

The Lost Scrolls

When Prince Suhail brought the lost scrolls of Aj'Altair to Huzuz, he sparked a religious controversy that continues to this day. However, last night the scrolls were stolen by a radical sect. Not fully translated, the enchanted scrolls of Aj'Altair hold the promise of a revival of the Faith and an end to rising sectarian violence. However the true power of the scrolls is yet to be revealed...

Background

When the Loregiver traveled with Fate's message, she passed on a wealth of wisdom to the shepherds of the remote village Aj'Altair, who recorded it on sacred scrolls (see the *Teaching of Fate* tale in Appendix A). For centuries the humble people of Aj'Altair passed this sacred knowledge to their children, awaiting the coming of the First Caliph. However, the wisdom of the scrolls was anathema to the yak-folk whose sorcerers summoned an earthquake which swallowed the village temple the scrolls were housed in. Though the village elders did their best to relay the teachings to the First Caliph, he was young in his understanding of the Faith and unable to grasp their esoteric oral teachings. For a time, his court kept relations with Aj'Altair, who enjoyed their elevated status, but jealous sultans ended the relationship and in time the Caliphs forgot of Aj'Altair and the scrolls.

However, during the Great Unbinding the battles between the yak-folk and the dao unleashed a second quake which opened a deep fissure in the arid hills. While searching for a missing ewe, a shepherd girl named Etana found the fissure, and entered thinking she had discovered a water hole. Much to her surprise, she emerged amidst ruins of a temple wherein she discovered the lost scrolls. Immediately the girl recognized the wisdom held within and

returned to the village elders who decided the time had come to share them with Zakhara, and appointed Etana their keeper. However, Etana was suspicious of the greed of city men and so she decided to keep the knowledge among her village until a worthy champion arrived. To this end, the elders devised a test of character, awaiting the day that a pious Caliph would come.

Nearly a century would pass before Prince Suhail learned of the scrolls when converting hill tribes from the north. He searched for the scrolls for years until, desperate, he allowed himself to be captured by yak-folk and learned from them of Aj'Altair. Escaping, he traveled to the village and met the ancient Etana who he convinced to administer the test of character (see *Prince Suhail's Test* in Appendix A for one popular version of what occurred). Passing the test, Prince Suhail was entrusted with the scrolls, Etana's granddaughter Anjum accompanying him as an emissary of Aj'Altair. When he returned to Huzuz, Prince Suhail put the best translators to work deciphering the magical script with Anjum's assistance. As it became clear the scrolls challenged dominant beliefs about fate, clerics began to question their veracity and two powerful sects emerged around the most vocal imams. Conflict between these two sects has been on the rise, and Prince Suhail has been unwilling to reveal the scrolls until they are fully deciphered, fearing they would be misinterpreted.

To assuage the feuding imams, Prince Suhail planned to host a private viewing of the scrolls. However, after the feast when the Prince opened the sacred shrine housing them – the scrolls were missing! As palace guards searched for the thief, Anjum revealed that in the wrong hands the scrolls could be put to terrible use. Furious, the imams swore to find the scroll for themselves. Enter the PCs.

Character Hooks

- The PCs are approached by the Imam of the Great Mosque who seeks to avoid sectarian violence by recovering and translating the scrolls. Clerics and paladins serve as his direct representatives.
- The PCs seek the Tablets of Destiny for their own reasons (e.g. to change their fate or know the future), and their leads point toward the scrolls. Taking advantage of the theft they offer their services to Prince Suhail to recover the scrolls.
- The PCs have been framed by the Hand of Fate for the theft of the scrolls, taking advantage of their roguish reputations. If the PCs flee justice, Prince Suhail is their steadfast enemy. If the PCs turn themselves in, a hakima reveals they are innocent, and the Prince offers them a chance to get revenge on those who framed them.

Suggested Builds	
Cleric	Ethoist, Hakima, Moralistic, Pragmatist
Fighter	Any
Paladin	Faris
Ranger	Desert Rider
Rogue	Daroga, Holy Slayer
Warlock	Malaka's
Warlord	Amir, Sheikh
Wizard	Fateweaver, Philosopher Mage

Power Groups

There are four power groups that are after the scrolls, each with different interpretations of their meaning.

Prince Suhail believes the scrolls are meant to be shared with all of Zakhara, and that they will clarify long-standing questions about the nature of Fate, help resolve difficult judicial cases, and, most importantly, help lead him to the Tablets of Destiny where he can determine what shall befall his brothers if he is destined to

become Grand Caliph. Blinded by faith, he would risk everything to gaze upon the Tablets.

Anjum is actually the leader of the radical **Hand of Fate** sect which stole the scrolls, and she has become convinced Suhail is unworthy of bearing them. The sect seeks to restrict knowledge of the Loregiver's teachings on Fate to a select few, believing that their truth will be misconstrued or distorted by the unwise and greedy. Seeing themselves as the living instruments of Fate, they revere the Loregiver as a semi-divine being and regard the Grand Caliph suspiciously.

Imam Fadil is the head of a clerical sect known as the **Determinists**, whose tenets can be summed up by the saying, "the foremost energies cannot pierce the walls of foreordained destinies." Fadil is suspicious of the authenticity of the lineage of the scrolls, and has encouraged the belief among his followers that they are an elaborate illusion woven by shaitan. Of course, Fadil himself knows this isn't the case, but he is suspicious they contain pagan interpretations of the true Faith during its blossoming years, and could undermine the Zakharan way of life. However, once he sees the true power of the scrolls he will stop at nothing to ensure the Tablets of Destiny are untouched.

Imam Waseem is the head of a clerical sect known as the **Rationalists** who interpret fate as karma, implying that it is the logical reward of one's deeds by the gods, and that there is no such thing as destiny. Waseem's followers preach among society's destitute, prisoners, and those struck by misfortune, teaching them to take responsibility for their lot in life – they believe the scrolls explain the karmic nature of fate so clearly that none will be able to refute it. Waseem sought the scrolls in his youth, believing it was his destiny, traveling to distant Aj'Altair only to fail Etana's test. He suspects that either Suhail stole them or that the scrolls are forgeries of the actual artifact.

Complications

- Etana passes away and Anjum is declared Keeper of the Scrolls. She demands that should the PCs recover the scrolls, they return them to her. If her identity as leader of the Hand of Fate is discovered, the PCs face a quandary: harming her will impede learning the secrets of the scrolls.
- Yak-folk spies are sent to destroy the scrolls, forming a tenuous alliance with the Determinists.
- When the true power of the scrolls is revealed, the power groups find their objectives changing. Suhail is stunned, and seeks to keep the scrolls hidden from the public. Anjum becomes a fanatic, willing to give her life to protect the Tablets of Destiny and the scrolls. Fadil has a falling out with his followers; he seeks to protect the Tablets of Destiny and conceal the scrolls, while his followers seek their destruction. Waseem endorses Suhail's claim to the scrolls, believing it is the prince's destiny; his followers abandon him, seeking instead to recover the scrolls for the good of all.

Tiers of Play

At the **Heroic** tier, the PCs

At the **Paragon** tier, the PCs

At the **Epic** tier, the PCs

Deciphering the Scrolls

(Skill Challenge)

The Scrolls of Aj'Altair are described in the Artifact section of Chapter 8.

Scrolls of Aj'Altair

The *Scrolls* are appropriate for characters in the middle paragon-tier and upward. In order to use the *Scrolls*, a character must succeed at a skill challenge to translate them (see “Deciphering the *Scrolls*” in Chapter 1).

Scrolls of Aj'Altair

Paragon Level

A relic left behind by the Loregiver during her preaching, the Scrolls of Aj'Altair are a bundle of papyrus scrolls stored within a marble case whose seal reads “Your Fate is given” in Old Midani on the exterior and “Your Fate is chosen” on the interior. The mystical gilded writing seems to shine with inner light, illuminating the dark reaches of the mind.

Wondrous Item

Property: Gain a +1 item bonus to Will saves and Religion checks.

Property:

Power (At-Will * Divine, Implement): Standard Action.

Power (Encounter * Divine, Implement):

Power (Daily * Divine, Implement): Immediate Action. Target must keep the result of the roll they just made for all similar rolls for the rest of the encounter (e.g. attack rolls).

Goals of the Scrolls

- Challenge foolish and violent traditions like the blood feud, starving of young lovers, beating of dogs to dispel jinn, etc.
- Guide the despairing and bitter who have strayed back to the Faith.
- In time of need, reveal the Tablets of Destiny to a worthy champion.

Roleplaying the Scrolls

The *Scrolls of Aj'Altair* communicate through their writings, though never explicitly. When the owner turns a page, they may find a proverb which pertains to their present quandary, or an illuminating tale which suggests a bold course of action.

Concordance

Until its possessor successfully translates the mystical calligraphy on a skill challenge, the artifact has no concordance and the possessor doesn't gain any of its properties or powers. As their Concordance score increases, the owner can make out subtler calligraphy. Conversely, if their Concordance score decreases, the owner is dazzled by the calligraphy until it becomes blinding.

Starting score	5
Owner gains a level	+1d10
Owner successfully challenges a foolish or violent tradition	+2
Owner reads the original Law of the Loregiver kept in the Great Mosque	+2
Owner fulfills destiny/duty despite sacrifice	+2
Owner can <i>channel divinity</i>	+1
Owner helps restore a person's faith	+1
Owner denies their destiny or duty	-2
Owner engages in a foolish or violent tradition using religion as a pretext	-2
Owner harms/kills the Keeper of the Scrolls	-2/-4

Pleased (16-20)

“The Scrolls have revealed the true nature of Fate to me – it is both given and chosen.”

The *Scrolls*

Property: The *Scrolls'* bonus to Will saves and Religion checks increases to +5.

Power (Daily)

Satisfied (12-15)

“Clearly these words were divinely guided and the Scrolls have chosen me to share them.”

The *Scrolls*

Property: The *Scrolls'* bonus to Will saves and Religion checks increases to +2.

Power (Daily)

Normal (5-11)

“The Scrolls reveal only what I can see.”

Having deciphered the *Scrolls*, you realize that they bear more secrets than at first thought, and that what faith and wisdom you bring determines what the *Scrolls* reveal.

Unsatisfied (1-4)

"The Scrolls tell me what I knew all along."

Though the calligraphy of the *Scrolls* is dazzling, you can make out key phrases which confirm your beliefs about Fate (either that destiny is foreordained or that you control your destiny). The *Scrolls* fear your misunderstanding and are ready to disappear unless you open your mind.

Property: You take a -2 penalty to Will saves and Religion checks.

Special: When you read or draw upon the power of the *Scrolls* you are dazed for 1 round after.

Special: If you believe that your destiny is foreordained, once per day, when you

Special: If you believe that you control your destiny, once per day, when you roll a 5 or less on an attack roll or skill check, you must use that result for any subsequent similar attack roll or skill check for the rest of the encounter.

Angered (0 or lower)

"Agh! Its pages have blinded me!"

The *Scrolls'* calligraphy becomes blinding, infused with holy light.

Property: You take a -5 penalty to Will saves and Religion checks.

Special: Upon reading or drawing upon the power of the *Scrolls*, you are stunned for one round, and blinded for one encounter.

Special:

Moving On

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Lore