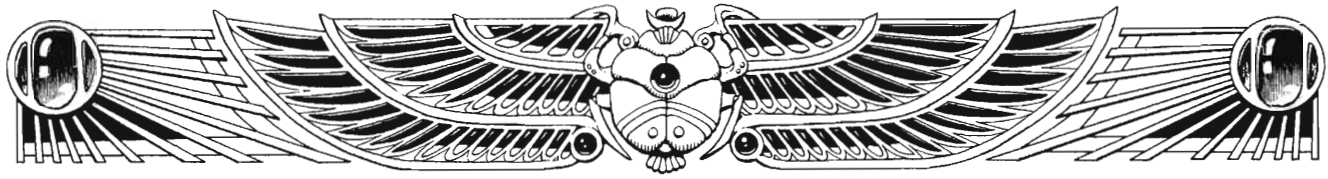




The Adept's Way

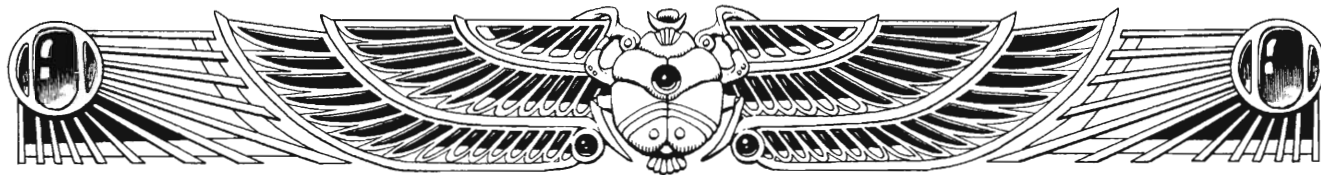
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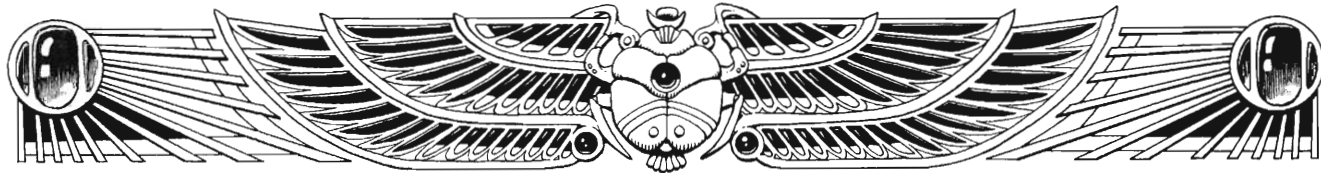
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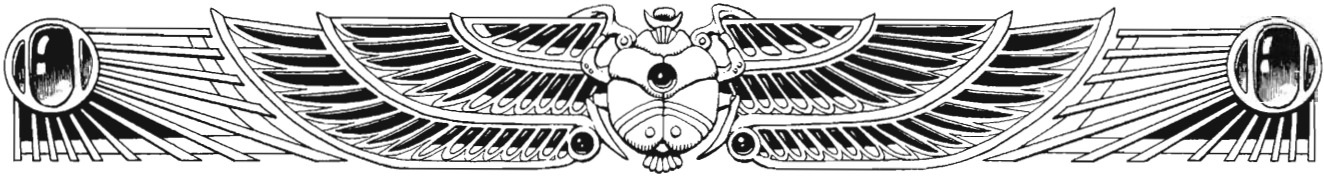
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ON THE COMPILATION OF THE ADEPT'S WAY

This text, *The Adept's Way*, is the latest offering from the Great Library of Throal in our continuing series exploring the nature of Barsaive through the eyes and voices of its people. This volume attempts to answer the vital question, What is the nature of the adept's way?, through personal testimonies of adepts who follow the most common Disciplines practiced in Barsaive. Indeed, we can only answer that question through personal accounts, for the true meaning of following a Discipline in present-day Barsaive is different for every adept.

The Adept's Way is a collection of essays written or dictated by adepts of each of the fifteen Disciplines most commonly practiced in Barsaive, in which the author describes how he sees his Discipline: its meaning, its demands, its symbols and rituals, and so on. Because we recognize that this book offers only one point of view for each Discipline, we encourage other adepts to read these passages and offer their own comments and insights. The Master of the Hall of Records and the staff of the Great Library have also added comments where appropriate.

CONCERNING DISCIPLINES EXCLUDED FROM THIS VOLUME

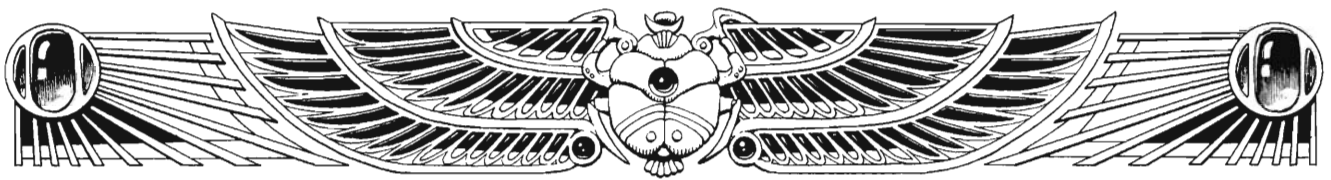
When Barsaivians speak of adepts, they usually mean a person who follows the most common Disciplines: the air sailor, archer, beastmaster, cavalryman, and all the others in this book. Other adepts practice other Disciplines in our land with equal devotion, however. One's practice of the adept's way is tied tightly to one's view of the world, and so there may be as many Disciplines as there are ways of seeing. Indeed, our assiduous research here at the library shows that each of the Name-giver races except for humans has developed Disciplines peculiar to adepts of that race: the traveled scholar among dwarfs, the woodsman among elves, the purifier among obsidimen, the liberator among orks, the outcast warrior among trolls, the boatman among t'skrang, and the wind-dancer, windmaster, and windscout among windlings. Many adepts view these racially oriented Disciplines as less significant than others, but no justification for that opinion can be found. All of these—and an infinite number that we have yet to discover—are true Disciplines whose practitioners adhere to the same ideals as do followers of the core Disciplines discussed in this volume. Unfortunately, a discussion of racially specific and less common Disciplines lies beyond the scope of this volume.

THE LEGEND OF THE FIRST HEROES

As a conclusion to this introduction, I leave the reader with one version of the legend of The First Heroes, which tells of the origins of the adept's way. Much as each race has a distinct version of the origins of life, each Discipline tells a traditional version of the origins of the adept's way.

For this story we must travel back to the beginning of time. The world had not yet been Named, for it had just been formed, created of Upandal's forge. In fact, it was still cooling, making it a hot and uncomfortable place for the races we now call the Name-givers. I phrase it so, for at this time our ancestors had not learned the secrets of Name-giving. They had not learned magic. They had not learned to make clothing, or grow food, or produce weapons for the hunt, or even to speak to one another. These poor folk had been created by an accident of some sort: some say our ancestors were born of Lochost's tears or the blood of Thystonius. At any rate, they suffered terribly. Their unclothed feet burned when they walked on the still-fiery ground. Their bellies ached with hunger. Their mouths cracked with thirst. Garlen wished with all of her being to nurture these new and pathetic creatures, but the other Passions refused her wishes. The other Passions were divided and had argued themselves to a standstill. Some felt that these new creatures marred the perfection of Upandal's creation. Others found the sufferings of these new beings interesting, and proposed that their condition merited further study. The Passions debated long and hard and came to no conclusion.





But among each of the eight races there was a brave hero. Each hero had tried to make life better for his or her race, but none had succeeded. Then these eight heroes gathered together and swore an oath to cooperate until, as a group, they discovered the secrets of living. Because they had tried to find the secrets of living in their world and had failed, the eight heroes knew they must try elsewhere. The eight heroes hatched a plan; they would sneak into the hall of the Passions in the sky and steal from their treasure vaults the secrets of living.

The eight heroes began by stealing the stars from the sky. From these they built a ladder, which they used to climb to the Passions' hall. Now the Passions knew that the eight heroes planned to invade their hall, so they prepared eleven ingenious trap rooms, one designed by each Passion. Garlen did not prepare a trap, for she was on the side of the Name-givers-to-be. As soon as the heroes passed safely through the traps (for which Garlen rejoiced), they divided their group to accomplish separate tasks. The human, elf, dwarf and windling heroes made their way to the vault where the secrets of living were stored. The others traveled to the debating room where the Passions still argued. The obsidiman, troll, ork and t'skrang heroes distracted the Passions while the first group gathered up the secrets of living. As the eight attempted to flee the hall, they were seized by the Passion who has now become Dis. As the Passions debated how to slay the eight heroes for their effrontery, Garlen interceded and freed the heroes to return to their races with their stolen prize. The eight gave the secrets of living to all the races: the secret of the bow, of the plough, of the corn seed, of working metal, of defense against monsters, of taming beasts, of Name-giving and many more secrets besides. The people on Upandal's world now knew how to live and how to survive in order to pass these secrets onto their sons and daughters.

When the Passions beheld the actions of the eight heroes and saw that they acted out of generosity rather than treachery, they were greatly moved. They summoned the eight heroes back to their hall, this time as honored guests. They announced that they were so impressed by the heroes' abilities, virtue and courage that they would reward the heroes with the Passions' final secret, that of the Adept's Way. They revealed to the eight heroes the secret of plucking fantastic abilities from the air, of performing great deeds of heroism, and of teaching these things to others. The eight heroes who stole the secrets of living from the Passions became the first adepts.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records, 1507TH

