Cults and Religions

- Majority
  - Church of the Sovereign
  - Witnesses, Pilgrims, and Chaplains
- Minority
  - Witches
- Taboo
  - The Worship of Mother Spider

Majority

Majority

Church of the Sovereign

The veneration of The Sovereign as a deity is recognized as the official regional religion within Maret, Laguerre, and Kota. The church maintains a majority presence within the other families as well, though it is not recognized officially as a political entity.

Temples dedicated to the Sovereign are grand buildings built like semi-circular, indoor amphitheaters. Even temples built in relatively small villages and towns tend to dominate the architecture of the settlement.

Devotees of the Sovereign attend twice weekly ceremonies at the temple where songs are sung, and rituals of cleansing are performed. Occasionally, theatrical performances depicting the life and great works of the Sovereign are put on as well. These always draw crowds and tend to be incredibly extravagant, often including live animals and dazzling magic and action.

The most important day to devotees of the Sovereign happens five days after the summer solstice, on the day which it is believed to be the day the miasma flooded the old capital and the Lord Sovereign fell silent. Often called simply: Mourn, the day is a solemn affair that lasts from sunrise to sunset. Devotees dress in black clothes, speak as little as possible, and cover their faces with ash. Priests spend the day speaking of the Sovereign and his silence. When the sun sets an hour is spent in complete silence while devotees pray, then a great feast is had with music and dancing and magic and all sorts of extravagant events. This is to represent the day that the Sovereign finally breaks his silence and returns to unite the world once more.

Becoming a priest of the Sovereign is open to anyone, however significant dedication is required and as such less than half of all who begin their training ever complete it. While the training is not terribly difficult on its own, the responisbilities of a Priest of the Sovereign are significant and can be overwhelming to many. Especially within Maret, Laguerre and Kota, Priests of the Sovereign act not only as spiritual leaders, but political ones as well. Often in small towns within the families, Priests serve as mayors along with their other duties. In larger cities, Priests hold various positions of office which allow them to oversee much of the day to day life of the citizens.

While Laguerre and Kota maintain that they are not a theocracy and do not allow priests to hold positions that would "compromise their fidelity to the people", Maret makes an effort to appoint priests in as many leadership positions as they can.

Majority

Witnesses, Pilgrims, and Chaplains

While there are many who devote their lives to the Sovereign, very few can claim to have seen him. Certainly, none remain alive who were around during his reign, however there are those who claim to have been visited by the Sovereign himself in visions. Always the story is the same, a figure cloaked in silver armour, emerges from a forest of dense green trees to deliver a message of unity. The Witness is then visited by other Witnesses, called to their location to welcome them into the fold and send them out to follow The Sovereign's Path (a metaphorical and literal journey for the Witness to travel the land giving aid wherever the Sovereign points).

It is believed that the first Witness appeared around ten years after the Sovereign's Silence. Since then, many have appeared (though today only about a thousand are known) and spread across the world. Witnesses created temples around the edges of the miasma as well as several other (usually remote) locations. There older Witnesses, and those resting from their travels, would train new generations as more were discovered.

While away from the temples Witnesses operate alone, or in groups of two or three. They often have the support of the Church but maintain a distance as allies, never taking orders from church officials. As such, it is rare but not uncommon for disagreements to occur between them and Priests of the Sovereign.

Witnesses train in various forms of melee combat, many choosing to emulate the Sovereign's own style using a large two handed blade. Witnesses pulled from a lifestyle that did not include a combative upbringing often have other Witnesses take them under their wing, or stay and train at a temple until such a time as they can competently defend themselves and others.

Aside from their martial skills, Witnesses are blessed with special power they call the Voice of the Sovereign. This can manifest in many ways, but most often gives Witnesses the ability to manipulate the world around them physically, as well as influence people and animals. There is many a story of a meek person, or even those unable to speak, suddenly gathering all attention with their speeches after becoming a Witness, or tales of children lifting objects simply by waving their hand.

People love to follow Witnesses. The most devoted of these, who follow the Witnesses everywhere they go, call themselves Pilgrims. Pilgrims are regular folk who have abandoned their lives to support one or more Witnesses while they travel The Sovereign's Path. Often this involves gathering supplies, aiding in religious ceremonies, connecting with various people in town to secure monetary assets or even simply just a place to sleep. In extreme cases, hundreds of

Pilgrims can be found following a single Witness, though this is usually only found near the southern borders in war-torn territories.

Chaplains are the self appointed bodyguards of a Witness. Unlike the regular citizenry who follow as Pilgrims, Chaplains are competent warriors who defend the Witness with their lives and who's loyalty is matched only by their zealotry. Some Witnesses despise Chaplains, as they see their existence as directly antithetical to the Witnesses role as defender of the people, but Chaplains argue that a Witness cannot defend the people if they are dead, and usually follow these Witnesses anyway.

Minority

Minority

Witches

There are more than a few people in the families who live in towns far from any cities or other large populations. From these small locations sprang the Covens of Witches. Witch Covens are generally small groups that meet exclusive of other Covens. In fact, the people forming the Covens were initially believed to be completely separate of one another until further study discovered that their beliefs were shared among each other, despite many of them never having knowledge of other Covens. While some scholars consider this coincidence and "shared experience", many take this as evidence of a greater connection currently unknown. The Covens themselves of course take this as affirmation of their beliefs.

Witches is the general term used for anyone within a Coven that follows the belief system of the Covens. There is no restriction as to who can call themselves a Witch, as long as they are actively practicing the rituals and prayers of the Covens.

Covens believe widely in the power of celestial bodies, and believe that a spirit or soul resides in every living thing. The moon is the most important aspect of the Covens beliefs and while they don't worship the moon in the traditional sense, they do believe that by performing certain rituals at certain times they can bring about good things (or bad things) in their lives or the lives of others.

Witches core belief is that everyone is connected to each other though the invisible fabric of the world and other celestial bodies, and as such spend much of their time helping those around them and generally making life better everywhere they can.

On rare occasions, Witches can be found with the ability to alter the natural world around them. Word of Healers in distant cities, or conjurers on the front lines of battle have got the church split on whether or not to consider these magics heretical.

Taboo

Taboo

The Worship of Mother Spider

Long ago, a group of Witches (from all over the families) split from their Covens. They began to form their own covens but what little research has been done into these new groups has discovered something sinister. These Witches had continued their veneration of the moon, but it had become more like traditional worship. In addition they began using spider iconography throughout their rituals and holy days and word began spreading of a being they called Mother Spider.

Mother Spider is still much of an enigma to scholars, as the Witches of these new Covens are very secretive and very rarely do they discuss their loyalties to this splinter group, much less display it openly. What could be gathered is that much of the original conceptual beliefs of the Witches remained, however they were adjusted to encompass this new figure, Mother Spider, who connects all living things.

Initially this splinter group was either unknown in the regions it operated or otherwise not seen as a problem (except by Covens of the original Witches), that is until an unfortunate case where an entire towns population vanished overnight, and the iconography of Mother Spider was left in and on every building. Since then, the Cult is widely seen as dangerous, and remains unwelcome in most spaces.