

GURPS Glorantha: Magic

Assumptions

This supplement uses the spells from GURPS: Magic, and applies them to four differing systems of magic that exist in Glorantha. Mechanically, many of these spells will function similarly (or exactly) the same, as it is not the intention of this work to personalize each GURPS spell both to the world of Glorantha, and to the system of magic it is being used by. It is therefore up to the GM to apply the principles espoused herein towards each individual spell, and to provide that individuality through his description and his narration.

It is also here assumed that the effects here laid out are common knowledge not just to the players, but also to the NPCs of the GM's world. Therefore, the players should not be surprised or upset when their enemies maneuver to attack them on inauspicious days of the calendar, or that the enemy avoids attacking them on a piece of ground widely known to be magically powerful.

Power Investiture and Magery

Advancement within a system of magic is represented through the GURPS advantage "Power Investiture", with increasing levels giving the cult member greater skill and greater access to magical abilities.

Magery is reserved exclusively for sorcerers and their like, and the details of their particular brand of magic are enumerated in the appropriate section below.

Rune Points and Fatigue

GURPS Glorantha makes use of two energy systems for the powering of magic: the traditional fatigue points, which are used to power Battle Magic and Spirit Magic; and Rune Points, which are a non-renewable resource gained by any hero who initiates into a cult. Rune Points, once spent, do not regenerate on their own, and must instead be accumulated through the means of worship listed below.

Lay Worshipper

Lay worshippers are those individuals in Glorantha who are full adults, but who participate only marginally in their culture's cult activities. Such participation would be limited to major holy days and other special (rare) occasions; the bulk of their time is thus spent on mundane matters. They are thus restricted to basic level magic, representing spells taught them by family and clan, and have only occasional access to the Rune Magic dispensed by the gods.

Power Investiture 1, First Level Battle Magic, Rune Points equal to $\frac{1}{2}$ Will

Lay Worshippers may make sacrifice only on Holy Days (or if led by an Initiate or Devotee), and gain Rune Points only on a one-use basis regardless of circumstance.

Initiate

Initiates are those who have chosen to dedicate themselves to a particular god or goddess, and spend a significant portion of their yearly lives in worship to that chosen deity. Initiates have access to more formal magical training, represented both by their increased magical skill and the higher degree to which they may exercise it. Initiates also may use Rune Magic at will.

Power Investiture 2, Second Level Battle Magic, Rune Points equal to Will

Initiates may make sacrifice at any time, and regain their full Rune Points each seasonal Holy Day

Devotee

A devotee is one whose life revolves almost entirely around the activities of their cult. They are entirely supported by their temple, as they do not have sufficient time to support themselves while also maintaining the necessary level of religious activity.

Power Investiture 3, Third Level Battle Magic, Rune Points equal to 2x Will (permanent)

Devotees may make sacrifice at any time, and regain their full Rune Points each weekly Holy Day

Rune Lords

Rune Lords are a special subset of a cult's devotees. They are charged with the defense and preservation of the cult's temples and holy places, and they often possess special knowledge and weapons gifted to them by the cult for the fulfillment of this purpose. Rune Lords almost always are accompanied by a guardian spirit they acquire through a special ritual. This spirit provides them with aid in battle and while on journeys in Glorantha's Other Worlds.

Battle Magic

Battle magic spells are taught by cults to their members. Although anyone can learn any battle magic spell, finding a teacher is the limiting factor. Some spells are taught by nearly all cults, while others are much more rare and specialized. See each spell's description for more details.

Where a spell is described as variable, additional points of fatigue may be spent on the spell to gain an increased effect; note that this is only available to those who know the spell at that higher level: bladessharp 2 must be learned independently of bladessharp 1.

Rune Magic

Rune Magic is cast through the use of a resource known as Rune Points, which are separate from both fatigue and health. The recovery of Rune Points, and the magnitude of a worshipper's pool are dictated by his rank within his chosen cult (see below). In all other respects, Rune Points are treated as normal magical energy in the GURPS rules.

Cults

Rune Magic is the magic of divine forces. Generally speaking, it is the gift of power from a god or goddess to one of his or her worshippers, a gift which allows them to bring a piece of the divine into the Middle World, which in most cases operates on mundane rules divorced from divine interference. Each god has its own cult associated with it, and each cult has its own hierarchy and organization and purpose. It is beyond the scope of this endeavor to exhaustively catalog these distinctions.

Worship

Worship in Glorantha takes several forms. In the case of Rune Magic, worship is designed to attract the attention of the god, and to accumulate power into the worshipper(s). Each act of worship may gain the worshipper a certain number of rune points, where multiple acts of worship overlap, they are additive.

Prayer

A prayer is a quick, verbal plea to the god for attention and succor. At most this is worth a single Rune Point on a successful Cult Lore roll, and can be performed once per day.

Sacrifice

Sacrifices can be broken down into low, medium, and high potency. As these are different for each god, the actual sacrifices themselves will be detailed in the appropriate cult entry. Generally speaking, however, the following guidelines may be useful:

Low potency (2 RP): fairly trivial, such as a figure made of barley, or a chicken

Medium potency (4 RP): something more valuable, like a set of weapons, or a pig

High potency (6 RP): a major sacrifice, such as a cow or bull

Sacrifice can quickly refill a PCs store of magic, and it is not in the spirit of these rules to provide artificial limitations on frequency. However, a sacrifice represents a permanent loss of material resources, and the GM should place mechanisms into his game to ensure that the PCs are not able to absorb such losses without some kind of serious consequence.

Ritual

Rituals tie other forms of worship together, and often fold prayer and sacrifice into themselves, often at holy places. There is a practical limit to the size of these ceremonies.

Low potency (2 RP): a ritual performed alone or with one or two others

Medium potency (4 RP): a clan ritual, which might attract worshippers from outside

High potency (6 RP): a tribal ritual, with resources and worshippers drawn from far and wide

Location

Glorantha is suffused with magic. The land still remembers the tread of the gods and the heroes who followed them, and the places where they fought or died or lay down to rest are still filled with their potency. Performing magic on these sites has two effects, it reduces the expenditure of magical energy for spells cast within their area, and allows greater recovery of magical energy. It should be noted that this can possibly allow very extensive uses of magic, and give some spells a casting cost of 0. The GM should therefore be strict in his allowance of these bonuses.

Low potency (+1 RP, -1 casting cost): a clan holy place, the tallest hill in the tribe's territory

Medium potency (+2 RP, -2 casting cost): a tribal holy place, the highest mountain in a kingdom

High potency (+3 RP, -3 casting cost): the highest mountain in the world, the birthplace of a god

Time

Time is the youngest god, created out of the union of chaos and cosmos, he is the child of Arachne Solara. Each day in the Gloranthan calendar has three runes attached to it: a day rune, a week rune, and a season rune. Days with runes corresponding to a god's runes are considered holy to it, the more the better.

Low potency (+1 RP, -1 casting cost): weekly holy day

Medium potency (+2 RP, -2 casting cost): seasonal holy day

High potency (+3 RP, -3 casting cost): yearly holy day

Heroquesting

Heroquesting is the supreme act of Gloranthan magic, and involves the repetition of actions undertaken by heroes and gods in ages past. Through heroquesting, a worshipper acquires special powers and techniques that may or may not become a permanent part of his character.

In game terms, heroquesting is a way to allow players access to cinematic and supernatural techniques and advantages, or anything else that would otherwise be off-limits in the normally realistic Gloranthan setting.

Heroquesting is a highly personal activity, and should be a narrative process carried out collaboratively between the player and the GM once the desired goal is decided upon:

1. The heroquest itself. The GM, with the player's input, should create a short adventure for the player to undertake. This would typically take the form of a myth about the hero's god, which the player must then repeat. Success would give the player access to the "heroquest reward".
2. A ritual that the player must undertake in order to activate the advantage once it is acquired – this should only be an issue if the heroquest reward is permanent.

Heroquesting is the most powerful of Gloranthan magic, but it is also the most dangerous. A full exploration of the heroquesting craft is not within the scope of these rules, but it should be noted by the GM and made clear to the players, that failure can result in the summary loss of their character, and grave penalties for those who supported their endeavor.

Spirit Magic

Spirit Magic is based around the possession of charms and familiars inhabited by friendly (or unfriendly) spirits. These spirits may provide both passive and active effects. Some charms may only provide a passive skill bonus, while others might be fully fledged and powerful entities capable of independent thought, action, and combat. By default, an individual can possess a number of charms equal to $\frac{1}{3}$ Will, though skilled shamans may be able to control far more.

Charms

Charms are small objects which house a minor spirit. These are created by a shaman and then usually sold or traded to others. A charm benefits its user only if he is wearing it and if he knows the name of the spirit inhabiting it. Such a charm provides a +1 (rarely, +2) bonus to one skill; if the owner does not have the skill, the bonus applies to its default. A character cannot benefit from multiple charms affecting a single skill.

Fetishes

A fetish is a much more powerful form of charm, though it takes a similar physical form. It houses a major spirit which is capable of independent thought and action. It does not provide a passive bonus, but instead acts on behalf of the owner as a subordinate entity.

Sorcery

Sorcery is the traditional magic of wizards. It involves the study and understanding of various principles and laws of the natural world, which in turn allow for the manipulation of those same laws to create magical effects. Expect spell books and grimoires and long robes. Mostly found in Western cultures, but occasionally seen in Theistic cultures, such as in the case of the cult of Lhankor Mhy.

Mysticism

Mysticism in Glorantha is the turning away of the Self. It is the removal of one's attention from this world, and the focus on the infinite and the absolute that is beyond this world of illusions. Paradoxically, this turning away from the world grants great power and knowledge, though the Mystic is loath to exercise it and thereby reentangle himself in the illusion of reality.