loyalty.

The chain and the rope are sometimes a matter of contention for the Preachers of the Imperial Orcs, being too closely representative of the slavery they and their ancestors endured at the hands of the Empire. Some have adopted the **horse** (especially the horse skull) to represent Loyalty, while others favour the **clasped hands** (a common expression of respect between individuals).

In the League, the **ring** is a strong symbol of Loyalty, tied inextricably as it is to both custom and hearth magic. Indeed gifts of rings have become a powerful symbol of Loyalty throughout the Empire, and are often used as part of a ceremony where someone undertakes an obligation for another, or as a part of marriage vows. **Interlinked rings** - usually two but sometimes three (especially in Wintermark and the Brass Coast), or seven - represent bonds between individuals in a similar fashion.

In Navarr, **thorns** are sometimes used as a symbol of Loyalty, and the blood they shed is seen as a reminder of the price of sacrifice (an idea that many Navarr consider to be closely tied to the virtue as well as to their own nation's history). Thorny briars are a common feature of the tattoos used to mark oaths.

In Wintermark, the **hawk** and the **falcon** are symbols of Loyalty, while in Varushka the virtue is associated with the **hound**. Some magicians use the rune **Lann**, which represents equitable bargains, to symbolise Loyalty.

Some Urizen point to the astronomantic constellations of the Chain and the Three Sisters as manifestations of this virtue - albeit with different, nuanced interpretations. During their Spring festival, they represent Loyalty with blue flowers.

It is more shameful to distrust your friends than to be deceived by them.

3.3 Further Reading

- You can learn about the various spiritual roleplaying effects created by priests dedicated to Loyalty here.
- You can learn about the skills that priests can use to support the virtue of Loyalty here.

3.3.1 The Seven Virtues

- Ambition
- Courage
- Loyalty
- Pride
- Prosperity
- Vigilance
- Wisdom

3.3.2 Religion

- The Way of Virtue
- Imperial Theology

- Synod
- Religious Skills
- Recent History

4 Pride



From *A Children's Primer of the Way*

4.1 The Path of Pride

Some may believe that Pride is simply senators in fine clothing praising the qualities of their Nation, but this is only a tiny part of the path. National Pride is, quite rightfully, important to many citizens and is the reason for the creation of the egregores. Yet the Virtue of Pride exists to inform the small parts of life as much as the large. From the servant who keeps their mistress? cups clean, to the craftsman who holds all their work to the same high standard, to the general who remembers the name of every soldier who died under their command ? all demonstrate Pride and know what it is that they serve and strive for.

4.1.1 Guidance on the Path

Through meditation on the auras of Pride, and close study of the stories of paragons and exemplars, the priests of the Way have gleaned insight into the heart of the virtue and how best to pursue it. There are collections of parables, tales, sayings and teachings that distil this for Imperial citizens to learn from. The following are a handful of teachings and sayings deemed to be essential to understanding the path:

- Pride conveyed by words alone is vain boasting; proclaim it by how you conduct every part of your life.
- Do not be complacent; ever strive for excellence in that of which you are proud.
- Embrace your past; never be ashamed of it.
- The Virtuous inspire others to greatness; they do not demean them.
- Despise the half-hearted, the uncommitted and the pretender.

4.2 Paragons and Exemplars

Across history, the paragons and exemplars of Pride have been amongst the easiest to identify for they are, by nature, rarely reclusive and withdrawn. Recognised paragons and exemplars of Pride include:

- The legendary paragon Kethry of the Kesh kept her peoples' ways alive and ultimately inspired the conquering nation to embrace them.
- The paragon Richilde inspired the people of the Empire to celebrate their culture and history, and was the first paragon recognised in the modern era.
- The Highborn paragon Lepidus kept the spiritual heart of his nation alive during the dark days of the Patrician Council's corruption.
- the Navarr musician and bard Geralt Brackensong who fell fighting the vallorn.

4.3 Symbols of Pride

Priests of Pride teach that the best symbol of the virtue is the open display of whatever it is that the pilgrim is most proud of. The **flag** and the **banner** are ways of displaying such symbols, as is the **livery** of a Marcher household, or the **heraldry** of a noble or Noble house in Dawn.

As a more unified symbol of the virtue itself, rather than of the individual's personal Pride, the Synod often favours the **sun**. The sun shines brightly,

without shame, open for all the world to see. By so doing, it allows others to see as well - and while it may occasionally be occluded by clouds, when the clouds pass the sun's light is undiminished.

In Wintermark, the **eagle**, the **heron**, and the **swan** all symbolise Pride. The eagle is also a popular symbol of the virtue in Varushka where it is joined by the **deer**. Some magicians use the rune of Majesty, **Feresh**, which represents glorious splendour, to symbolise Pride. These magicians point to the way that Feresh only enhances attributes that are already present as a particularly telling parable about the nature of Pride.

During their Spring festival, the Urizen represent the virtue of Pride with pink blossoms.

4.3.1 The Ten Things

It is obviously down to the individual which qualities make them proud, but each of the Imperial nations can be associated with a single common idea that is often referred to as a source of Pride. The Navarr writer Cerin of Winter Trees referred to them as the Nine Things in the early years of the Empire. They were still in use over three hundred years later when the Imperial Orc philosopher Jakaj added her own people to the list during a speech given at the funeral of Emperor Ahraz. Following a recitation of the Nine Things, she appended her own people, and since then the list has been referred to by its current name.

For the Freeborn it is honesty; in Dawn it is glory (of course); in Highguard it is certainty; among the Imperial Orcs it is strength; in the League it is cleverness; in the Marches it is either practicality or stubbornness (depending who you are speaking to); among the Navarr it is sacrifice; in Urizen, excellence; in Varushka the idea of wisdom; and among the Winterfolk heroism.

4.4 Further Reading

- You can learn about the various spiritual roleplaying effects created by priests dedicated to Pride here.
- You can learn about the skills that priests can use to inspire the virtue of Pride here.

4.4.1 The Seven Virtues

- Ambition
- Courage
- Loyalty
- Pride
- Prosperity
- Vigilance
- Wisdom

4.4.2 Religion

- The Way of Virtue
- Imperial Theology
- Synod
- Religious Skills
- Recent History

5 Prosperity



From *A Children's Primer of the Way*

5.1 The Path of Prosperity

To the one without virtue, Prosperity is oft misunderstood as the pursuit of wealth and luxury, yet neither the wealthy miser, gluttonous sot, or lucky gambler can truly be called prosperous. True Prosperity is the culmination of effort and labour, sweat and toil, and celebrating the fruits of that labour. The prosperous are: the farmer who toils to bring in the harvest and enjoys their bounty; the magician who strives to master a magic and then uses their newfound art; the merchant who competes fiercely for each coin they earn and then spends it in celebration. True Prosperity enriches those around them as well as the individual, and so what may seem the pursuit for the sake of the self is to the benefit of the many.

5.1.1 Guidance on the Path

Through meditation on the auras of Prosperity, and careful study of the tales of paragons and exemplars, the priests of the Way have gleaned insight into the heart of the virtue and how best to pursue it. There are collections of parables, tales, sayings and teachings that distil this for Imperial citizens to learn from. The following are a handful of teachings and sayings deemed to be essential to understanding the path:



Enjoy the fruits of your labour today; nobody knows what the morrow holds.

- Strive, toil, and claim the just rewards of your labours.
- Enjoy the fruits of your labour today; no one knows what the morrow holds.
- There are three things that should never be made: Food that goes uneaten, coin that goes unspent and magic that goes unused.
- The Prosperous are not selfish; all that is worthwhile is shared with those who deserve it.
- Despise the thieving bandit, the lazy wastrel, the grasping miser, and those who take without giving.

5.2 Paragons and Exemplars

Paragons and exemplars of Prosperity are considered reasonably easy to identify owing to their efforts and labour, and how they use - or share - the fruits of those labours. Recognised paragons and exemplars of Prosperity include:

- The legendary paragon Good Walder of the Marches.
- The exemplar known as The Little Mother, whose tireless work helped to establish the importance of charitable deeds in The League.
- The exemplar Long Tom Goodfellow, the healer and brewer whose legacy still encourages pilgrimages today.
- The exemplar Zemress, the Blade of the Isles, who not only encouraged hard work and investment but also the importance of taking-up of arms to defend what is yours.
- The exemplar Kvetmir Kvetmirovic, known as the Bee Shepherd, who also has some odd ideas about bees.

5.3 Symbols of Prosperity

There are a great many symbols of Prosperity across the Empire but one of the most common is the **wheatsheaf**. Strongly symbolic of harvest time, it represents both the hard work that has gone into ploughing, sowing, and tending the field and the reward for that labour. Priests and pilgrims of this path often have a stalk of wheat or other grain upon them. There are a number of other popular symbols along the same lines, associated with different harvests and different forms of work - the **apple**, the **grape**, the **fishing net**, the **wagon**, and the **merchant ship** for example.

Likewise, the **coin** is a popular representation of Prosperity - sometimes an Imperial crown, sometimes a gold or silver coin stamped with another symbol of prosperity of some sort. As a symbol the coin has grown with prominence through the Empire's history, and is very popular with those whose hard work involves trade or the practice of a profession rather than manual labour. By a similar token a set of **artisan's tools** are sometimes used as a symbol of the virtue - and in the Marches, a **spade** or a **shovel** may stand as a slightly tongue-in-cheek symbol of Prosperity. Another popular symbol in the Marches is the **handshake**, often used to seal an agreement that will bring Prosperity to both parties.

The **cup** (along with the **wineskin** and the **waterskin**) has a long tradition of being associated with Prosperity. Sometimes it is a cup of water used to quench thirst brought on by hard work, sometimes it is a cup of wine or beer drunk as a reward for a job well done. It is quite common for priests and pilgrims of the Path of Prosperity to carry waterskins, or bear fruit or other food, to enjoy or share as virtue guides them.

A less common symbol of Prosperity is the **stout club** or cudgel. Possibly a reference to Good Walder, it represents the will to defend what one has earned against the greedy. In some old versions of this symbol, the club is wound with ivy or with thorned berry-bearing briars.

In Wintermark Prosperity is symbolised by the **magpie**, while in Varushka the virtue is demonstrated by the industrious **bee**. Some magicians use the rune of Wealth, **Pallas**, which is said to represent an apple tree, as a symbol of Prosperity.

During their Spring festival, the Urizen use yellow or golden flowers to represent Prosperity.

5.4 Further Reading

- You can learn about the various spiritual roleplaying effects created by priests dedicated to Prosperity here.
- You can learn about the skills that priests can use to support the virtue of Prosperity here.

5.4.1 The Seven Virtues

- Ambition
- Courage
- Loyalty
- Pride
- Prosperity
- Vigilance
- Wisdom

5.4.2 Religion

- The Way of Virtue
- Imperial Theology
- Synod
- Religious Skills

- Recent History

6 Vigilance



From *A Children's Primer of the Way*

6.1 The Path of Vigilance

The Virtue of Vigilance is popular amongst those charged with ensuring the safety of things precious; from the inquisitor who seeks out treacherous cultists, to the scrivener who scrutinises their dhomiro?s records against fraud and theft, to the shepherds in the fields. The threats to the Empire and its citizens are many and varied and all must be prepared for, guarded against and actively opposed lest they tear down civilisation. Not all threats carry arms like the barbarians; some come with smiles and lies, like false-faced eternals, or even lie in the hearts of weak citizens. Through diligence, detail, and dedication in all things does one person?s Vigilance safeguard another from harm.

6.1.1 Guidance on the Path

Through meditation on the auras of Vigilance, and by studying the lives of paragons and exemplars, the priests of the Way have gleaned insight into the heart of the virtue and how best to pursue it. There are collections of parables, tales, sayings and teachings that distil this for Imperial citizens to learn from. The following are a handful of teachings and sayings deemed to be essential to understanding the path:

- Seek out the poison in your neighbour?s fields, lest your own crops be blighted.
- Be alert to all dangers; within and without.
- Seek out falsehood and expose the truth.
- Prepare for malice, yet thwart malice before it strikes against you.
- Despise that which threatens what you watch over, whether by malice, lies, folly or carelessness.

6.2 Paragons and Exemplars

Attempts to catalogue paragons and exemplars of Vigilance have met with mixed success. In some cases, the disaster they prevent or the catastrophe that goes averted results in their heroism going unsung. More notable are those who publicly expose traitors, infiltrators, and black-hearted villains. Recognised paragons and exemplars of Vigilance include:

- The legendary paragon known as The Sentinel, who is credited with building many ancient towers and fortresses that still stand today.
- The exemplar Berechiah who exemplifies the often unpopular idea that the vigilant should be prepared to do whatever is necessary to protect their people from outside threats.

6.3 Symbols of Vigilance



The Lantern lights the path of the Virtuous through the Labyrinth.
The **tower** is a common symbol of Vigilance, representing the ancient works of the Sentinel. The watchtower allows one to see great distances and prepare for coming threats, while a fortified tower or a **castle** allow one to protect that which is precious. Along similar lines, other tools of warding and warning are common symbols of the path, especially the **bell**, the **barred gate**, and the **beacon**. Priests and pilgrims of the Path of Vigilance will often carry a bell or whistle for precisely the purpose of alerting others to danger they have identified. A **lantern** is another popular symbol of Vigilance, as is the **candle** - both can be used to provide aid in dark places and to signal warnings to others.

Mystically inclined Urizen favour the **unblinking eye** (an eye without lids). The eye has a great deal of hearth magic significance, and is often painted onto surfaces such as gates, doors, and the base of heliopticon towers as a reminder of the need to stay alert. During their Spring festival, they represent Vigilance with green flowers or sometimes wreaths of green leaves. The image of the unblinking eye can also be seen in the **basilisk**, a common symbol for unsleeping Vigilance among the Highborn.

In Varushka, eyes or grim faces are often carved into lintels or trees to keep watch over a vale; there are several stories of warnings being delivered in dreams to those who sleep in a house guarded by these peculiar icons. A similar role is played by the **scarecrow** (and to a degree the traditional poppet) in the Marches.

The **spear** also stands as a symbol of Vigilance, especially among the Navarr where it has strong connotations of protecting against outside threats.

Among the people of Wintermark Vigilance is represented by the loud **jay** and by the **goose**. The goose is also used as a symbol of the virtue in Varushka, alongside the wise **spider**. The spider also serves as a symbol of Vigilance among some covert sects in Urizen, specifically as the astronomantic constellation of the same name. The law of the Spider - *things are watched by a hidden eye* - is both a statement of the need to be constantly alert for danger and a reminder that others are always watching. Some magicians use the rune of Revelation, **Ophis**, as a symbol of vigilance.

6.4 Further Reading

- You can learn about the various spiritual roleplaying effects created by priests dedicated to Vigilance here.
- You can learn about the skills that priests can use to safeguard the virtue of Vigilance here.

6.4.1 The Seven Virtues

- Ambition
- Courage
- Loyalty

- Pride
- Prosperity
- Vigilance
- Wisdom

6.4.2 Religion

- The Way of Virtue
- Imperial Theology
- Synod
- Religious Skills
- Recent History

7 Wisdom



From *A Children's Primer of the Way*

7.1 The Path of Wisdom

There are many citizens of the Empire who believe themselves, by nature, to be filled with the virtue and it comes easily to them, yet the truth is ? like all the virtues ? Wisdom is a journey and must ever be striven for. Only the fool believes their journey is complete. Wisdom in the Empire takes many forms and what might benefit you in the Wintermark could as easily be your ruin in Varushka. Wisdom?s natural enemies are folly and complacency who steal the wit and desire for understanding and enlightenment. There is also dispute amongst the wise as to the extent that knowledge should be shared with the unready lest it imperils them.

7.1.1 Guidance on the Path

Through meditation on the auras of Wisdom, and careful analysis of the stories of paragons and exemplars, the priests of the Way have gleaned insight into the heart of the virtue and how best to pursue it. There are collections of parables, tales, sayings and teachings that distil this for Imperial citizens to learn from. The following are a handful of teachings and sayings deemed to be essential to understanding the path:

- The Virtuous apply what they have learned; Wisdom knows all knowledge is incomplete.
- Let every word you speak carry meaning; do not use forty when four will do.
- Wisdom is not always knowing the answer; Wisdom is finding the right question.
- Test what you learn; only fools accept hearsay as truth.
- Despise folly and chastise the fool that spreads it.

7.2 Paragons and Exemplars

Recognised paragons and exemplars of Wisdom include:

- The legendary paragon Zoria learned the names of all the creatures of the wild; bird and beast, fish and fowl and using their names, commanded them to serve her.
- The paragon Isenbrad of the Steinr was known for practicality, good judgement and wise counsel, and is said to have been the first runesmith
- The paragon Atun of the Highborn steered the ships that bore the Highborn through unknown waters to their new homeland.
- The exemplar Avigliana di Sarvos of League encouraged others to take note of the world they lived in and put the truth of it in writing.
- The exemplar Kala codified a system of weights and measures that are still in use today and provided much of the foundation for modern Imperial scholarship.

7.3 Symbols of Wisdom

One of the most widely accepted symbols of Wisdom is the **scale**, used to weigh and measure the world. Other tools of measurement, evaluating, and recording knowledge are also popular including the **abacus**, the **quill**, and the **rolled scroll**.

Things that create light and illumination are also popular icons of Wisdom, and there is some crossover with the symbols of vigilance in this regard but the meaning tends to be subtly different. The **lantern**, the **candle**, and the **torch** allow the virtuous to see clearly, and to understand things as they actually are, as well as to provide the opportunity to take action (such as when Isenbrad used a lantern to illuminate the cave in which he carved his runic secrets). Many priests and pilgrims of the Path of Wisdom often carry sources of light or the means to provide such, along with the means to record such knowledge and wisdom that they encounter.

Before the formation of the Synod, Wisdom was often represented by animals of one type or another, perhaps in recognition of the mastery of animals practiced by Zoria. The early Synod discouraged this practice; especially among the Highborn it was argued that beasts are inferior to humans - although understandably this attitude did not sit well with the people of Wintermark or Varushka who largely ignored it.

The **raven** symbolises wisdom in Wintermark, while in Varushka they prefer the **squirrel** and the vigilant **spider**. Unsurprisingly perhaps some magicians use the rune **Irremais**, which represents a certain kind of wisdom.

During their Spring festival, the Urizen represent Wisdom with white or silver flowers.

Wisdom is not short hand for ?action I?d like you to take?, and foolishness is not synonymous with ?outcome I wish you had not provoked'

Cardinal Abaddon De Rondell, Spring 378YE

7.4 Further reading

- You can learn about the various spiritual roleplaying effects created by priests dedicated to Wisdom here.
- You can learn about the skills that priests can use to enlighten others to the virtue of Wisdom here.

7.4.1 The Seven Virtues

- Ambition
- Courage
- Loyalty
- Pride
- Prosperity
- Vigilance
- Wisdom

7.4.2 Religion

- The Way of Virtue
- Imperial Theology
- Synod
- Religious Skills
- Recent History

8 Synod

Reward the Virtuous; Punish the Wicked



The Imperial Synod has the power to reward the virtuous and punish the wicked.

8.1 Overview

The Imperial Synod exists to safeguard the soul of the Empire, protecting it from dangers and corrupting influences, whilst nurturing and promoting virtue wherever it flourishes. It provides a balance on the power of the Senate and The Throne and has the power to reward the virtuous and punish the wicked. It also controls the supply of true liao which grants access to past life visions.

The Secretary General of the Civil Service has written a short pamphlet outlining how to participate in the Synod, which can be found here. Copies of this pamphlet are also available in the Hub during events.

8.2 Role within the Empire

The Synod is charged with overseeing the spiritual well-being of the Empire - ensuring the virtue of its citizens and in particular those who lead them. Its remit includes being aware of all the official business of the Empire. Members of the Synod are permitted to sit in while any Imperial meetings are being convened, although they are not automatically able to pry into the private affairs of citizens. The purpose is to ensure that virtue is enshrined in all the most important decisions taken by Imperial citizens.

To allow the Synod to perform its role, it may act to veto motions passed by the Senate - or to revoke individuals who hold important positions in the Senate or the Military Council. The Synod's most feared punishment is to excommunicate a citizen, allowing the ceremonial rite of excommunication to be performed on the accused and stripping them of their right to hold any Imperial title.

The Synod is also granted the power to dispense the majority of the true liao produced by the Empire each season as well as being charged with maintaining Imperial doctrine, providing guidance to the faithful through rulings on metaphysical and spiritual issues.

8.3 History

The creation of the Imperial Synod was a crucial part of the formation of the Empire. While the Empress and many of her Highborn supporters favoured a theocratic model of government for the Empire, they were unable to convince everyone of the wisdom of this approach. The compromise was to vest legal power in the Senate - but to create the Synod to watch over the Senate and ensure it remained a virtuous house. When it became clear that the Military Council would act independently of the Senate, the Highborn were able to successfully argue that the Synod's remit should also cover the generals.

The notable exception to the powers of the Synod are the Bourse and the Conclave. Titles appointed by either of these two houses may not be revoked, nor are their decisions subject to veto. The exclusion of the Bourse was the result of a long and bitter battle between Giovanni of Tassato (later Emperor Giovanni) and his followers and the Highborn. Giovanni was insistent that the Bourse must be completely free from political interference and would

brook no compromise, demanding that the independence of the Bourse be enshrined in the Imperial Constitution.

Giovanni later became Emperor, and was instrumental in courting the Urizeni, convincing them to join the Empire peacefully. The exclusion of the Conclave from oversight by the Synod likely reflects Giovanni's political views as much as it did the demands of the magicians of the time.

During the Spring Equinox 383YE the Senate voted to change how membership of the Virtue assemblies was determined. This represents one of the most significant changes to the way the Synod operates since the reign of Empress Varkula. The change was proposed initially as a way to allow the priests of the Imperial Orcs to more fully participate in the Imperial Synod, by moving membership of the Virtue assemblies away from dedication and toward the virtues a priest actually preached.

8.4 Sessions

Day	Synod opening times	Associated voting close time
Friday	6pm-10pm	10pm
Saturday	10am-2pm	2pm
	3pm-6pm	6pm
	7pm-10pm	10pm
Sunday	10am-2pm	2pm

The civil service do not arrange any formal meetings or sessions for the members of the Synod. Rather the Synod acts by passing (or rejecting) judgements that have been raised by members of the Synod. When a judgement is submitted to the civil service it is raised onto the walls of the hub so that it may be scrutinised by any citizen. Eligible members of the Synod may then vote for (or against) the judgement at any point until voting closes. Voting is conducted in public and any citizen may view the records for any judgement before it closes to see how many votes it has gathered and who has supported or opposed it.

At set times during the summit, voting closes to allow the civil service to tally the votes cast for every judgement that is due to end then. A judgement must receive at least three hours of scrutiny, unless there are sufficient members of the Synod physically present to immediately determine the outcome of the judgement.

This approach ensures that members of the Synod can have sufficient time to examine a judgement, discussing it with their peers, and considering the ramifications. It also means that all members of the Synod who attend Anvil can vote on judgements raised, regardless of how many are present.



8.5 Participation

Each citizen who has been responsible for the running of a congregation in the season preceding the summit is automatically a member of the Synod. This makes them eligible to raise one judgement per summit and to vote on judgements raised by other Synod members. Votes are based on the size of the congregation - the larger the flock that a priest tends to, the more votes they receive. The founders of the Empire adopted this approach to ensure that the decisions of the Synod best reflected the wishes of the citizens of the Empire.

Participation in the Synod is divided into a number of different assemblies:

- *General Assembly*, consisting of all Synod Priests
- *National Assemblies*, consisting of all Synod Priests from a single nation. There are ten National Assemblies, and a given priest is automatically a member of one of them.
- *Virtue Assemblies*, consisting of all Synod priests who share the same dedication, or lack of. There are eight Virtue Assemblies (one for each of the seven virtues, and the assembly of the Way). A given priest is a member of one Virtue Assembly initially based on their dedication, but with the option to change it through preaching between summits.
- *Assembly of Nine*, consisting of the eight Cardinals of the Virtue Assemblies and the Throne.

Every member of the Synod is automatically a member of the General Assembly - and a member of the relevant national and virtue assembly. Each assembly has specific judgements available to it - for example the Marcher National Assembly may revoke Marcher senators and generals.

The assembly that will consider a judgement is set when the judgement is raised - it may then only be voted on by members of that assembly.

8.6 Limitations

Although the Synod is powerful - arguably as powerful as the Imperial Senate - it does not possess the ability to change the law, nor to create new Imperial titles. The Synod has the power to veto motions passed by the Senate - but it is absolutely reliant on the Senate to raise and pass any motions needed to change laws or even the structure of the Synod itself.

Crucially the powers of the Synod do not extend to cover the Conclave or the Bourse. Both bodies are explicitly defined to be outside the Synod's jurisdiction. This means that the Synod cannot veto a declaration passed by the Conclave - nor revoke those who hold Bourse or Conclave titles.

8.7 Further Reading

Core Reading

- Synod
- Assembly
- Cardinal
- Member of the Synod

Judgements

- Judgements
    - Appointment
    - Castigation
    - Challenge
    - Change of Doctrine
    - Exaltation
    - Inquisition
    - Mandate
    - Penance
    - Proscription
    - Recognition
    - Revocation
    - Rewarding
    - Statement of Principle
    - Veto
    - Vindication

        - Writ of Consecration
        - Writ of Excommunication

Additional Information

- Synod Positions
    - Conscience of the Senate
    - Gatekeeper
    - Virtue Inquisitor
    - Tribune of the Synod
- Religious Crime
- Imperial Theology
- Inspirations
    - Paragons and Exemplars
    - Known Exemplars
    - Signs of the Paragon and Exemplar
    - Schools of Thought
    - Inspirational Location
    - The right question - historical research into the origin of paragons and exemplars

Click *Expand* to see a summary of judgements and other pages related to the Synod.

- Making your mind up - Spring 384YE Wind of Fortune proposing the change to how membership of the Virtue assemblies is determined

9 The history of the Way

This is a placeholder page for content that PD are actively working on.

9.1 The History of The Way

Priests and Scholars of The Way have unearthed myths and legends of Exemplars and Paragons that go back as far as any history or saga. Belief in reincarnation pre-dates understandings of the Labyrinth of Ages and can be found in multiple disparate cultures.

The Way of Virtue first began to take shape during a period of Highguard history called The Revelation. A Highborn Chapter called The Scions of Atun found a way to unlock the potential of Vinum, a herb previously used by the Navarr for medicinal purposes.

Through a complex system of refinement and maturation, The Scions of Atun created Liao which, when used, opened up a person's mind to the Labyrinth of Ages. In its rarest form, known as True Liao, it grants humans clear visions. During this time, another Highborn Chapter - The Distant Shores - uncovered proof that the visions were of events that had truly happened by matching up archaeological evidence and historical record with the visions witnessed. This was the spark that ignited The Revelation in Highguard. Further study by the Scions, Shores and other Highguard Chapters uncovered other secrets, such as the nature of the Labyrinth of Ages, the Seven Virtues and the identities of some Exemplars and Paragons.

Having taken root in Highguard, several Chapters - most famously the Winds of Virtue - carried The Way to the other Nations. As they did so, they learned about Exemplars and Paragons that had manifested in those lands, taught the people of the Labyrinth and the Virtues, and invited pilgrims to come to Highguard to experience the truth of The Way through the True Liao visions.

The spread of The Way amongst the nations preceded the rise of the First Empress, with pilgrims coming to Highguard in search of pure liao visions and to learn liao ceremonies. Yet The Way truly became dominant when the Empire was founded and the Empress formally recognised The Way as the religion of the Empire in the Imperial Constitution. This included the creation of the Synod and the granting of its powers.

Since the founding of The Empire, the combined insights of priests, holy mystics, scholars and wise ones from all nations have further informed the understanding of the Virtues, the Paragons and the Labyrinth of Ages. Further study of liao has also revealed it has applications in ceremonial rites that can facilitate or hinder a spirit's passage through the Labyrinth of Ages as well as demonstrating and aiding the power of Virtue in this lifetime.

9.1.1 Further Reading

- The Way of Virtue
- Imperial Theology
- Synod
- Religious skills
- Recent History

10 The Labyrinth of Ages and the Paragons and Exemplars

10.1 The Labyrinth of Ages and the Paragons and Exemplars

The Labyrinth of Ages is the name, coined in Highguard, of the twisting realm of pure spirit that is integral to the cycle of reincarnation. The name is something of a metaphor for no mortal has been there to witness it. However, it is understood that the journey from death to rebirth is neither simple nor instantaneous. Indeed, some spirits are said to wander between lives for years, even generations, before being reborn. Some are condemned to wander lost forever.

The Way of Virtue teaches that living a virtuous life holds the key to successfully traversing the Labyrinth of Ages swiftly, safely and with the purity of spirit that strengthens ties to past lives. This is supported by insights gained from the Liao Ceremonies conducted by priests of The Way. These same insights revealed the nature of the seven virtues and the presence of powerful individuals throughout history who have burned with virtue and been legendary heroes known as exemplars. A few, rarer still, have been recognised as paragons, possessed of such a state of virtue that they have transcended the Labyrinth of Ages and never again need to be reborn. This is held to be the ultimate destiny of humankind.

Although the Way teaches the supremacy of the human spirit and rejects false gods, there are some superstitious corners of the Empire in which simple folk venerate the transcendent paragons. The Synod tolerates this idolatry by affirming that prayer to the paragons achieves nothing more than meditating on their example for inspiration on how to take action oneself.

The Synod, and the Highborn Chapters that pre-date it, have found evidence of exemplars and paragons going back to the dawn of history, preserved in myths and legends. To many are attributed wonders and miracles that have helped raise up humanity from darkness and primitive superstition, laying the groundwork - in their own way - for the Empire and the Way. It is also widely held that the First Empress was herself a paragon, though there is some debate as to which virtue she may have been a paragon of.

10.1.1 Further Reading

- The Way of Virtue
- Imperial Theology
- Synod
- Religious Skills
- Recent History

11 Paragons and exemplars

A truly virtuous spirit, one who is a paragon of Virtue, is capable of freeing itself from the Labyrinth of Ages through transcendence.

The Doctrine of the Paragons

11.1 Overview

According to the doctrines of the faith, paragons are souls who have attained sufficient purity of spirit, predominantly through perfection of Virtue, to pass through the Labyrinth of Ages and achieve enlightenment. Exemplars are generally viewed as those who are on the path to become paragons - but have not yet reached the destination. Together these inspirations serve as human figures to light the Way of Virtue for those who follow. By studying the teachings they left behind or by emulating the deeds they accomplished, citizens of the Empire are inspired to virtue.

It is the role of the Synod to recognize those whose deeds meet the signs of the paragon and exemplar. Several legendary figures were identified as paragons at the dawn of the Empire - but the accomplishments of a paragon represent the pinnacle of human achievement and only a handful have ever accomplished this since the Empire was founded.

The requirements for exemplars are less demanding and so they are far more numerous by comparison. Like paragons, many prominent individuals were recognized as exemplars when the Way of Virtue was first codified and the Imperial Synod has raised countless more to the pantheon in all the years that followed. The current Synod has continued this tradition recognizing several more exemplars in the years preceding Empress Lisabetta's ascension to the Throne.

11.2 Annals

In the early years of the Empire, the followers of the Way kept meticulous records of the paragons and the exemplars, recording their lives and deeds for the benefit of future generations. Sadly these records were destroyed along with the Lepidean Library by the madness of Nicovar who sought to purge the inspirational histories along with the accumulated wisdom they represented. Fortunately the mad Emperor was stopped before he could completely destroy the School of Epistemology in Tassato, but it was too late to prevent the catastrophic loss of knowledge. Despite the best work of historians, scholars, and civil servants, no definitive list of paragons and exemplars from this time now survives.

Since that day historians and scholars have striven to curate the knowledge that remained and add to it where they can. With the help of the civil service they have promulgated this list of known paragons and exemplars throughout the Empire. In recent times the chaos that followed Empress Britta's death has meant that no new histories of past inspirations have been unearthed and so most folk have come to regard the roster of known exemplars and paragons as conclusive. With a new Empress on the Throne, this should change and it is hopeful that the chroniclers may resume restoring what was lost.



The faithful often make pilgrimages to sites connected to a renowned paragon or exemplar, such as inspirational memorials.

11.3 Renown

The most popular paragons and exemplars are known throughout the Empire, their wondrous deeds woven into stories in the lessons of parents and the sermons of priests. Not everyone in the Empire knows every paragon - but their names and stories are recognized throughout the Empire. These inspirational figures are renowned, the tale of their lives has spread so far and wide that records of their lives are no longer needed to ensure their memory lives on.

However there are many more inspirations, mostly exemplars, of whom knowledge is much more localized. An isolated Navarr steading in Liathaven will preserve the memory of their exemplar who drove back the vallorn to establish their settlement, but few others will ever have heard of her. In theory the deeds of an exemplar serve as an inspiration to everyone who hear them - in practice folk tend to remember best those whose stories appeal to them and that often means local figures whose lives they can relate to or whose deeds have personal meaning for them.

When the Imperial Synod recognize a new exemplar or paragon, or when details of a past inspirational figure are unearthed, the civil service will try to spread word throughout the Empire. Theologians tend to take special interest in these figures, looking for new lessons about Virtue in whatever details of their deeds are available, but the lives of most Imperial citizens are busy with other concerns. An exemplar or paragon will always be of interest to those who knew them in life or for whom that figure particularly resonates, but without a focal point for their faith, the common citizens of the Empire will pay heed to those figures they already know and love.

In the decades since the destruction wrought by Nicovar, a handful of inspirational figures have been given an inspirational memorial to comemorate their life. Consecrated with true liao, this tomb, cenotaph, or similar encompasses a powerful spiritual aura that inspires all those who experience it. These tombs are a major destination for pilgrimage, and the site will usually contain records of the life and deeds of the memorialized exemplar or paragon. Creating a tomb in this way ensures that an exemplar immediately becomes renowned throughout the Empire, so the Virtue of their lives will inspire generations to come.



Hazelelponi of the Shattered Tower, Lepidean Librarian, whose controversial work challenged centuries of accepted wisdom regarding inspirational figures.

11.4 Origins

In 386YE, the revelation that the paragon Vardas was fictional - as recounted in the *Life of Vardas* commissioned by the Lepidean Librarian - the status of inspirational figures was brought into question. Following the turmoil caused by that revelation, there was significant interest in the history of the paragons and exemplars, leading to the publication in 388YE of *The right question*, historical research that investigated the origins and purpose of both paragon and exemplar.

11.5 Renowned Paragons

The following are paragons of Virtue who have been formally recognised by the Imperial Synod and are renowned throughout the Empire.

- Aldones di Sarvos - Ambition
- Atun - Wisdom

- Empress Richilde - Pride
- Good Walder - Prosperity
- Isenbrad - Wisdom
- Kethry - Pride
- Korl - Courage
- Lepidus - Pride
- The Marked - Loyalty
- The Sentinel - Vigilance
- Tian - Ambition
- Zoria - Wisdom

11.6 Renowned Exemplars

The following are exemplars of Virtue that have been formally recognised by the Imperial Synod and are renowned throughout the Empire.

- Adelmar the Lion - Ambition
- Atuman - Ambition
- Avigliana di Sarvos - Wisdom
- Berechiah - Vigilance
- Bolstering Bill - Loyalty
- Cora Holdfast - Recognised as an exemplar of Loyalty in 379YE.
- Elayne Silverlark - Loyalty
- Emperor Ahraz - Courage
- Gilda Ashwine - Courage
- Inga Tarn - Courage
- Isaella - Courage
- Kala - Wisdom
- Long Tom Goodfellow - Prosperity
- Permion - Courage
- The Little Mother - Prosperity
- Zemress - Prosperity

In addition to these famous figures, there is a complete list of all known exemplars.

11.7 Renounced Inspirations

The following are paragons or exemplars of Virtue that at one point were recognised by the Imperial Synod but have since had that status renounced.

- Vardas - Vigilance - Renounced in Autumn Equinox 386YE

11.8 Philosophy

Priests are divided on both the exact role of inspirational figures in the faith, and the way they are recognised by the Synod. There are many competing schools of thought in the Empire, some of which might be considered to border on the heretical.

11.9 Further Reading

Core Reading

- Synod
- Assembly
- Cardinal
- Member of the Synod

Judgements

- Judgements
    - Appointment

        - Castigation
        - Challenge
        - Change of Doctrine
        - Exaltation
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        - Recognition
        - Revocation
        - Rewarding
        - Statement of Principle
        - Veto
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        - Writ of Consecration
        - Writ of Excommunication

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    - Known Exemplars
    - Signs of the Paragon and Exemplar
    - Schools of Thought
    - Inspirational Location
    - The right question - historical research into the origin of paragons and exemplars

Click *Expand* to see a summary of judgements and other pages related to the Synod.

12 Citizens, priests, pilgrims and dedication

For the average citizen of the Empire, it is simply enough to know of the seven Virtues and how they apply to their lives. There is no requirement to honour one above another for all seven are part of the Way and will guide their spirit through the Labyrinth of Ages.

Priests of the Way have made greater study of the mysteries and doctrines of the faith. They provide guidance to citizens about how to live virtuously and have learned ceremonies that enrich the lives of virtuous citizens and enhance an individual?s understanding of the Virtues.

The liao ceremony of dedication allows a human to more sharply focus their spirit onto one particular Virtuous path. This focus enables a dedicated priest to perform other ceremonies that provide greater insight and illumination into the Virtue. Consequently, dedication is reasonably common amongst priests who wish to provide ministry and guidance relating to a specific Virtuous path, whilst other priests choose not to dedicate and so represent all seven Virtues equally.

Dedication is regarded as being of little benefit to the average citizen as it is not believed to aid reincarnation by itself. However, some layfolk do choose to become dedicated for their own reasons. Such individuals are called pilgrims and are said to walk in the path of the paragon. A few pilgrims even go on to be recognised by the Synod as exemplars of the Virtue, whose words and deeds are an inspiration to others.

Despite some claims to the contrary, the evidence is that whilst a pilgrim or dedicated priest may continue to respect all Virtues, a spirit can only be dedicated to one Virtue and attempts to dedicate to more than one results in a loss of focus and, consequently, dedication. The individual is then free to seek to dedicate themselves anew.

12.1 The Paths of Virtue

Imperial doctrine currently states that there are seven paths of Virtue that make up the Way. These are:

- Ambition
- Courage
- Loyalty
- Pride
- Prosperity
- Vigilance
- Wisdom

12.1.1 Further Reading

- The Way of Virtue
- Imperial Theology
- Synod
- Religious Skills
- Recent History

13 Religious skills



Religion is a core facet of life for Imperial citizens.

13.1 Overview

Religious skills allow characters to invoke and influence spiritual forces. In the Empire, religious power comes from following the Way, the official faith of the Empire. Characters who practice these skills are often referred to as *priests*. Every religious skill requires a dose of liao to use. Liao is provided to everyone with a congregation, which is a personal resource. Unlike a magician, a priest does not receive any innate power to use their religious skills. If you intend to make use of your ceremonies, it is well worth considering choosing a congregation for your character's personal resource.

A starting congregation resource produces five doses of liao per event, and also allows a character to participate in the business of the Synod - the political body that guides the Empire on spiritual matters.

The Seven Virtues

Ambition

Courage

Loyalty

Pride

Prosperity

The Seven Virtues

Wisdom

Vigilance

The dedication skill is a prerequisite for every other religious skill. By taking the dedication skill, you can also choose to begin play dedicated to one of the Seven Virtues. Priests who are not dedicated to one of the Seven Virtues are called "Priests of the Way". They can still use all the religious skills, but their ability to use the anointing, consecration, and hallow skills is significantly limited.

Some religious skills place auras on people, places, or objects. These ceremonies create roleplaying effects that can affect how someone plays their character. The auras a priest can choose from are determined by their dedication. For example, if they are dedicated to Ambition they can only use their skills to create auras of Ambition.

Using a religious skill is usually referred to as "performing a ceremony."

13.2 Performing a Ceremony

Religious Skill	
Dedication ?	2-point skill
Anointing	1-point skill
Consecration	1-point skill
Exorcism	1-point skill
Excommunication	1-point skill
Hallow	1-point skill
Insight	1-point skill
Testimony	1-point skill

? Dedication is a prerequisite for all other religious skills.

- **Requires a dose of liao and at least ten seconds of appropriate roleplaying.**
- **May require the presence of a referee.**
- **The target must usually be close enough to touch and present throughout.**
- **It should be obvious to everyone nearby that you are performing a ritual.**
- **Priests can cooperate to create more powerful effects.**
- **The ceremony fails if you or your target are hit or attack another character during the performance**

While there are some exceptions, performing a ceremony requires a dose of liao and ten seconds of appropriate roleplaying. Some ceremonies also require the presence of a referee. Individual skills may call out exceptions to these rules (such as the ability to perform a quick Insight).

The target of a religious skill must usually be close enough to touch, and present throughout.

If you are using a skill that creates an aura, you need to specify which aura you are creating. For example, there are four personal auras that a priest dedicated to Ambition can create with anointing. They must tell the target of the anointing which aura they have imbued.



Priests use their skills through the performance of a religious ceremony.
Priests who are not dedicated to a virtue cannot produce auras, but can use their skills to remove them (and they have some special benefits when it comes to cooperating with other priests).

13.3 Cooperation

- **Characters with the same virtue may cooperate to perform a ceremony with a higher strength**
- **Characters with different virtues may cooperate if they are part of the same sect**
- **Every participant must have the appropriate skill**
- **Requires one dose of liao for each participant**

Characters with the appropriate skills can cooperate to perform a ceremony with a higher strength. Strength means different things for different skills. For example, strength determines how hard auras, such as those created by anointing, hallow, or consecration are to remove or replace.

All characters collaborating to perform a ceremony must have the appropriate skill and *either* all be part of the same sect (a sect ceremony), *or* all be dedicated to the same virtue (a virtue ceremony). Characters who are devotees of the Way can assist any virtue ceremony; they cannot assist a sect ceremony unless they are a member of the sect.

Each participant can use one dose of liao.

Only the insight skill provides no benefit for cooperation.

13.4 Ceremony Strength

- **The strength of a ceremony is the amount of liao used to perform it**
- **A stronger aura is harder to destroy, you must create an effect of equal strength to replace or remove it**

Several skills talk about the *strength* of the ceremony. The strength of a ceremony affects how difficult it is to remove or how effective it is in removing a spiritual effect. For example, an aura created with strength 3 can only be removed by performing a new ceremony with equal or greater strength. A powerful spirit that is possessing a character may require an exorcism of strength 5 or more to remove it.

The strength of a ceremony equals the amount of liao used to perform it, (plus any special bonuses). Under normal circumstances, a priest can spend only one dose of liao. There are magic items, potions, and even ritual enchantments that can allow a priest to use additional liao and thus create an effect with a higher strength.

13.5 Further Reading

- Ceremonial Skills
    - Anointing
    - Consecration
    - Dedication
    - Excommunication
    - Exorcism
    - Hallow
    - Insight
    - Testimony
- Additional Information
    - Auras
    - The Way
    - Synod

14 Religious Crimes

1. REDIRECT Religious crime

15 Malign spiritual presences

Tomas moved to pick up the sword. Sensing something wrong, I cried out a warning, but it was too late. I could see the change in him immediately. I instructed him to put the weapon down. He refused and told me that he no longer had to do what I told him. I knew then that I would have to exorcise the vile force that controlled him now, but first I would have to separate him from the cursed blade - and for that I would have to fight him.

The Shadow of Crescencia



Sects dedicated to a malign spiritual presence, such as the Whittle folk, can prove a major threat to the stability of the Empire - and the souls of the virtuous.

15.1 Overview

Although there are seven virtues that are known to empower the human soul and guide it through the Labyrinth of Ages, there are other spiritual forces that are present in the world. These malign spiritual presences can arise from false teachers, barbarians, foreigners, or even simply by circumstance. Amongst the duties of priests of the Way is cleansing and purging the malign spiritual presences utilising an appropriate liao ceremony.

Malign spiritual presences have a number of known sources and manifestations. These include:

15.1.1 False Virtues

It is possible to become dedicated to some malign auras as if they were virtues. When embraced in this way, adherents can use liao to dedicate others, and create anointings, hallows and consecrations just as a priest of the true Virtues might. These auras are often referred to as false virtues. They may appear harmless initially, even beneficial, but they were ruled as un-virtuous and excluded from the Doctrine of Seven by the early Synod. Consequently, the promotion and propagation of these auras and presences is regarded as blasphemy under Imperial law. Nevertheless, some blasphemous cults still arise and either explore these auras in secret, or seek to change the Doctrines of the Faith to press for their inclusion.

The four known false virtues are Anarchy, Hatred, Peace, and Vengeance. Other malign spiritual presences, such as Hope and Fear, may appear spontaneously, but it does not appear to be possible to become dedicated to them, so they do not spread as readily as the false virtues.

15.1.2 False Gods

In their ignorance, some barbarians and foreigners encounter spiritual auras and manifestations and, instead of understanding that they are echoes from the Labyrinth of Ages, see them as the presence of gods, demons or other supernatural entities. Priests of these false gods may even believe that they are invoking the power of some divine being through their warped approaches to religious ceremonies.

15.1.3 Phenomena and Phantasmagoria

While the propagation of blasphemous cults and the worship of false gods is carried out via mortal agencies, there are occasions where malign spiritual presences can seem to occur as a natural, or indirectly occurring, phenomenon. For example, a house in which a horrific crime is committed may attract a malign spiritual aura related to the nature of that crime. Additionally, it has been known for vile and wicked spirits - condemned to wander the Labyrinth of Ages for all time - to break loose and seize control of mortal hosts.

15.2 Known Malign Spiritual Presences

The following are spiritual presences that have been excluded from the Doctrines of the Faith, and embracing them constitutes blasphemy.

15.2.1 Anarchy

Auras of Anarchy - sometimes called Freedom or Liberty - stir mortal souls against structures and order and were recognised at an early stage as self-destructive forces as well as a threat to the unity of the Empire. Anarchy has been known to take root in blasphemous cults that seek to tear down all the Empire has sought to build, but it has also often occurred spontaneously, most commonly on raids to free slaves from the Grendel, the Asaveans and others.

The false Virtue of Freedom was extensively preached during the Freedom Heresy. Their descendants, the Montanians continued to embrace the Virtue before their eventual death at the hands of the Varushkans.

15.2.2 Fear

Auras of Fear, are usually found arising spontaneously. Like Hope, Fear, is seldom referred to as a false Virtue because it offers few if any teachings and there are no reliable accounts of anyone being dedicated to Fear. Rather, it is used as a means to goad and control other mortal souls. The Druj in particular are masters of Fear, employing a potent combination of drugs, deprivation, and torture to create and spread auras of fear over entire territories, the better to control their subjects. In early 388YE, a study of fear was made by the Silent Bell, with particular reference to the Druj, and made publicly available as the *On the nature of fear* essay available to Imperial priests and interested citizens.

15.2.3 Hate

There was some significant debate within the early Synod before auras of Hatred were deemed unvirtuous. Commonly referred to as the false Virtue of Purity by adherents, its proponents argued that it was a powerful, motivating force that spurred mortal hearts into action. It was ultimately ruled to be in conflict with the virtue of Wisdom, being irrational and indiscriminate in its nature. However, there are blasphemous cults that still seek to use these auras as a means to guide mortal souls.

Recent interest in learning more about this wicked spiritual presence led to the Minister of Historical Research commissioning further investigation, summarised in the report Maude, and the nature of Hatred.

15.2.4 Hope

Much like Fear, auras of Hope tend to arise spontaneously rather than because anyone has actively created them. There is little evidence to suggest that anyone has ever been dedicated to Hope, but there are idolatrous cults associated with false gods that draw on hope to encourage faith in "higher" powers.

Seemingly benign, this aura has also been referred to as Fortune or Fate and generally conveys that there are greater supernatural forces at work, and that these forces are benign and can be trusted. This seductive aura has been deemed by Synods past as being anathema to all the virtues for it discourages effort and striving by mortals.

15.2.5 Peace

Another apparently benign aura, Peace has also been known as Tranquillity and Harmony. It is widely embraced in Axos where it is studied and promulgated as the false Virtue of Understanding. There was little evidence of support for Peace in the early Synod where it was deemed dangerous for promoting passivity and being in conflict with virtues such as Ambition, Courage, Pride, and Vigilance.

At its worst, Peace promotes compromise in the face of the many challenges that confront, even threaten, the Empire. The restful nature of Peace auras is alluring and, some claim, mildly addictive, which is a quality that has been exploited by blasphemous cults.

15.2.6 Vengeance

Like Hope and Fear, auras of Vengeance commonly occur spontaneously. The aura has been known to manifest in areas of sudden violence and, is often linked to hauntings. However, there are also cults dedicated to Vengeance, eager to recruit those who believe they have been wronged.

In Faraden, the false Virtue of Justice is widely practiced where it is seen as one of the "Five Flames", a heretical notion that denies the seven true Virtues. The destructive auras of Vengeance were deemed unvirtuous by the early Synod for fuelling cycles of violence and goading citizens into action, often in defiance of Imperial law.

15.3 Further Reading

- The Way of Virtue
- Imperial Theology
- Synod
- Religious skills

- Know your enemy - 387YE Summer wind of fortune presenting options to learn more about malign spiritual presences

- On the nature of fear - 388YE Spring report from the Silent Bell about the malign spiritual presence of fear/dread
- Maude, and the nature of Hatred - Historical research report touching on the nature of the malign spiritual presence of hate
- Eater-of-Hope

16 Symbols of the Way



The labyrinth is a common symbol of the Way

16.1 The Way of Virtue

The Way of Virtue has several symbols to represent it across the Empire, but there are two that are widely used by the Imperial Synod, and priests of the Way may have items or regalia marked by such symbols.

- **The Seven-Spoked Wheel** ? The wheel is a symbol of the journey that each spirit must make and each of the spokes represents one of the Virtues all of which converge on a single point, that of rebirth.
- **The Labyrinth of Ages** ? The Labyrinth is depicted in a number of ways, but usually within a circle. Most designs favour seven co-centric circles or other elements to represent the seven virtues. Some symbols represent a labyrinth with only one path through from the outside to the centre, while others favour a labyrinth with multiple routes, depending on the attitude of the artist to the virtues.

As the Way is concerned with the journey of the spirit from birth-to-death-to-rebirth, some priests and pilgrims carry or adorn themselves with items and regalia of travel.

16.2 The Paths of Virtue

There are a great many symbols associated with the individual Virtues, and no exhaustive or definitive list exists. Many are drawn from well-known stories or parables about the virtue, while others are associated with long-held traditions such as the bird imagery of Wintermark, the virtuous animals of Varushka, or even the magical runes said to have an association with each virtue.

16.2.1 Ambition



Both the Throne and the Imperial Crown are powerful symbols of Ambition in the Empire.
One of the most common symbols of Ambition used in the Empire is **flame**. This is not only symbolic of the quest Tian undertook to steal the fire of the sun, but fire possesses many of the qualities of purest ambition. It is ever hungry and never satisfied, for the moment it is satisfied, it dies. Some pilgrims of Ambition even go as far as to burn a brand on their arm or hand in recognition of the price Tian paid or as a reminder of how dangerous Ambition can be.

In Wintermark, ambition is often signified by a **rook**, while in Varushka the virtue is associated with the cunning **fox**, and (in recent times) the wily **hare**. The rune **Naeve**, which represents hunger, is used by some magicians as a symbol of Ambition.

For obvious reasons the **throne** is a common symbol associated with ambition - indeed the physical throne that stands in the Senate is sometimes seen as one of the most profound symbols of ambition in the Empire representing as it does the most potent Imperial title. For similar reasons, a **crown** (along with other regalia of high office) is sometimes used as a symbol of ambition in Dawn. This image no doubt originated as a reference to the old monarchs of that nation, and later the actual Imperial crown worn by every Throne since the foundation of the Empire.

The **mountain** is also sometimes used as a symbol of ambition, or rather of the obstacles one must overcome to achieve one's goals. Tian climbs a mountain, after all, in her pursuit of fire. In Urizen the astronomantic constellation of the Mountain is sometimes used as an icon of ambition representing as it does the universal law that *things are not easy*. In a similar vein, in some parts of the League, the **ladder** is used as a slightly tongue-in-cheek icon of ambition, most likely having its roots in the rambunctious street-dramas of Tassato and Sarvos.

During the Spring festival celebrated in Urizen, Ambition is represented by a purple flower.

16.2.2 Courage

Common symbols of Courage across the Empire are those associated with the iconic tools or weapons of favoured paragons and exemplars. One of the most common and prevalent is the **axe**. This is symbolic of the axe created by Korl as both a weapon and a tool with which to tame the wilderness and overcome obstacles. Axes and hatchets are popular weapons among priests and pilgrims dedicated to the path of Courage for this reason. The **hammer**, the iconic weapon of Inga Tarn is likewise favoured as a weapon by pilgrims, and is especially popular among those dedicated to Courage in the southern Empire especially the Marches - a common saying is that a pilgrim in the south is much more likely to encounter problems that can be solved with a hammer than with an axe.

In Wintermark, courage is often signified by a **jackdaw**, while in Varushka the virtue is associated with the strength of the **boar** and the **bear**. **Jotra**, the Rune of Battle which represents challenges to be overcome, is used by some magicians as a symbol of Courage.

Those who take a less martial approach to the virtue use the **Blue Rose** as a symbol, in honour of Gilda Ashwine. During the Spring flower festival celebrated by the urizen by contrast, crimson and scarlet blossoms are associated with this virtue, perhaps representing shed blood.

16.2.3 Loyalty

The Path of Loyalty has many symbols across the Empire, but one of the more common is a **chain**. This symbolises not only the humble origins of the earliest paragon as a slave, but is composed of single links given length, strength and purpose by being inextricably linked to others. Along similar lines,

a **rope** of many strands is a common symbol. Some priests and pilgrims dedicated to this path wear chains around their necks, or either a chain or rope around their waist indicating their ties. Although the exact description of the slave tattoos of the Marked is lost to time, several priests and pilgrims will be tattooed, often with some reference ? obvious, oblique or symbolic ? to that which holds their Loyalty.

The chain and the rope are sometimes a matter of contention for the Preachers of the Imperial Orcs, being too closely representative of the slavery they and their ancestors endured at the hands of the Empire. Some have adopted the **horse** (especially the horse skull) to represent Loyalty, while others favour the **clasped hands** (a common expression of respect between individuals).

In the League, the **ring** is a strong symbol of Loyalty, tied inextricably as it is to both custom and hearth magic. Indeed gifts of rings have become a powerful symbol of Loyalty throughout the Empire, and are often used as part of a ceremony where someone undertakes an obligation for another, or as a part of marriage vows. **Interlinked rings** - usually two but sometimes three (especially in Wintermark and the Brass Coast), or seven - represent bonds between individuals in a similar fashion.

In Navarr, **thorns** are sometimes used as a symbol of Loyalty, and the blood they shed is seen as a reminder of the price of sacrifice (an idea that many Navarr consider to be closely tied to the virtue as well as to their own nation's history). Thorny briars are a common feature of the tattoos used to mark oaths.

In Wintermark, the **hawk** and the **falcon** are symbols of Loyalty, while in Varushka the virtue is associated with the **hound**. Some magicians use the rune **Lann**, which represents equitable bargains, to symbolise Loyalty.

Some Urizen point to the astronomantic constellations of the Chain and the Three Sisters as manifestations of this virtue - albeit with different, nuanced interpretations. During their Spring festival, they represent Loyalty with blue flowers.

16.2.4 Pride

Priests of Pride teach that the best symbol of the virtue is the open display of whatever it is that the pilgrim is most proud of. The **flag** and the **banner** are ways of displaying such symbols, as is the **livery** of a Marcher household, or the **heraldry** of a noble or Noble house in Dawn.

As a more unified symbol of the virtue itself, rather than of the individual's personal Pride, the Synod often favours the **sun**. The sun shines brightly, without shame, open for all the world to see. By so doing, it allows others to see as well - and while it may occasionally be occluded by clouds, when the clouds pass the sun's light is undiminished.

In Wintermark, the **eagle**, the **heron**, and the **swan** all symbolise Pride. The eagle is also a popular symbol of the virtue in Varushka where it is joined by the **deer**. Some magicians use the rune of Majesty, **Feresh**, which represents glorious splendour, to symbolise Pride. These magicians point to the way that Feresh only enhances attributes that are already present as a particularly telling parable about the nature of Pride.

During their Spring festival, the Urizen represent the virtue of Pride with pink blossoms.

16.2.5 Prosperity

There are a great many symbols of Prosperity across the Empire but one of the most common is the **wheatsheaf**. Strongly symbolic of harvest time, it represents both the hard work that has gone into ploughing, sowing, and tending the field and the reward for that labour. Priests and pilgrims of this path often have a stalk of wheat or other grain upon them. There are a number of other popular symbols along the same lines, associated with different harvests and different forms of work - the **apple**, the **grape**, the **fishing net**, the **wagon**, and the **merchant ship** for example.

Likewise, the **coin** is a popular representation of Prosperity - sometimes an Imperial crown, sometimes a gold or silver coin stamped with another symbol of prosperity of some sort. As a symbol the coin has grown with prominence through the Empire's history, and is very popular with those whose hard work involves trade or the practice of a profession rather than manual labour. By a similar token a set of **artisan's tools** are sometimes used as a symbol of the virtue - and in the Marches, a **spade** or a **shovel** may stand as a slightly tongue-in-cheek symbol of Prosperity. Another popular symbol in the Marches is the **handshake**, often used to seal an agreement that will bring Prosperity to both parties.

The **cup** (along with the **wineskin** and the **waterskin**) has a long tradition of being associated with Prosperity. Sometimes it is a cup of water used to quench thirst brought on by hard work, sometimes it is a cup of wine or beer drunk as a reward for a job well done. It is quite common for priests and pilgrims of the Path of Prosperity to carry waterskins, or bear fruit or other food, to enjoy or share as virtue guides them.

A less common symbol of Prosperity is the **stout club** or cudgel. Possibly a reference to Good Walder, it represents the will to defend what one has earned against the greedy. In some old versions of this symbol, the club is wound with ivy or with thorned berry-bearing briars.

In Wintermark Prosperity is symbolised by the **magpie**, while in Varushka the virtue is demonstrated by the industrious **bee**. Some magicians use the rune of Wealth, **Pallas**, which is said to represent an apple tree, as a symbol of Prosperity.

During their Spring festival, the Urizen use yellow or golden flowers to represent Prosperity.

16.2.6 Vigilance



The Lantern lights the path of the Virtuous through the Labyrinth.
The **tower** is a common symbol of Vigilance, representing the ancient works of the Sentinel. The watchtower allows one to see great distances and prepare for coming threats, while a fortified tower or a **castle** allow one to protect that which is precious. Along similar lines, other tools of warding and warning are common symbols of the path, especially the **bell**, the **barred gate**, and the **beacon**. Priests and pilgrims of the Path of Vigilance will often carry a bell or whistle for precisely the purpose of alerting others to danger they have identified. A **lantern** is another popular symbol of Vigilance, as is the **candle** - both can be used to provide aid in dark places and to signal warnings to others.

Mystically inclined Urizen favour the **unblinking eye** (an eye without lids). The eye has a great deal of hearth magic significance, and is often painted onto surfaces such as gates, doors, and the base of heliopticon towers as a reminder of the need to stay alert. During their Spring festival, they represent Vigilance with green flowers or sometimes wreaths of green leaves. The image of the unblinking eye can also be seen in the **basilisk**, a common symbol for unsleeping Vigilance among the Highborn.

In Varushka, eyes or grim faces are often carved into lintels or trees to keep watch over a vale; there are several stories of warnings being delivered in dreams to those who sleep in a house guarded by these peculiar icons. A similar role is played by the **scarecrow** (and to a degree the traditional poppet) in the Marches.

The **spear** also stands as a symbol of Vigilance, especially among the Navarr where it has strong connotations of protecting against outside threats.

Among the people of Wintermark Vigilance is represented by the loud **jay** and by the **goose**. The goose is also used as a symbol of the virtue in Varushka, alongside the wise **spider**. The spider also serves as a symbol of Vigilance among some covert sects in Urizen, specifically as the astronomantic constellation of the same name. The law of the Spider - *things are watched by a hidden eye* - is both a statement of the need to be constantly alert for danger and a reminder that others are always watching. Some magicians use the rune of Revelation, **Ophis**, as a symbol of vigilance.

16.2.7 Wisdom

One of the most widely accepted symbols of Wisdom is the **scale**, used to weigh and measure the world. Other tools of measurement, evaluating, and recording knowledge are also popular including the **abacus**, the **quill**, and the **rolled scroll**.

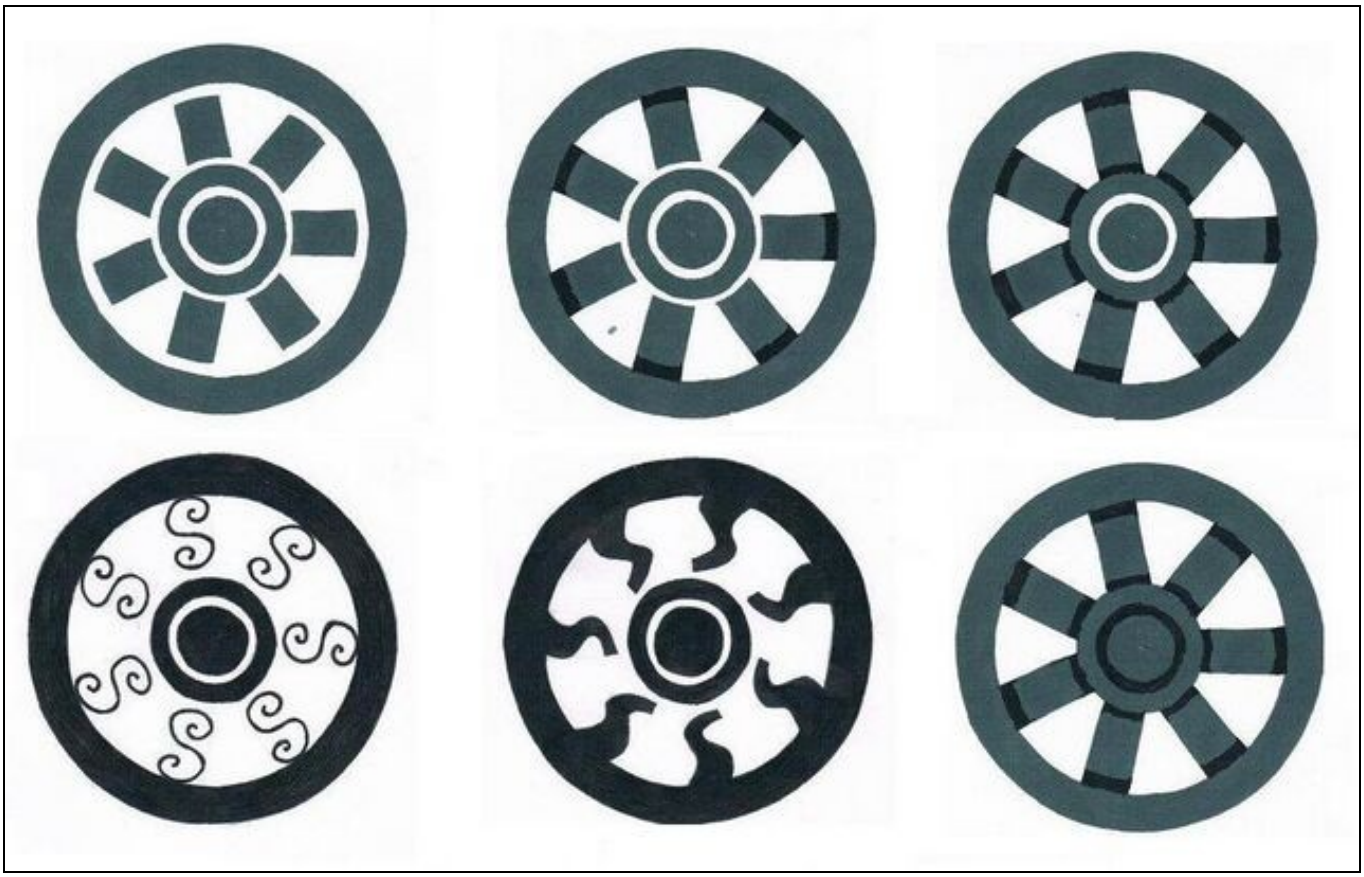
Things that create light and illumination are also popular icons of Wisdom, and there is some crossover with the symbols of vigilance in this regard but the meaning tends to be subtly different. The **lantern**, the **candle**, and the **torch** allow the virtuous to see clearly, and to understand things as they actually are, as well as to provide the opportunity to take action (such as when Isenbrad used a lantern to illuminate the cave in which he carved his runic secrets). Many priests and pilgrims of the Path of Wisdom often carry sources of light or the means to provide such, along with the means to record such knowledge and wisdom that they encounter.

Before the formation of the Synod, Wisdom was often represented by animals of one type or another, perhaps in recognition of the mastery of animals practiced by Zoria. The early Synod discouraged this practice; especially among the Highborn it was argued that beasts are inferior to humans - although understandably this attitude did not sit well with the people of Wintermark or Varushka who largely ignored it.

The **raven** symbolises wisdom in Wintermark, while in Varushka they prefer the **squirrel** and the vigilant **spider**. Unsurprisingly perhaps some magicians use the rune **Irremais**, which represents a certain kind of wisdom.

During their Spring festival, the Urizen represent Wisdom with white or silver flowers.

16.3 Images



The seven-spoked wheel represents the journey each spirit must make



The seven Virtue Assemblies, the Assembly of the Way, the ten National Assemblies, the General Assembly, and the Assembly of the Nine together make up the Synod.

16.3.1 Further Reading

- The Way of Virtue
- Imperial Theology
- Synod
- Religious Skills
- Recent History

17 Imperial Theology

1. REDIRECT Imperial theology