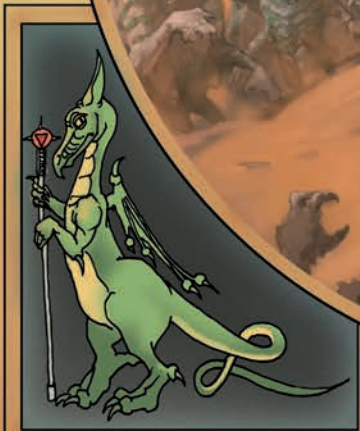


Ars Magica

# Between Sand & Sea

Mythic Africa



by Ferguson,  
Hayes, McFarland  
& Shirley



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## Chapter One

# Africa and Its People

Welcome to Mythic Africa!

This continent, occupying a full quarter of our habitable zone, is mostly unexplored by Mythic Europeans — and, in fact, by most Mythic Africans as well. Sandwiched between the Great Desert to the south and the Mediterranean Sea to the north is a region just barely inhabitable by humans, or so it seems. Despite the hostile environment, some of the largest and furthest reaching dynasties known to the world have originated in Africa, and their descendants dwell here still.

Herein are described the lands of Mythic Africa, as seen through the eyes of both Mythic Europeans and those who live here. This book can be used either for running stories where magi from Mythic Europe visit the mysterious continent across the sea, or as a setting for whole sagas with African characters. You will find here details of the geography, customs, and legends from the Atlantic coast to the Siwa Oasis — the whole of Mythic Africa except for Egypt and Ethiopia. The lands of the Nile differ sufficiently from the rest of Africa to warrant separate treatment, and will be detailed in a future supplement for *Ars Magica Fifth Edition*.

## The Shape of the World

The habitable zone in which Mythic Europe lies is a quarter of the sphere of the earth, divided by the meridian and the equator. It consists of three continents, and Africa is the one bounded by the Mediterranean sea to the north and

the River Nile to the east. The continent is named after the Roman province of Africa, a name preserved in the current Arab province of Ifriqiyeh. Its southern boundary is the Great Ocean that runs around the earth's equator, and the western limit is the Atlantic Sea. The existence of the Great Ocean has been deduced from indisputable logic rather than directly observed, since it lies at the center of a belt of intense heat and stunning dryness called the torrid zone.

The torrid zone is where the sun is closest to the earth, and it scorches the land directly around the equator. The northern limit of the torrid zone is a matter of debate, but most agree that it extends no further north than the Tropic of Cancer, and probably ceases well to the south of this limit. It is almost universally accepted by the Christian West and Arab scholars alike that Africa is limited to the northern side of the equator, that the equatorial ocean is unpassable, and that the torrid zone is uninhabitable. There have been expeditions into the fringes of the torrid zone both by land and by sea, and those who have returned have brought back stories of fabulous lands beyond the desert. Stories that might arise from entering the torrid zone are explored later in this book.

## Themes

Mythic Africa has two dominant themes: wonder and hunger. To the natives, elements relating to either theme are so commonplace that they are rarely noticed or mentioned, but to outsiders these themes should stand

out. Storyguides introducing Mythic Africa into a saga may wish incorporate elements from one or both of these themes, particularly during the characters' first experiences on the continent.

### A Note for Modern Readers

Some might be surprised to see that this book refers to a land called Africa, but covers only a fraction of the continent that currently bears that name. However, in the thirteenth century this was Africa, not North Africa. It was generally accepted that Africa had a southern shore on the Great Ocean somewhere north of the equator, but this had never been witnessed because the proximity of the sun to the equator formed a torrid zone that is hostile to all life. The black-skinned inhabitants of the continent are mostly Ethiopians who live on the fringes of the torrid zone. The historical empires and kingdoms of sub-Saharan Africa are relegated to legend, since in Mythic Africa they exist within or beyond the torrid zone. However, the border of the torrid zone is ill-defined and need not be at a constant latitude throughout its extent. At the option of the storyguide there may be regions beyond the Great Desert that can support human life, or else these lands could lie within regiones.

*Art & Academe* page 28 has a more complete discussion of the shape of the world in *Ars Magica Fifth Edition*, but pertinent material has been extracted here.