



RUNES

Runes are archetypes or powers. A magical rune has within it part of the potency of the force that it symbolizes. The Sun rune, for instance, draws upon the warmth and life-giving energy of the sun. When a rune is written, the real power of the magical image is present within it. Repetition of a rune does not weaken it, but strengthens its presence in the mortal plane.

To command a rune's power, a person must understand it as more than a symbol. To do this, most magicians seek to know the mysteries of a single magic entity. To learn a single rune and all its permutations of power is difficult, to master more than a few all but impossible. Even the greatest magician rarely tries to use a rune directly; instead, runes are the impersonal forces that empower magic. More than passing knowledge of the uses and meaning of the runes is high magic. Most humans must be content with knowing their own self-rune of Man in their lifetime.

Throughout Glorantha, perhaps thousands of distinct runes are known. Many systems exist, each with **entity runes** unique to its pantheon or philosophy. Each system classifies and organizes the runes its own way, but most recognize a few runes of primal importance. These are the high or **core runes**, usually claimed as the ultimate reality of Glorantha. They are the building blocks of the cosmos, of which all that exists is a manifestation or inflection. All beings that have reached a certain level of psychic development are runic creatures in and of themselves—all humans are living representatives of the Man rune.

Entity Runes

Every religion uses its own runic system to identify and call upon the powers of its deities, spirits, or saints. Each such entity has its own rune that represents and concentrates its magic powers. Throughout this book, individual runes can be found near the magic keyword of each religion, deity, spirit, or saint.

The God Learners traced individual runes back to combinations of core runes. They thus made correspondences between entities of different religions whose individual runes differed, but whose core runes were identical. This is one of the types of magic they abused, and the practice is avoided by most modern Gloranthans, who wish to avoid the God Learners' fate.

The Core Runes

The best-known of Glorantha's runic systems was developed by the God Learners of Jrustela. They called them the **core runes**, and believed them to be the primal runes that empowered all of the other, lesser runes. Some of the concepts of this runic system are common to most peoples; others are almost unique to it. In theory, any feat, spell, or other magic power can be represented by a series of core runes that it draws upon.

The core runes are thirty, divided into five classifications. The **five worlds** map relationships between the Mortal World, magic, and the Other Side. The **five elements** are the raw matter

used to create the physical world, while the **ten ancient polarities** are the powers that compose the Other Side. The **five movements** determine the interactions of matter and energy and the patterns the other runes create. Lastly, the **five forms** can be seen as the inhabitants of the worlds, the basic forms of life whose creation is the ultimate expression of the other runes.

The Five Worlds

Unique in Gloranthan history, the God Learners were able to perceive and explore all of the planes of the Other Side. While codifying the four magic systems portrayed in this book, they saw that the Five Worlds were the basic divisions of the universe, and thus believed them to be the most powerful of the runes. These runes, sometimes identified as the magic runes, are almost unknown outside the God Learner system. Each simultaneously designates a philosophy, a world, a magical power, and an essential transcendent philosophy.

The Five Worlds		
Rune	Name/World	Type of Magic
☘	Mortal World	Innate Magic
☼	God World	Theism
☚	Spirit World	Animism
☞	Essence Planes	Wizardry
☉	—	Mysticism

The Ten Ancient Polarities

The ancient polarities represent abstract forces commonly referred to as powers. They are said to symbolize the ancient Gloranthan Court, identified by different magic systems as the first deities, spirits, laws, or essences. They are opposed in pairs that contest against and/or balance one another to shape existence. The God Learners recognized the power runes as the primal energies that make up the Other Side.

The Ten Ancient Polarities			
Rune	Name	Rune	Name
☺	Harmony, Healing	☹	Disorder
☳	Movement, Change	☰	Stasis, Stability
☱	Fertility, Life	☲	Death, Conflict
☶	Truth	☵	Illusion
☴	Cosmos, Law	☱	Chaos

The Five Elements

The elemental runes are the basic materials that make up the Mortal World. They are the raw and lifeless essence, inert until acted upon by other forces, at which point their potential for creation was realized. They are the ground people walk on, the air they breathe, the water they drink, the sun's light, and the darkness where the other elements are not. Some systems recognize different elements, but these Five Elements of the God Learners are known in most places as the basic substances.

The Five Elements	
Rune	Name
●	Darkness
~	Water
□	Earth
☉	Fire/Sky
☼	Air/Storm

The Five Movements

The movements represent the most primal manipulations of the runes. All forms of worship of and interaction between runes can be seen to stem from these five actions. At least, so claimed the God Learners, who used them to show what aspect of a form, element, or power or world was expressed by an entity.

The Five Movements	
Rune	Name
≡	Equal Exchange, Trade
♁	Recreation, Rebirth
⊖	Balance, Moon
☉	Annihilation, Void
Y	Unequal Exchange, Theft

The Five Forms

The forms characterize the living beings of the Mortal World. They are the basic molds that were used to populate the worlds. Although theoretically each species or type of being has its own unique rune, the God Learners recognized that these five runes depicted the most basic forms taken by life in the Mortal World, including Otherworld beings found as part of the landscape.

The Five Forms	
Rune	Name
⊞	Mineral
♁	Plant
♂	Animal
♂	Man, Human
♁	Otherworld Being

Magical Ability Runes

Most magical abilities seem to channel power from a small pool of runes—basic magical concepts like *Death* or *Fire* or *Military Might*. Although each people uses its own rune to represent a concept, in *HeroQuest* we use a single set of runes to identify broad magical concepts. Many come from the core runes, but those that do not are listed below.

Additional Magical Ability Runes			
Rune	Name	Rune	Name
℞	Magic, Common Magic	≡	Family
☉	Awareness, Perception	♁	Anti-Chaos
□	Defense, Protection	♂	Victory
☼	Blessing	☉	Thunderstone
Y	Literacy, Writing	♁	Orlanth Allfather
≡	Wilderness	⊞	Mastery (see pages 10, 19)
♁	Hunting	♂	Crafting, Making
⊞	Ernalda Allmother		

Other Runic Systems

Different places in the world have different runic systems, depending on the power matrix that was established before the Dawn and later modified according to their histories. The most powerful of these other systems are known in the West, where the wizards and sorcerers codify the laws of the universe as runes; and in Kralorela, where the mystics categorized the distractions. Dragon Pass, being the crossroads of the continent, had a very fluid system that changed as new invaders or settlers arrived.

Several runes are used in this book that are not explained here or elsewhere, and they are listed in the table below.

Other Runes			
Rune	Name	Rune	Name
♁	Geeteey, the Glorantha Tribes Assembled (5 variations)	♁	Prax, Praxians (see also page 145)
℞	Luck (see also page 10)	⊞	Kralorela, Kralori Pantheon
✱	Fate (see also page 10)	☉	Blood Sun
∧	Force (see also page 186)	☉	Teshnos, Teshnos Pantheon
∞	Infinity	Y	Wolf Pirates
♁	Heort, Heortlings	♁	Dara Happa, Solar Pantheon
♁	Hrestol, the Hrestoli Church	□	Imarja, Esrolia, Earth Pantheon (see also page 111)
♁	Arkat	♂	Aeolian Church, the Esrolvuli (see also page 167)
⊞	Rokar, the Rokari Church (see also page 169)	♁	Majestic Horses Tradition, Grazers (see also page 143)
⊞	Pelandan Pantheon, Pelandans	♂	Dragonewt