

## Bookmaker Lifepaths for the Burning Wheel



Miniature of Vincent de Beauvais in a manuscript of his *Speculum Historiale*, c. 1478–1480

“He who does not know how to write imagines it to be no labour, but although these fingers only hold the pen, the whole body grows weary.”

– Montalembert, citing an unknown scribe

By the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, the codex – a book made of separate pages bound between hard covers – had replaced the scroll as the dominant form of book. Indeed, we now refer to codices simply as ‘books’, and scrolls are thought of as something else entirely. In Medieval Christian Europe, monasteries were the dominant producers of codices, while in the Islamic world similar work was done by secular professionals. The Lifepaths below are meant to represent those two systems – they can be used in conjunction or separately. To avoid confusion where it might arise, I have given the Monastic Lifepaths Latin names and the Secular Lifepaths English names.

Following the Lifepaths, two new Skills (Papermaking and Bookbinding) are described, as well as the new Marginalia-wise.

The last page of the document is a short note explaining the logic behind the choice of certain Traits, Skills and Leads. The Lifepaths were inspired by two great novels. Umberto Eco’s *Il Nome della Rosa* (*The Name of the Rose*), a murder mystery set a 14<sup>th</sup> century Italian monastery famous for its library, was the inspiration for the Monastic Bookmaker Lifepaths. *Ben Adım Kırmızı* (*My Name is Red*), by Orhan Pamuk, spiritual successor to *The Name of the Rose*, inspired the Secular Bookmaker Lifepaths. *My Name is Red* is also a historical murder mystery involving books – it is set in 16<sup>th</sup> century Istanbul and focuses on a group of a miniaturists, that is, illustrators. I hope my attachment to these books has not clouded my good judgement, however; these Lifepaths are intended for the historical stickler and as such I tempered my literary inspiration with real research.

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The Scribe Lifepath already present in the City Setting can be used alongside the Monastic Bookmaker Lifepaths below, in which case it represents a less specialized occupation dedicated to the production of unbound manuscripts. I recommend omitting it if you are using the Secular Bookmaker Lifepaths, since it becomes redundant. In this case, allow Calligrapher to count as Scribe for the purpose of fulfilling Lifepath requirements.

If the Monastic Bookmaker Lifepaths are used, the Cloistered Monk Lifepath should be added to the Religious Setting – it is the same in all but name to the Cloistered Nun Lifepath included in the Burning Wheel. If you wish to distance your game from the institutional sexism of Medieval Europe, you may have Cloistered Nun count as Cloistered Monk for the purpose of fulfilling the Lifepath requirements below.

If you use any of these Lifepaths, you should add the Papermaker Lifepath to the City Setting:

Lifepath	Time	Resources	Stat	Leads
Papermaker <sup>1</sup>	5 years	16	+1 M and +1 P	Religious*

*Skills:* 4pts: Papermaking, Read, Jargon, Paper-wise

*Traits:* 1pt: Systematic

1: Papermaker requires Apprentice.

\* This Lead should only be used alongside the Monastic Bookmaker Lifepaths. Omit it if you are using only the Secular ones.

## Monastic Bookmaker Lifepaths

These Lifepaths are found in the Religious Setting.

Lifepath	Time	Resources	Stat	Leads
Ligator <sup>1</sup>	3 years	6	+1 M	City

*Skills:* 4pts: Bookbinding, Mending, Read, Paper-wise

*Traits:* 1pt: Mind-Numbing Work

Scriptor <sup>2</sup>	5 years	10	+1 M	City
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*Skills:* 4 pts: Calligraphy, Read, Ink-wise, Marginalia-wise

*Traits:* 1 pt: Cramped Hands *or* Red-stained Hands (see Note, below)

Illuminator <sup>3</sup>	6 years	13	+1 M	City
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Illuminations, Read, Marginalia-wise

*Traits:* 2pts: Disturbed, Near-Sighted, Perspective

Bibliothecarius <sup>4</sup>	11 years	45	+1 M	City, Noble Court
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*Skills:* 7 pts: Book-Wise, Read, Research, Ancient and Foreign Languages, History

*Traits:* 2 pts: Hates Pests and Mold, Bookworm

1: Ligator requires Apprentice Artisan, Cloistered Monk or Papermaker.

2: Scriptor requires Cloistered Monk, Clerk, Illuminator, Ligator or Student.

3: Illuminator requires Apprentice Artisan or Cloistered Monk.

4: Bibliothecarius requires Archivist, Illuminator, Scholar or Scriptor.

Upon taking any of these Lifepaths a character gains the trait Tonsured unless they already possess it. (This should really also apply to the Abbot/Abbess Lifepath in the Burning Wheel...)

## Secular Bookmaker Lifepaths

These Lifepaths are found in the City Setting.

Lifepath	Time	Resources	Stat	Leads
Bookbinder	3 years	8		

*Skills:* 3pts: Bookbinding, Paper-wise

*Traits:* 1pt: -

Calligrapher <sup>1</sup>	7 years	19	+1 M	Noble Court
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*Skills:* 5 pts: Calligraphy, Read, Ink-wise, Pen-wise, Handwriting-wise

*Traits:* 2 pts: Honored

Miniaturist <sup>2</sup>	6 years	15	+1 M	Outcast
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*Skills:* 4 pts: Illuminations, Soothing Platitudes, Great-Masters-wise, Ink-wise

*Traits:* 2pts: Perfectionist, Near-Sighted

Master <sup>3</sup>	9 years	35	+1 M	Noble Court
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*Skills:* 7 pts: Instruction, Artisan-wise, Materials-wise, Book-wise

*Traits:* 2 pts: Severe, Ambitious

1: Calligrapher requires Apprentice Artisan, Bookbinder, Clerk, Papermaker or Student.

2: Miniaturist requires Apprentice Artisan, Bookbinder or Papermaker.

3: Master requires Calligrapher or Miniaturist; it fulfills the pre-requisites for Scholar.

### Marginalia-wise

Marginalia are the commentaries, critiques, annotations, notes, scribbles, doodles and illuminations found in the margins of codices. This Wise allows a character to interpret such marks, as well as to differentiate original illuminations from later additions. It follows the Obstacles for Wises given in the Burning Wheel.

### Papermaking

Papermaking is the art of making paper in its various forms. In Medieval Europe paper made from mashed cotton or linen came to replace the papyrus of Antiquity. Higher quality paper was made of stretched animal skins called parchment. The best paper was made from the pliable skins of young animals and called vellum. Before being written on, paper was primed with size, a binding agent.

*Obstacles:* Papyrus Ob 1, Pulp-paper Ob 2, Parchment Ob 3, Vellum Ob 4. These obstacles assume yellowish or tan-colored paper. White paper is +1 Ob.

*FoRKs:* Paper-wise

*Skill Type:* Craftsman

*Tools:* Size (expendable), pulp-vat and paper-press for pulp-paper, stretching rack for parchment and vellum.

## **Bookbinding**

Bookbinders take sheets of paper and bind them to each other and to codex-covers with thread and glue. High-quality Medieval European codices were lined before being handed over to the scribes: writing lines provide +1 D to calligraphy tests to fill the book. The Bookbinding skill does not cover the making of scrolls. Obstacles rise with the size of the pages and the quality of the cover.

*Obstacles:* Octodecimo Ob 1, Sextodecimo Ob 2, Duodecimo Ob 3, Octavo Ob 4, Folio Ob 5, writing lines +1, wood cover +1, metal cover +2 Ob.

*FoRKs:* Papermaking, Paper-wise, Book-wise

*Skill Type:* Craftsman

*Tools:* Needles, thread, glue and book-covers (all expendable) and a small press.

## Explanatory Note

### Monastic Bookmakers

For Monastic Bookmakers, the Calligraphy skill is understood to include the art of rubrication. Rubrication, from the latin *rubrico* – “I color red” – is the addition of headings and over-sized initial letters in red ink to the black ink manuscripts already written out by scribes. In the later Medieval period blue and green ink were increasingly used. Though many scriptoria (a book-making workshop in a monastery) had specialized rubricators, in the Lifepaths above the occupation is understood to fall under Scriptor. The option to trade Cramped Hands for Red-Stained Hands is intended to represent characters who worked as specialized rubricators.

### Secular Bookmakers

“Verily, the first to be created by Allah was the pen.”  
– from the *Jami' at-Tirmidhi*

In the Medieval Islamic world, calligraphers held a position of honour and importance. This has been attributed to the centrality of the Qur'an as well as to the association of figurative art with idolatry. The Honoured trait in the Calligrapher Lifepath above represents this. Islamic calligraphers did not practice rubrication like their Christian counterparts – hence the absence of Red-Stained Hands. The association of figurative art with idolatry is the reason why the Perspective trait is found only with the Illuminator and not with the Miniaturist. Islamic miniaturists tended to portray the world with a “God’s eye view”, without any foreshortening or reduction in size of distant objects. Even using this method, miniaturists worked on the edge of blasphemy, hence the Lead to Outcast. Though Islam placed great importance on the written word, the observant reader will notice that there is no Lead from Calligrapher or Master to the Religious Setting. This is because the Religious Setting presented in the Burning Wheel represents Medieval Western European Christianity and the link therefore seemed out of place. The prestige of these Lifepaths, however, is reflected in their Leads to the Noble Court.



Miniature of a Palace Scene, Mir Sayyid Ali  
1539-1543