

Nations of Théah: Book Five

Castille

TM

by Patrick Kapera



7th Sea

TM

~ 1668 ~

Roleplaying Game



Castille™



*"Live every moment as if it were your last.
Only then can you see the blessings Theus has wrought."
— Don Andrés Bejarano del Aldana*

From her vaulted universities to her spired churches, Castille is a land of contradictions. Scientific advancement proceeds despite the efforts of an Inquisition dedicated to stamping it out. Celebrations take place mere miles from blood-soaked battlefields. The citizens love their neighbors as family, while treating foreigners with clinical distrust. Here, two thousand years of invasion and occupation has left her people wounded, proud, and fiercely independent; a boy king totters on an unstable throne while enemies surround him without and within; and sinister conspiracies lurk behind wide smiles and passionate speeches. Welcome to Castille, the crucible of faith.

The *Castille* sourcebook includes:

- A complete history of the country, from their early days as an Old Republic colony to the current war with Montaigne.
- Detailed descriptions of the land, its people and their culture — including bullfighting, dancing, and Castillian duels.
- New rules for Castillian Heroes: fighting schools, rules for bullwhips, new skills and advantages, and the enigmatic fire magic *El Fuego Adentro*.
- Plus, a section on the Vaticine Church, with new information never before published!

AEG 7203



Wizards Entertainment Group

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Castille

The Seat of Theus



*We assumed they were weak.
We assumed they were broken.
We could not have been more wrong.*

– Gerald Bunois, Chief of Espionage for the Empereur of Montaigne







7th Sea

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to Les Simpson, a friend to AEG and a closer friend to me, and to John Glenn, who deserves better than he gets. We appreciate you John, even when it doesn't feel like it.

– Pat



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Turning the Tide

“Retreat!?” General du Toille screamed at his cringing lieutenants. “I’d no sooner retreat from this rabble than I would surrender to their infant king!”

The first rays of sunlight had yet to stream across the general’s tent, but the ridge beyond could be clearly seen. Across the barren fields of Rancho Zepeda, just out of range of their biggest guns, stood an engineering marvel the likes of which none of the Montaigne army had had seen – a wall stretching across the horizon, dotted with dozens of loaded cannon and lines of soldiers waiting for fresh targets.

“They must have built it while we were putting down those skirmish units, sir,” one of the general’s braver underlings put forth.

“Nonsense!” du Toille returned. “It is a bluff, nothing more.” He rubbed the still-healing scar on his forehead and dared the man to contradict him. The gathered officers shuffled their feet nervously. No one had dared ask him about the wound, which he suffered in the first days of fighting, but ever since it had appeared, the general’s moods had been... erratic.

“Sir,” the brave one began again, “the hardpoints are solid stone, and even the abatis between them look impenetrable. Perhaps the wall can be circumvented or —”

“It stretches the length of the front, you ridiculous man!” He removed his hat and pointed out the open tentflap. “All the more reason to doubt its strength. The Castellians cannot possibly hold the entire length of that wall; we must simply find the weakest link in the chain, and strike there.”

“Sir, please,” the lieutenant tried one final time. “We’ve taken most of the peninsula. A strategic retreat might—”

“You’re relieved,” du Toille barked. “We will not retreat. We are Montaigne! The world is ours! Am I clear?”

The remainder of the officers nodded.

“Good. Send in the scouts.”




On the other side of the field, atop the wall that had taxed the limits of his people’s engineering, General Don Jose Rioja de Montoya del Castillo watched the Montaigne scouts slowly probe for position. For weeks, he had played a dangerous game with the invaders: striking, retreating, striking again. He had been cut off from the capital and driven like a hunted fox to the southern end of Rancho Zepeda. But he had survived. His army had avoided the devastating onslaught of General du Toille and remained intact throughout the campaign. Now, all of that was about to pay off. He smiled grimly.

“Montegue isn’t here to help you any more. Your war stops here.”

He turned to his own lieutenant, who stood behind him at attention. “It won’t be long now. Three hours, four at the most. Tell the men to be ready – and tell them that the butcher of San Juan commands the enemy.”

The officer nodded, and turned to go. Before he did, Montoya caught the gleam of hatred in the young man’s eye. Every soldier on the wall had heard what happened in San Juan. Montoya wanted them to remember that when the battle began.



Introduction



Three hours later, with little sleep and less determination, the Montaigne army mobilized. Lines of cannon came forth, dragged behind rows of sturdy pack-horses, and prepared for the siege. Ranks of soldiers – mounted and on foot – drew up at several spots along the wall. Only a few of these areas were potential targets. The rest were kill-zones, where the youngest and least skilled were posted.

Du Toille stood just behind the line, watching them advance. The wall seemed sound, but scouts reported a central spot where the cannons were fewer. With numbers on his side, he could press them on all sides, then send his best men to overpower the weak point. He smiled in anticipation and raised his handkerchief above his head.

“Begin the attack!”

Spreading out across the fields before La Muralla al Ultimo like a wave of wild boars, the bulk of the Montaigne troops surged forward. The cannons on the wall exploded into fire, only to be answered by the Montaigne artillery to the rear. Great spouts of earth flew up and men screamed and died. But the Montaigne pressed forward, new soldiers replacing the fallen. The fire from the wall was fearsome, but the invaders advanced steadily.



General Montoya observed the battlefield, watching his cannon tear into the enemy. The artillery crews did their work well, aiming their grapeshot at the thickest clusters of troops. The Montaigne fell left and right, scattering the battlefield like dolls on some monstrous playground. Even so, the line moved steadily forward, and the Montaigne grew closer to his defense.

“You’ve spread your men thin, du Toille,” he whispered to himself. “Why? You’re not so mad as to think you can overpower me...” He scanned the field, willing himself to

ignore the horrors he saw and looking for the pattern beneath them. Groupings of troops, the ebb and flow of their advance... anything he could use to gain the advantage

“Too thin... you’re spread too thin...” he murmured. “Why would you attack me on so many points...?”

The crack of musket fire interrupted his thoughts. The first Montaigne had reached the wall. He smiled as he watched them fall to Castillian sharpshooters. After that cannons, there weren’t enough surviving Montaigne to breach the wall. He listened as sharpshooters all along the line did their grisly work, halting the advance at the foot of the wall.

All along the line...

“He’s going to make a push!” he barked suddenly. “He’s engaged us all along the line, so we can’t shore up any breach!” He turned to the nearest soldier, a grimy-faced gunner who worked the nearest cannon.

“Tell them to watch for a spearhead!” he yelled. “Spread the word – he’s going to try to break the weakest link!”



Du Toille watched with satisfaction as the battle pressed forward. The entire length of the wall was engaged, every gunner and musketeer busy trying to throw back the advance. Excellent. As long as he could keep shoveling troops at them, there was no way they could stop the spearhead.

“For *l’Empereur*,” he whispered, “for Montaigne.”

He let the handkerchief fall from his upraised hand. The signal for the Musketeers to attack.



A single regiment of men leapt forward, aiming for a low segment of the wall. The tabards they wore had the seal of the Sun King emblazoned on the front. Musketeers.

General Montoya screamed for his men to redirect their fire. "There!" he cried. "Focus your attacks there!"

Montaigne cannon swiveled to cover their approach, and the rest of the troops turned to support them. Castillians pitched forward off the wall, their bodies torn asunder by the fire. A Musketeer leapt over the wall; Montoya fired his pistol into the blazing crest, and the man crumpled before him.

For a single terrifying moment, time stood still. The smell of battle intensified and he watched the red bloom across the fallen Musketeer's chest like a rose. *In a minute*, he thought. *Another man will take his place. Then another. Then another. The line will fall...* The slow rumble of cannon seemed to punctuate his doom.

But it wasn't the Montaigne cannon that fired. The sound came from either side of him, as the Castillian gunners turned their fury on the invaders. As he watched wide-eyed, the Musketeers scattered like leaves, the rain of pitch and powder falling mercilessly around them. The narrow channel of their approach exploded with craters, and the push which had been a breath away from breaching them had melted like snow. A canister dropped in the heart of the Musketeers' ranks and they fell away from it in bloody heaps. Behind them, the smoke masked the sight of Montaigne soldiers falling away from the wall. The musket fire diminished, then silenced altogether as the enemy passed out of range.

"They're retreating..." Montoya whispered, almost in disbelief. "...they're retreating..."



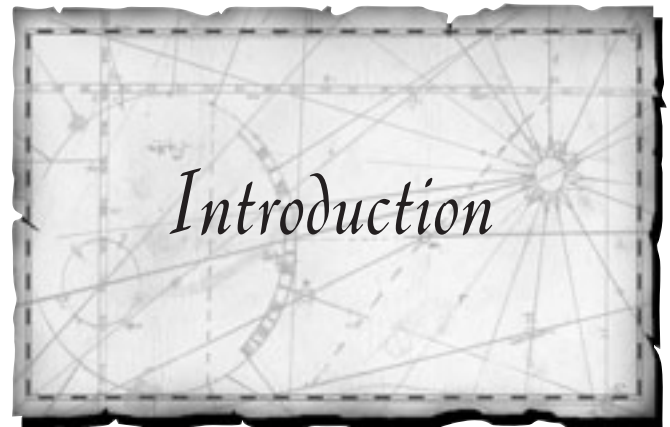
"No!" du Toille screamed as his forces fled past him. Wave after wave of Montaigne troops flew by, most dusty and bleeding. Commanding officers tried to establish order, but could only manage to bring the semblance of an organized retreat. Du Toille quivered with rage. Raising his riding crop, he smote the nearest soldier on the ear.

"Get back to the wall, you coward!" he shouted. The soldier ignored him and kept running. Du Toille howled in impotent fury as his army continued to drop away.



The cheers of the Castillian army echoed upon the ramparts of the Last Wall for days. For the first time since the Montaigne invasion, the people of Castille had something to celebrate.

They had staved off the inevitable.



When one speaks of passion in Théah, of loyalty, of fierce dedication beyond the call of duty, one inevitably speaks of Castille. Castillians live life to the fullest, taking every experience as if it were their last. It is the foundation of the Vaticine Church and has been its capital for six hundred years. It houses the greatest universities in the world, spearheading scientific advancement. While other Théans see them as cold and distrustful, their hearts beat strong and proud. They are the epitome of devotion, the personification of life.

At its heart, Castille cherishes nothing so much as tradition. Its long history of foreign occupation, religious strife, and political upheaval has taught it to upon its rich cultural identity and strong heritage to survive. Even when things

Introduction

are at their worst, Castillians practice siesta, attend mass, and entertain extended family. These are the things that make Castille unique. But Castille is a nation divided. Divided by invasion, divided by hatred, divided by fear. The Montaigne have swept through the western peninsula, claiming nearly all of it as their own. Two-fifths of the nation's populace is once again witnessing their way of life challenged by a foreign power.

The Church is suffering internal turmoil as well. With the Hierophant dead and the Cardinals missing, the Vaticine religion suffers a power vacuum that is being slowly filled by the Inquisition, an unyielding force that threatens many of the disciplines that Castille holds dear. Scholarly pursuits – for which Castille has become known across Théah – are being classified “heretical” and stifled or snuffed out. Knowledge and enlightenment are slowly being replaced by ignorance and fear. Combined with the Montaigne invasion, the Inquisition has tested this country's proud heart as none before it.

Castille is a nation torn asunder, but her people have over two thousand years of folklore and regiment to fall back on. Their entire culture is centered around the premise that it is *their* culture, free of interference from foreigners or tyrants. Now, war threatens that careful balance, and it is uncertain how much, if anything, they will retain. But they keep fighting with strength and determination, and with the absolute faith that Theus will see them through. As the Montaigne have learned, that's harder to destroy than it looks.

This book is organized into five chapters. We'll start with **Castille** and look at the families and places that make up the nation, as well as its culture, government, economics, and present state. In **Hero**, we'll look at some of the nation's most important people, including NPCs from the nobility, military, and elsewhere. **Drama** gives you new mechanics and additional rules for making Castillian heroes, and introduces a new style of sorcery: *El Fuego Adentro*. **Brotherhood** discusses the finer points of roleplaying a Castillian, and presents a section which is for GMs only, and contains many secrets that players will not want to read.

Lastly, the **Appendix** gives you some useful graphics, such as Admiral Orduño's flagship and a map of the riverport city of Altamira, along with four new character templates that are ready to play.

So if you are ready to embrace life to the fullest, turn the page and begin your journey into the heart of ancient Théah, where faith and family are more important than gold.







Castille

Into the Abyss, Part One

The lieutenant's horse vaulted across a low wall and into the fields outside of Barcino, mere minutes ahead of the approaching army. His steed was young, scarcely trained, and ill-prepared for such treatment, but it couldn't be helped; the people of Castille had to be warned.

Montaigne had invaded.

They had appeared out of nowhere, emerging from the plains surrounding Rancho Ochoa without warning. In one devastating foray, three small teams of Montaigne Musketeers had stalked the halls of the Ochoa Palace, moving from room to room with practiced precision, sending the entire northern defensive line into chaos.

The Ochoa patriarch, Don Santafiel Ontiveros, was safe, extracted from his occupied lands by Don Zepeda. By now, both men were riding inland, away from the sudden march of Montegue's army, to prepare a proper defense.

But someone had to warn the northern cities along the Great River of the danger that loomed so close at hand. Someone had to give Castille's northern border a fighting chance...

"Invasion!" the messenger screamed as he entered Barcino's gates. "The Montaigne! Invasion!"

Castille had long feared an invasion from the heathen Empeureur and his Porté-wielding dogs, in retaliation for the Inquisition's attack upon his capital city of Charouse.

Defenses had been reinforced all along the Great River – new barricades had been erected, Vaticine guard details had been doubled, and each of Castille's cities and towns along the waterway had been fortified.

Which made the surprise assault upon Rancho Ochoa all the more difficult to accept. From all indications, the attack had come from *within* the palace itself – an impossibility. As the northernmost family of the Castillian government, the Ochoas were the most vulnerable, and their lands were patrolled accordingly. How could one hundred and fifty mounted troops – openly wearing the sun of the Montaigne army – have possibly slipped through...?

The messenger narrowly dodged a Castillian craftsman, whose face was already tight with alarm, and plunged into the city's narrow side-streets on a bee-line for the nearest guard tower. If he could reach the city's warning bells in time, perhaps the Montaigne troops on his heels could be deflected.

Skirting the ramp to the northern wall, he bent low over his steed's mane, trying to will the beast forward. Below him could be seen the glimmering roofs of Barcino's houses and shops, and endless rows of docks that seemed to fall into the Frothing Sea...

...where a Montaigne fleet bore down upon the idle port, ignoring the warships moored around Barcino's northwestern hub. Behind and among the invading galleons were the flaming, partly submerged wrecks of several other Castillian ships, their crews scrambling for lifeboats or swimming back to shore.

Why weren't the city's defenders fighting back? Where were the troops that had garrisoned Barcino just a week ago?

Before the messenger could ponder this any further, the high bridge was rocked by nine hundred pounds of shot. The guard tower in front of him crumbled and collapsed into the river, showering mist on both sides and temporarily obscuring the messenger's vision. When it fell, it was clear...

Tomorrow a foreign sun would rise over Barcino.



History

“History is written by the victorious, studied by the defeated, and forgotten by the rebellious.”

— Captain Allende

The history of Castille is complicated in that – until recent times – it was not written by Castellians. Much of the history of Castille, known as “Castillo” (Kah-stee-yo) in the native language, has been written by the societies that invaded and occupied it over the centuries. Castille is a living testament to the impact of these ancient cultures upon the face of Théah.

Ancient History

Acraga: The Early Ages

Early in Théah’s history, the region that eventually become Castille was called Acraga, and was populated by semi-nomadic hunter-gatherer tribes. They lived primarily as game hunters, cattle and sheep herders, fishermen, and wild fruit and vegetable gatherers. They dwelt in the forests south of the River, and along the fertile banks of the Rio de Delia and Rio de Dios. Coastal settlements were also common, especially along the beaches of La Boca de Cielo, and the southeastern peninsula facing Vodacce, where trade relations prospered with merchants of the cultures that would become the Old Republic. Because there were few natural barriers, the people mingled freely with traders and

other foreigners, a trend that would continued throughout the region’s history.

AUC 228–268: The First Invasion

The first invasion by a foreign power came when the Republic spread its influence (socially and militarily) throughout Théah. The conquest of Acraga began peacefully enough, as the natives of the Old Empire (the realm now known as Vodacce) forged a mutually-beneficial trade agreement with the early natives along the realm’s southern coastline.

Acraga welcomed the Republic’s advances in technology, education, culture, language, and military knowledge. Troops from Numa (the Old Empire) were regularly dispatched to escort Acragan trade vessels and caravans, and some were even loaned to Acragan settlements as garrison protection.

AUC 268–344: The Acragan Wars

Early on, the trade agreement between Numa (the Old Empire) and Acraga was strong, and both regions flourished. With the advanced resources of the Numan coastal navy to help them, the Acragans quickly opened new trade routes in other directions – mainly to the north, in the regions that would become Montaigne, Eisen, and Ussura now reside.

But these newfound trade alliances cost the Acragans greatly. Numa wanted this trade as their own, and Acraga stood directly in their way. Since the beginning of their agreement with the Acragans, the Numans had intended to seize the fertile trade routes through the gulflands, and had placed their garrisoned troops accordingly.

In 268, when gold, silver, and weapon-quality iron were discovered in La Sierra de Hierro, open fighting for the Acragan basin began. The natives desired the secrets of forging these ores from the Numans, and the Numans wanted the ore to arm their own military.

The Acragan Wars were brutal and extended, dragging on for three-quarters of a century. The Acragans fought with a fire born of purity; they fought for their land, their freedom,

and their very way of life. But the Numan preparations were too well-planned, and half of Acraga (all the way to the river now known as El Rio de Delia) was captured within weeks.

Brush-wars followed for decades, as towns, mountain settlements, and coastal ports traded hands across the basin and peninsula. Meanwhile, the Numans diligently pushed forward through the remainder of Acraga, securing one zone after another. The invaders took their time with the regions across the Rio de Delia, knowing how valuable the land there was. The rich farmlands were ripe and well-harvested, and the coastal settlements produced enormous catches of fresh fish.

By 320, the Numan armies had conquered all of Acraga – even if the Acragans didn't know it yet. Only three major strongholds of Acragan resistance held out against the invaders – the coastal fortification now known as Puerto de Sur, the river settlement now known as Altamira (where troops could fight from within the heavy northern forests and across the River), and the capital city of Marina Linda (now known as Barcino). All three were eventually sacked, but the death toll on all fronts was horrendous. By the end of the Acragan Wars in 344, tens of thousands of Acragans had been slaughtered, and their three strongest settlements were sacked.

AUC 344–AV 98: Redevelopment

After consolidating control of Acraga, Numan administrators led by Senator Caius Castellus and his family set themselves to work rebuilding their prize. As their armies continued to march north through the area that would eventually become Montaigne, the Castellus nobles instituted widespread reform, absorbing the Acragan society into their own.

Prior to the occupation, the Acragans specialized in sea trade and dye and textile production. Numan technologies improved upon all of them. Scholars from beyond the mountains nearly doubled harvest yields, and introduced the process for making wine, a technique modern Castellians are famous for.

Numa established the administrative, commercial and architectural models that post-war Acraga relied upon. Their influence remains today, though much has been changed to accommodate modern dynamics. Architecture, in particular, has evolved through the ages, affected by the many cultures that have invaded and occupied the basin; see page 46. Numa also started the educational, literary, and artistic developments that the Castellians would one day perfect.

The Republic established roads across Acraga, and built mighty cities (both new and old) to house her people, including Acraga Nova (its name would change to Barcino after the fall of the Western Empire) and the modern-day cities of Tarago and San Augustin.

But for every advancement and gift the Numans offered, they stole something in return. They stole Acraga's ore, stripped its land, and subjugated its people. Republic citizens had rights in Acraga that the natives couldn't exercise, and all important decisions were made by the Castellus family or their masters in Numa. They set the pattern of exploitation that would plague the area for centuries to come, and instilled the first threads of foreign hatred within the hearts of the natives.

Perhaps the biggest blow came in the mid 700s AUC, when one of Caius Castellus' descendants arrived from Numa with a strange new gift: sorcery. The natives called it *El Fuego Adentro* – “The Fire Within” – for it gave its practitioners the ability to draw fire from within their souls. The art spread through the Castellus bloodline, aiding them in their subjugation of the people. Eventually, through marriage and inter-breeding, the natives learned to practice fire magic as well. But it always remained in the hands of the nobility, used to maintain their rule over the unruly province.

The diverse political divisions set in place by the invaders offered the Acragan natives a unique opportunity, however. With so many small communities spread across the region, it was easy for the Acragans to mount guerrilla resistance which lasted until the Numan system collapsed in AV 297.

AV 98–297: The Western Empire

Early during this period, Acraga endured a political revolution. It became painfully obvious that Imperial authority was being compromised by the enormous number of territories they controlled, as well as the vast distance between them, so many regions to the west (including Acraga) were granted semi-autonomy and dubbed the Western Empire.

An Emperor was placed in charge of the Western Empire, whose political capital was situated in the Numan-built city of San Cristobal. For two hundred years, Acraga benefited from the Empire's support without suffering the pains of direct interference from their rulers. The individual provinces were allowed to develop on their own, and even the Acragan language was reconciled with that of the Numans, developing into several variant dialects that the Acragans now shared with the rest of Théah.

Due to this slow alienation, the fall of the Old Empire was not as traumatic for Acraga as it could have been. As Eisen invaders sacked Numa and brought the eastern Empire down in flames, the Western Empire launched on a new path... and Castille was born.

AV 297–312: The First Kings Of Castille

The violent fall of Numa allowed the Castillo family (whose name had slowly changed from *Castillus*) to assert its social position, and semi-peacefully win the capitulation of the other kingdoms. In 299, Josémaria de Castillo was crowned the first King of a united Castille. The former kings of the remaining provinces were granted administration of their own lands in exchange for their fealty to the King, and were bestowed the noble title of *Gubenedor*, or "governor."

The Castillo monarchy advanced their status through trade, and promoted advances in the sciences of agriculture,



engineering, and mining (at this time, the majority of the High King's wealth came from the those Gubenadores that mined La Sierra de Hierro). Castille also made early trade agreements with the Empire of the Crescent Moon, a union which proved advantageous for both sides.

The Middle Ages

AV 305–1000: The Second Invasion

The alliance with the Empire of the Crescent Moon offered the Castillo new trading options, new military innovations (including several methods of fighting and technological advancements still seen today), and new architectural developments. In exchange, Castille allowed Crescents to establish trade colonies along the southwestern coast of Rancho Gallegos. The two primary ports of call that remain today are Malaca and Puerto de Sur.

This alliance would survive the Corantine Empire, the coronation of Emperor Carleman, and even the creation of the Vaticine Church. The “silent invaders” (as historians have since dubbed them) brought with them new advances in architecture, metallurgy, alchemy, mathematics, astronomy and their own versions of the teachings of the Second Prophet. Under Crescent guidance, Castille enjoyed nearly seven hundred years of peace and prosperity.

The Castillo monarchy formalized this lucrative alliance when King Josémaria married the eldest daughter of the Crescents' Caliph. In 313, the child of this union – King Alonzo Al-Mahmud de Josémaria – was named both the Second High King of Castille and Caliph of the Empire of the Crescent Moon (the previous Caliph, Alonzo's uncle and only heir to the Caliphate, had died shortly after inheriting it), although the vast distance between the two countries made the title more symbolic than practical. The rise of Emperor Corantine also limited Alonzo's power, and the boy-king remained subject to Corantine's laws throughout his reign.

While seemingly harmless at the time, King Alonzo's ascent is now considered a horrendous compromise of Castillian sovereignty. While both nations flourished under joint rule,

most modern Castellians see the gradual dissolution of their ancestors' lifestyle as an unforgivable betrayal. For the second time in their history, Castellians were forced to sacrifice their own way of life for those of outsiders.

The Second Prophet and the First Crusades

Many Castellians resented Crescent presence on their soil and wished to lash out. They found their chance in 306 when the Second Prophet was killed within the Empire of the Crescent Moon. The nation of Vodacce (then at the forefront of anti-Crescent sentiment and looking for an excuse to seize their resources) called for war against the Crescents, offering angry Castellians a chance for blood.

The First Crusades were another protracted war, consuming countless lives and untold resources before they ground to a halt. But none of the fighting occurred in Castillian territory: most of it took place on the Vodacce-Crescent border, and see-sawed back and forth for years. The war created a schism in the ruling lines and the symbolic unification of the two nations could not survive the strain of the Crusades. Alonzo's son was forced to abdicate rule of the Crescent Empire to a distant cousin, one who had never left the Empire of the Crescent Moon.

Still, the Crescent-Castille alliance survived. Many of the most vocal and active enemies of the Castille-Crescent alliance died in the conflict, leaving more moderate voices to take their place. Alonzo's rise was a direct result of these moderate voices; were it not for the Crusades, the alliance he symbolized might never have lasted as long as it did. Trade with the Crescents continued throughout the Crusades and the Castillian remained on friendly terms with the distant Empire for the next seven centuries. The alliance afforded Castille relative prosperity, which allowed them to weather the Dark Ages well. The Church provided a haven from barbarian raids, the White Plague, and other dangers which destroyed so many other areas of Théah. By the time the Third Prophet arrived, Castillian civilization was one of the most sophisticated in the world.

AV 1000: The Third Prophet

Even today, Castellians speak proudly of the blessed emergence of the Third Prophet in their nation. In AV 1000, the Third Prophet appeared, performing miracles in the northern regions of Castille. But the Vaticine Hierophant was at first very apprehensive about accepting him without some proof of his divinity. Hearing this, the Third Prophet invited the Hierophant to accompany him on a pilgrimage to La Sierra de Hierro. There, he led the Hierophant directly to a hidden cave, which contained a huge spiraling jet of white flame rising from a crack in the floor. He then knelt in quiet meditation for three days. At dawn of the third day, he placed his hand within the pillars of fire, which suddenly turned white.

“The Flames of Theus burn bright,” he said, “but cannot harm those who obey His word.”

The Hierophant, convinced that only one of the Prophets would have such power, accepted him for what he claimed to be. Castellians rejoiced as word spread that the Third Prophet was of their blood; the event strengthened both the renown of their throne and their shared heritage with the Empire of the Crescent Moon, home of the previous Prophet. The Chamber of *El Fuego Sagrado* (The Holy Flame), as the cavern came to be known, is now one of the most sacred sites in Castille.

But trouble brewed on the horizon. In the years that followed, the Third Prophet began to speak out against the decadent influence of the Empire of the Crescent Moon upon Castille. He preached that the Castellians had lost their identity, and allowed themselves to be culturally fooled by a power that had lost its connection with the true faith. This incited dissension within communities where the Crescent Empire’s influence was prominent, and many rejected the Third Prophet’s divinity. Religious division in Castille bloomed into civil unrest.

Open conflict erupted in the Spring of 1002, when a Vaticine bishop was murdered by a mob of Crescents in the port city of Malaca. Within days, the Third Prophet declared that anyone who rejected his teachings or claimed fealty to the Empire of the Crescent Moon would be

branded a heretic, and that the “infidels” would be expelled from Castille.

The Second Crusades had begun.

AV 1002-1011: The Second Crusades

By the spring of 1002, the Empire of the Crescent Moon had a stronger foothold within Castellian society than any other foreign occupant before or since. But the Third Prophet and his convert Hierophant were the religious power in Castille, and their influence was significant. The Third Prophet’s endorsement, and confidence that Theus was on their side, rallied the Castellian peasantry to join the Church’s army, which was building in the north.

Castille’s nobility faced a very difficult decision – to betray the King (and their own heritage), or betray the word of



Théus. Lines of allegiance were already drawn, and many nobles knew that they would be fighting against their cousins in the coming war. The High King, for his part, decided to protect his rightful holdings and the heritage that had granted them; he did not hesitate to side with the Crescent Empire.

For the next eight years, Castillians made war upon each other and the Empire they once called “ally.” Countless thousands fell before the Third Prophet’s righteous hordes, both in Castille and on the far border of the Crescent Empire. But not all was going well for the side of the Church, as countless nobles who had sided with it were also killed, their magic extinguished forever.

By autumn of 1008, neither side held a clear advantage. In need of fresh troops and facing the possible destruction of his Church, the Third Prophet called upon the other Vaticine nations for aid. Vodacce and Eisen helped to deliver the killing blow against the forces of the Crescent Empire, and in 1009, High King Garcia and the last of his infidel-Crescent armies were soundly defeated in a great battle at Malaca. Today, this battle is called *El Fin del Ciclo*, “The End of the Cycle.”

With the death of the King and his followers, Castille’s fire magic survived only in scattered renegades and those few who had fought under the banner of the Third Prophet. To them, the Prophet offered sainthood, but only if they gave their lives to his Church. Sorcery had been declared a heresy of the infidel Crescents – one that could only be purged and

forgiven by bathing in the holy flames of El Fuego Sagrado. Many were purified, stripped of their sorcerous blood by the fires, their place in heaven assured. Soon, few Castillians carried any trace of the ancient noble blood. Those who did were branded heretics and fled to the wilds of Rancho Gallegos.

While El Fin de Ciclo ended the war on Castillian soil, the

Crescents were not so lucky. The crusades continued on the border of their desert land as faithful Vaticines fought to purge the world of the infidels forever. The conflict there wouldn’t truly end until the death of the Poor Knights nearly three centuries later (see the *Players’ Guide* or the *Knights of the Rose and Cross* sourcebook for more details).

AV 1011–1100: The Dons of Castille

In the wake of the Crusades, many vassals acquired land and title from the nation’s former sorcerers. These vassals sought to establish a new monarchy with a strong link to the church. In a peaceful assembly in the historic capital of San Cristobal, the Hierophant listened to claims for the new throne. A monarch was chosen from the nobility, and in 1014, Ramon Sandoval – a famous warrior of the Second Crusades – was crowned High King of Castille. His first act was to reestablish the noble class.

Overnight, peasantry who had distinguished themselves during the Crusade were granted the title of Don (literally, “sir”).

El Sayyid (“The Master”)

During the Second Crusades, a valiant soldier captured the hearts and minds of all Castille, and became known as the Champion of the Third Prophet. The irony of this, however, is that the hero in question was not actually a Castillian himself. Ramon Sandoval was born to mixed parentage. His father was one of many Castillian nobles who died during the first bloody months of the war, while his mother was a Crescent who married him in a political match.

During the war Sandoval changed sides several times, fighting for whoever had the moral high ground at the time. Despite that, his success on the field of battle (he was rumored never to have lost a fight, no matter the size or odds), and his capture of Malaca in the final days of the second Crusade, earned him a treasured place in the memories of all loyal Castillians.

Ramon’s life has been immortalized in the epic poem *El Cantar de Mio Sayyid* (“the Song of the Master”), a lengthy treatise about knighthood in flower. A play and many songs and precious pieces of art followed. For more on these, please see page 49



The nation was then divided into new ranchos, each bearing the name of the ruling Don's family. The lands directly governed by the High King remained around the ancient capital of San Cristobal. Almost immediately upon taking his title, Don Ramon Sandoval offered a portion of his estate along the Rio De Dios in Central Castille to the Church, and dedicated his resources to the construction of a new Vaticine City.

The first building erected was the Great Cathedral of the Prophets, home to the Third Prophet until his death in 1030. Castille continued to re-build all that had been destroyed during the Crusade, expanding beyond the city's original bounds. Much of what the Crescents built in the south of the nation was left untouched. Common sense dictated that — although the Crescents were branded heretics, their mighty contributions to the grandeur of Castille would remain. As the Third Prophet was fond of saying, "It is simply easier and more reasoned to maintain what is than to build what is not."

AV 1012–1019: The Hieros Wars

Within a year after the Second Crusades ended, the balance of power within the Vaticine Church began to shift. As the base of the Third Prophet's power, Castille enjoyed preferential treatment from his Church. More and more Cardinals, Dioceses, and other Church positions were filled with Castillians. The traditional home of the Church, Vodacce, saw its power decline as its representatives were passed over time and again for promotion. Tensions between the two escalated to an all-time high and finally exploded when the Third Prophet declared that Castille would be the new home of the Vaticine faith.

Hostilities began within days. The High King of Castille required little convincing to join the army of the new Castillian Hierophant (chosen days before by the Third Prophet), and both set out to crush the now-heretical Vodacce church. For the next seven years, Castillians fought eastward, eventually defeating the Vodacce forces. The Hierophant, in his benevolence, allowed the Vodacce to keep their two Arch-Dioceses, but only to protect the religious integrity of his second-largest constituency. But the

war left a wound in Vodacce's people that has never truly healed.

The consolidation of the Church in Castille gave the nation a secure power base for the next four hundred years. Most believe that this is why Castille has come so far for such a young nation. Others claim that it lulled the nation into a false sense of security, without which the recent Montaigne invasion would have been far less successful.

AV 1386: The Return of the White Plague

Throughout the Dark Ages, Théah suffered under the terrible threat of the White Plague. For centuries, the disease ran rampant across the continent, claiming nearly one-third of the populace before running its course. Thanks to the Church, Castille was spared the worst effects of the plague. Vaticine officials ordered the quarantine of infected towns, had the bodies burned quickly and limited the horrors as much as they could. By the early 900s, the White Plague had diminished and Castillians thought the threat was over.

But in 1386, it struck again, this time in the heart of the country. The capital city of San Cristobal reported symptoms of the disease spreading out from the harbor district and quickly engulfing the remainder of the town. The Church quickly quarantined the city, using troops to block all roads and ordering inbound ships to turn back. A party of volunteers was sent to the royal palace, in hopes of removing the Sandoval family before they could be infected.

They arrived too late. The king lay dying in his bedchamber, his skeletal face spattered with blood. His wife and sons were scattered throughout the palace; they lay where they had fallen when the plague finally claimed them. The servants and courtiers were all dead or had fled long ago. The rats had moved into the palace in force. The volunteers remained until the king himself passed, then burned the bodies and retreated to find safety in the city.

The disease never escaped San Cristobal, but the damage had been done. Without a royal family, the government could not function. There were no surviving heirs and even



collateral relatives had been struck down by the disease. Several distant cousins stepped forward to claim the throne, but none of them had a clear mandate. While the Church debated, the cousins launched into a brief but fierce flurry of political infighting for the right to claim the throne. Four duels were fought in three days and a few candidates even threatened civil war.

Eventually, a native Montaigne named Jacques Cesar Prais du Rachtisse cowed his rivals into backing down and claimed the throne for himself. The Castellians were horrified. Du Rachtisse was related to the Sandovals only through distant marriage, and had never set foot in the land he claimed to rule. Even worse, he supposedly practiced *Porté* magic – a mortal sin as far as the Castellians were concerned.

Faced with a brewing popular revolt and unwilling to acknowledge du Rachtisse's claim, the council of Cardinals (at the Hierophant's behest) did something unprecedented: they refused to grant him title of *Rex Castellium*. The act effectively denied legitimacy of his claim, for without the Church's support, he could not govern effectively. The Cardinals then took over running the government, issuing edicts and shaping laws as a king would do. The Dons obeyed them, rather than du Rachtisse, and the courts and army soon followed suit. For six months, this jury-rigged government continued, despite intense saber rattling by the foreign "king." Finally, a solution presented itself: the late king's cousin – a diplomat on a goodwill mission to distant Ussura – was located and recalled to Castille. His ties to the royal family were much closer than du Rachtisse's and he had enough pedigree to satisfy the Cardinals. He slew du Rachtisse in a duel and the Hierophant himself crowned him king.

The White Plague outbreak was never explained, but it didn't surface again for almost three centuries. The Sandoval family gradually recovered from the blow and went on to rule with unquestioned authority.

AV 1400s: The Age of Exploration

Throughout the fourteenth century, Castellians realized that they had spent most of their existence looking inward. The High Kings took a renewed interest in international affairs and established political dialogues with the other Vaticine states. The Church even found room for expansion of the Prophet's teachings, and sent missionaries to the uncharted lands of Ussura and the Vesten territories.

But the grandest event of this age was the royal sponsorship of Cristobal Gallegos, a highly skilled ocean navigator who claimed that – if there was another part of Théah beyond the horizon – he would be the first to discover it, and claim it in the names of Castille and the Church. He also promised to be the first person to circumnavigate the globe. Both the High King and the Hierophant died before seeing if he was right, however. After leaving his home port of San Cristobal in the early fifteenth century, Gallegos was never





heard from again: he vanished somewhere in the vast western seas beyond the Syrneth Isles.

Many expeditions have searched for the missing explorer, but no clues as to his fate were ever recovered. Those ships that ventured too far west disappeared as well, while the remainder returned to port empty-handed. Some suggested that Gallegos was destroyed by the Corridors of Flame as he circled the globe. Others believed that he had found some savage new frontier which claimed him. Still others maintained that he had never left the continent at all and retired in seclusion after bilking the Crown of “support money” (though this doesn’t explain the subsequent vessels which disappeared). Regardless of his fate, the point was moot. After Gallegos’ failure, Castille’s interest in exploration waned. Théan pursuit in archaeology and cartography would not resume until the establishment of the Explorer’s Society in 1598. As far as the world is concerned, Cristobal Gallegos was either a victim of his own daring or the greatest swindler in history.

Recent Events

AV 1636-1666: The War Of The Cross

In 1517, Objectionism was created from the relentless questioning of Matthias Lieber. As the seat of Vaticine power, Castille reacted to the new faith with considerable alarm. Objectionism was banned within Castille’s borders, and numerous practitioners were burned at the stake. But they could not prevent its spread to the rest of Théah and in less than a century, Objectionism had become a fierce rival of Vaticine teachings.

The two faiths came to blows in 1636 with the War of the Cross. Though fought entirely in Eisen, the war held considerable interest for Castille, who saw it as an important test of the Vaticine faith. Countless Castillians joined the fighting on the side of the Church of the Prophets and participated in the increasingly bloody battles. Even so, the nation as a whole remained neutral until the last few months of the war. By then, Eisen had been crippled by the bloody

conflict, and Montaigne and Castillian forces marched across her soil with ease.

The Treaty of Weissberg ended the war and partitioned Eisen into seven kingdoms. The Objectionists were relegated to several autonomous provinces in the south, while the Vaticine monarchy maintained its stronghold in the north. Parcels of the eastern, southeastern, and southern border provinces were distributed among Montaigne, Castille and Vodacce. To this day, the Castillian monarchy feels that their tract of this hopeless wasteland is not worthy of their attention. Its former Eisen Lord remains in command and has never paid his yearly tax. His “court” is attended only by a single, low-ranking Castillian Ambassador.

More on the War of the Cross can be found in the *Eisen* sourcebook.

AV 1659: The Destruction Of The Castillian Armada

In the summer of 1659, the mighty Castillian Armada – 180 ships of varying classes and sizes – set sail from ports all over Castille under the direction of Hernando Arciniega de Orduño, an advisor of the High King who had never spent a day at sea. Their objective was simple: destroy the upstart Queen Elaine, who had declared independence from the Vaticine Church.

The Armada was doomed from the beginning. From the very day the fleet set sail, it was plagued with problems. From La Reina del Mar up the coast to San Juan, the fleet was slowed by bad weather. A hurricane set in and with few ports to harbor them along the rocky shores of Eastern Castille, nearly sixty ships were lost at sea. Quartermasters had underestimated the crew’s consumption of stores as well, and an unplanned supply stop was also necessary. The only city capable of supporting them – Barcino – was directly across the River from Buché in Montaigne. After the fleet’s resupply stop, the whole world knew what Castille was up to. To make matters even worse, Barcino was not capable of supplying the fleet in full; seven more ships had to be left behind.



Once on the high seas and into the Avalon Channel, the fleet was attacked by Vendel Commerce Raiders, who supported Elaine's rule. While the Armada was more than capable of dealing with this threat, critical amounts of powder had to be expended to repel the Vendel menace. Twenty-seven more ships and their crews were lost in the fighting. With only 94 ships left, and against the better judgment of the Armada's captains, Orduño ordered the fleet onward.

This proved to be his fatal mistake.

On the morning of the battle, the Armada encountered a tremendously thick fog bank within a day's sail from the Avalon coast. It was so thick that the ships could not see beyond a fathom (6 feet), and when the fleet emerged from the bank, they numbered less than half what they had sailed in with. Finding themselves face to face with the Avalon Sea Dogs – almost two hundred ships strong and experienced with the local waters – it appeared that the Castillian Armada's voyage was at an end.

Realizing that he could not win, Orduño ordered a withdrawal, but the Avalon ships were too fast. The battle lasted most of the day, as the Armada limped slowly away from Avalon. Only thirty-two ships remained when they emerged and headed south, back toward the coast of Castille. Thirty-six thousand sailors and soldiers had been lost at sea, including Orduño, whom some say was thrown overboard by his crew. Others contest that he died valiantly in battle, while still others claim he took his own life in shame. The Orduño family – long considered Castille's best sailors – were relegated to minor positions and the King's son, Javier, was named Admiral of the Navy.

The Boy King

Javier served well as the new Admiral, and his success meant high expectations for his eventual ascent to the throne. When his father was struck ill, he returned from sea to serve as regent. His governing ideas were effective and innovative, and the royal court responded well to his edicts. Everyone thought that the formal transfer of power would

be smooth and that Javier's coronation would mark a new era of prosperity for Castille.

Then something went wrong. Javier disappeared from his chambers one night, vanishing without a trace. An extensive search failed to turn up the heir, and though rumors abounded, no one could say what had happened to the prince or why. A short time later, High King Salvador Aldana de Sandoval died, consumed by ailments that had plagued him for a decade. In the spring of 1665, Javier's younger brother, the thirteen-year-old Prince Salvador Bejarano de Sandoval, was crowned High King of Castille. He is the youngest King his country has ever known, and many fear that his inexperience will usher in the worst era of Castillian history yet. But so far, his many decrees have been resolute and confident, though rather transparently biased toward the Church, a condition attributed to his dependence upon El Concilio de Razon (the Council of Reason, the King's personal body of Church advisors) and their plentiful advice.

More about Prince Javier's fate can be found in the *Pirate Nations* sourcebook.

The Montaigne Invasion

In 1664, King Léon of Montaigne openly declared that he was a sorcerer, and that his nation would shelter other sorcerers from the Church's oppression. Two years later, the Inquisition raised a small army – formed mostly of Castillians – to arrest the heretical ruler. The Church forces easily diverted the mighty Montaigne army and entered Charouse with a minimum of bloodshed, but were stopped at the King's gates in the battle later known as Montegue's Stand (see the *Montaigne* sourcebook for more details). Emboldened by the Church's failure, Léon proclaimed himself Empereur and ordered the recently promoted General Montegue to “free Castille from Vaticine tyranny.” Thus began Montaigne's invasion, and a new age of subjugation for the people of Castille.

The Castillian army was completely unprepared for the Montaigne onslaught, and Montegue's task was made easier

by an early betrayal within Castille itself. In the spring of 1667, the traitorous Don Marco Ontiveros del Ochoa opened the vital port of Barcino to Montaigne ships commanded by General François du Toille. The invaders met little resistance, and quickly secured the city in the name of the Empereur.

With du Toille holding the flank, Montegue launched a huge assault across the River. Throughout Rancho Torres and most of Rancho Zepeda, cities, port towns, and villages were seized with ease, allowing the bulk of the Montaigne forces to continue in their southern push while a secondary line reinforced their newly-acquired holdings. Rancho Torres received the worst blow, its reigning family losing everything to the invaders. Every night, the Castillian army could be heard across the farmlands, building defensive perimeters, only to be overrun the following morning. The commanding Castillian General, Jose Rioja del Montoya, was quickly cut off from San Cristobal and fell back to Rancho Zepeda.

With the main Castillian force cut off, Montegue turned the bulk of his forces east towards Rancho Aldana. El Rio de Delia was ringed with fortresses – the finest in Théah – and Montegue hoped to overpower them before reinforcements could arrive. Leaving General du Toille the task of subduing Rancho Zepeda, he marched resolutely towards Aldana.

The Battle of San Juan

Moving swiftly, du Toille's forces advanced on the peaceful town of San Juan, which straddled the border between Ranchos Torres and Zepeda. In keeping with his plan, General Montoya ordered the citizens to evacuate to La Reina del Mar, where the Castillian army was preparing a more stable and coordinated defense. But the people of San Juan would have none of it. Regardless of the outcome, they would make a stand to defend their homes, with or without the help of the Castillian army. Don Montoya left what arms and supplies he could, and retreated with his army to La Reina del Mar.

With only two days to prepare their defense, the defenders of San Juan mounted a sturdy line against the Montaigne. Determination and high morale guided them through six days of fierce fighting. Blocks of homes swapped hands many times throughout the battle, and neither the Montaigne nor the Castillian defenders could gain a significant advantage.

Furious with his mounting losses against the peasant militia, and the disruption of his steady advance, General du Toille ordered a withdrawal of all troops from the city. But the cheers of San Juan's defenders were quickly overwhelmed by the sound of Montaigne artillery; the bombardment lasted for two full days.

When the smoke cleared, and Montaigne troops once again entered the city, more than half the city had been razed, and thousands had been killed or crippled. General de Toille quickly put his engineers to work repairing the port facilities, and established a garrison for his troops. He then ordered San Juan's remaining citizens to gather the dead and seriously wounded in the plaza, only to have them join their fallen when he ordered the plaza cordoned off and set aflame. For the next three days, the smell of burning flesh spread throughout the countryside and a large column of black smoke rose above the ruins of San Juan, sending an unforgivable warning to all who would resist the might of the Montaigne's grand expansion.

La Reina del Mar

Predicting that the invasion would require amphibious support, General Montegue trained a segment of his troops for just such an occasion. But Don Ochoa's treachery ensured that these troops would not be required in the opening salvo. They sat idle in the rear until the attack upon Castille's primary western seaport, La Reina del Mar.

La Reina's coastal defenses were formidable, and reinforced by the presence of Don Montoya's Castillian army. With the remnants of the the Castillian Armada near, the Montaigne were reluctant to take the port from the sea. So du Toille decided that the city would be taken by land, a tactic which was delayed by the setback at San Juan.

The Montaigne plan placed the marines a few miles south of the city, prepared to cut off the expected retreat of Don Montoya's army. Du Toille's land troops would continue to march south from San Juan to assault the city from the north, and the navy would shell the city until all units were ready to attack. The Montaigne navy had quickly seized the sea lanes south of La Reina del Mar, blocking the Castillian battleships, but their army was behind schedule, stalled at San Juan for eight days. The attack upon La Reina was not aborted, however; the Montaigne would still land, this time to the north of the city.

Feeling the pressure of an impending attack upon La Reina, and wishing to avoid a general engagement with the Montaigne army, Don Montoya ordered another evacuation. This time, everyone but the most stubborn citizens left their homes behind, for news of the massacre at San Juan had spread. All that remained of the Castillian army were a few regiments of infantry and a small number of artillery batteries, whose orders were to hold the city as long as possible, then withdraw to join the main body marching south. The Montaigne landing went well, and the subsequent withdrawal of La Reina's rear guard offered the city up to the Montaigne with minimal casualties to either side.

The Eastern Assault

Meanwhile, General Montegue had moved his army east toward El Rio de Delia. On the eastern side, the Castillians quickly constructed a massive series of fortifications between El Morro and La Selva de Fendes. The Vaticine engineers who oversaw the construction believed that no one could breach the line, and that the Montaigne would be pinned on the western side of the river. They hadn't counted on Montegue's military genius, however. Using Porté mages as advance scouts, he crossed the river on the far northern end – through the Forest of Fiends. No army had ever crossed the forest before: it was considered impassable. But thanks to Porté and his own ingenuity, Montegue had done it. With a beach head secure on the eastern side of El Rio de Delia, he launched a devastating series of southern assaults. Within a few months, he had

destroyed all fortifications north of El Morro. Each fortification that fell allowed more troops to stream across the river – massing for a final blow at the heart of the country. Vaticine City looked sure to fall and the Cardinals debated abandoning the Church capital. Overwhelmed by Montegue's audacity, the Castillian army prepared a do-or-die counterattack in a desperate gamble to turn back the tide.

Then something happened which the Castillians consider nothing short of a miracle. Suddenly, inexplicably, Montegue was recalled to Charouse. The Empeureur had decided to start a new war, this time against Ussura, and he wanted Montegue at its head. One hundred thousand troops retreated across the River to begin the long journey east, leaving a severely weakened Montaigne army to finish the invasion.

Despite the setback, Montegue's underlings were confident that they could finish the job – confident to the point of foolishness. They had long pushed Montegue for an assault on El Morro – the one target he had refused to engage. With him out of the picture, they immediately launched an ill-conceived attack against the imposing fortress, hoping to take it and write their names into the history books.

At that moment, the Castillians launched their counterattack.

The bloodshed was massive. Tens of thousands of Montaigne died on the assault of El Morro, leaving a severely depleted front line to defend against the attack. The Castillian quickly overwhelmed the invaders, slaughtering huge numbers of troops and driving the Montaigne back across El Rio de Delia. Within seven days, they had recaptured what it took Montegue months to procure. The Montaigne managed to hold the Castillians to the river, but could not form another beachhead on the eastern side. The victory which had seemed so inevitable had been thwarted.



La Muralla al Ultimo

Meanwhile, on the southern front, General du Toille continued his advance. Many inland Castellians (mostly those not involved in the fighting) criticized Don Montoya for his continuing retreat. But none knew that he had preserved over 90% of his army, and given his engineers in the south time to build a defensive position where he and his army could make a final stand – La Muralla al Ultimo (“The Last Wall”). As news of Montegue’s withdrawal slowly spread through Rancho Zepeda, the battered Castellians began to take heart.

During the last offensive of 1667 General Montoya’s patience harvested fruit. In yet another series of running battles and rear guard actions, the Castellian army slipped away under cover of darkness to the safety of La Muralla. Two weeks later, as the Montaigne forces deployed for another assault upon what they assumed would be an empty battle field, their scouts returned with harrowing news. A string of fortified positions lay only a few miles beyond – an stout barrier of wood and soil, reinforced with stone hardpoints – stretching as far as the eye could see in either direction.

Du Toille’s arrogance cost thousands of Montaigne lives that day. He assumed that the Castellians could not possibly be able to defend the length of the wall, and launched a widespread attack. Thousands upon thousands of Montaigne’s best troops were cut down by the defenders’ murderous and seemingly endless coordinated fire. Attempts to probe for a flank to La Muralla only lead to the discovery that the wall ran the entire width of the southern peninsula, at no point showing weakness. His efforts to overwhelm the weakest point were turned back, and the Montaigne advance ground to a halt.

Today

Since the fall of 1667, the war has turned into a deadly stalemate. La Muralla has been a frustration to the Montaigne command, and the city of San Augustin just north of it continues to hold out against the invaders. On the eastern front, El Rio de Delia has turned into a bristling line of guns and cannon. The Castellians have shored up

their defenses, turning lakeside castles and villas into fortresses. The Montaigne, for their part, have no intention losing any more ground, and the western riverbank is rife with fortifications of their own. El Morro stands in valiant defiance, anchoring the Castellian defense. River traffic has become a perilous journey through miles of cannon emplacements.

Recent lulls in the fighting have given the Castellians the confidence to probe the Montaigne lines. They too have been repulsed – the Montaigne army remains huge, despite its recent losses – but these attacks have revealed the invader’s fractured command. With Montoya holding fast in the south and the eastern fortresses growing better-armed by the day, the Castellians hope that they can soon turn the tide of this war.

Castille Today

Historically, Castille has been a nation searching only for its own freedom. Today, in 1668, Castille is a nation embroiled in war, and that freedom once more hangs in the balance. The Montaigne invasion of the country has split the nation into thirds – the sections cut off by Montaigne troops, where prideful Castellians meagerly survive under the tyrannical yoke of the invaders; the distant lines of scrimmage, where the bloody battles for freedom and faith continue each day; and the rest of Castille (the basin and Gallegos peninsula), where the remainder of the populace wonder how they have once again come to blows with an enemy that desires their land, their Church, and their people.

But two thousand years of subjugation have made the Castellians strong. The passionate fire that burns within their breasts has never been extinguished, not once in their long and difficult history. They know who they are and they know what they are fighting for, and that has made the difference in the war with Montaigne. Whatever the future may hold, Castille will meet it head-on: they have earned no less.

Prominent Families

Castille is a very young nation, at least in terms of being unified. It had a late start to begin with, last before Vodacce in shrugging off the influences of the Numan Empire. In addition, Castille has spent a surprisingly small amount of time on its own, always invaded, supported, or influenced by other nations.

The pattern of invasion, subjugation, and forced influence in Castille has created an interesting familial climate, which appears deceptively simple to outsiders. While most look at Castille and only see eight families, the Castillians understand that each bloodline contains literally dozens of smaller branches of an extraordinarily complex lineage. For each Great Don, there are countless Lesser Dons – each with his own name and holdings (many of which are homeless and poor due to the Montaigne occupation).

Castillians are proud of their system of government, in which citizens are given the responsibility and resources to handle their own property and people; it instills a national pride that transcends social status. In essence, each of these minor holdings is allowed to administer itself internally. Even “peasants” (as they are called in other nations) are allowed rights and judgments here. It is the Castillian way.

Nobility

Below is a description of each of the eight great families of Castille, followed by a brief list of some of the lesser families beneath them. The game effects of belonging to a specific noble family are listed in italics following its description. Noble Heroes should choose a paternal and maternal family, and receive the listed game effects of each. Only Heroes with the Noble Advantage can be from a noble family. Note that Heroes who purchase the Noble Advantage and choose to belong to one of the lesser families should either choose an appropriate family from the list or work with the GM to create an original family of their own (with a flavor or specialty similar to those of the listed families).

The Aldana Family

During the days of the Second Crusades (see page 17), a young peasant *alcalde* (sheriff) named only “Aldana” came to the attention of the Third Prophet. His devotion to the Church and the Prophet’s teachings seemed without bound, and his ability to keep the peace within his jurisdiction earned him respect and admiration. It also earned him a place among the Prophet’s closest advisors. As the Second Crusades drew to a close, and the Prophet redefined Castille’s provinces, Aldana was recognized for his distinguished service in bringing civility and dignity back to his war-torn country. He was offered the highest seat in the Church – that of Hierophant.

But his response shocked the entire nation. Aldana replied, “Your Eminence, I seek no reward for my service to you and the Church – only to return to my home and serve my people in the manner I did before.”

Aldana’s humility stunned even the Third Prophet. By Royal and Vaticine Edict, Aldana’s homeland along the beaches of La Boca de Cielo was established as Rancho Aldana, and he was named as its *alcalde* and Don. The Third Prophet declared that the new Vaticine City would be built within Rancho Aldana. The Aldanas themselves were named “representatives of the people” and asked to always



speak on behalf of the common folk in court. They have served in that capacity ever since.

The current patriarch of the Aldana family is Don Francisco Guzman del Aldana. At times he is stubborn and stoic, though most of the time he remains just, fair, and forgiving. Also of note are his second wife, Doña Cherie du Montaigne del Aldana, and his nephew, Andres Bejarano del Aldana. Cherie is the eldest daughter of the Empereur of Montaigne, and has grown to love and admire the people of her new home despite the war with her native land. Andres is an advisor and good friend of King Sandoval's court. He is also a master swordsman, and once saved the life of the King alongside the mysterious El Vago.

Noble Heroes whose father is Aldana pay only 22 HP to purchase the Aldana Swordsman School at character creation, but they may not purchase the Criminal Skill under any circumstances.

Noble Heroes whose mother is Aldana receive the Courtier Skill for free. However, when using Repartee actions against members of the Gallegos family, their TN is increased by 5.

The Gallegos Family

Since Castille was founded, the Gallegos family has been scorned due to the heavy foreign influences in their blood (mainly Crescent and Vodacce). The bloodline's one true chance to redeem itself was lost with the failed expedition of Cristobal Gallegos in the late 1400s. Since then, Gallegos has had only limited contact with the rest of Castille – mainly in the prosperous ports along their coastline.

Gallegos are generally friendly folk, once the initial stigma about them wears off. They have a healthy appreciation for life, and are known for their daring and adventurous character. Much of this has to do with their continued connections with both Vodacce and the Empire of the Crescent Moon.

Outsiders often look at Gallegos (especially their commoners) as savages and witches, too concerned with pagan religions to pay attention to the real world. The few

surviving practitioners of *El Fuego Adentro* are hidden within the Gallegos province, which only adds to the family's dark reputation. In truth, however, the Gallegos are simply more in touch with their mystic side, a by-product of their isolationist nature.

Noble Heroes whose father is Gallegos pay only 22 HP to purchase the Gallegos Swordsman School at character creation, but they may not purchase the Streetwise Skill under any circumstance.

Noble Heroes whose mother is Gallegos receive a Free Raise when using Sorcerous Knacks, but they have two fewer Reputation dice while in Castille.

The Ochoa Family

Until recently, the Ochoa Family was one of the most respected in all of Castille, maintaining the rich lands that encompass Barcino and the ancient capital of Acraga. But today, the Ochoa bloodline is reviled across Castille, and its nobles are unwelcome anywhere in the nation. They are a family forgotten.

This hatred began during the early days of the war. Don Marco Ontiveros del Ochoa, the son of the family's patriarch, arranged for the Montaigne to meet only trifling resistance in Barcino, virtually throwing the doors open for General Montague's underling François du Toille.

No one knows his reasons for betraying Castille, though speculation ranges from debts of blood, money, and coercion to offers of a Montaigne court position and outright insanity. Regardless, the effect within Castille is clear. The Ochoa name is anathema; its nobility have been lost or killed. The survivors are in hiding, have joined the Montaigne, or fight a grim guerrilla war in the occupied territories. Rumors continue to spread that Don Efron – Marco's father, and head of the family – was recently murdered somewhere in the capital of San Cristobal.

Heroes from the Ochoa family may not purchase the Nobility Advantage under any circumstances.



The Orduño Family

While officially only part of Castille's lesser nobility, the Orduños have earned a reputation as the greatest shipwrights in the country. Occupying the southeastern corner of the Aldana Rancho (from El Morro and its surrounding swamps to the cities of La Pasiega, San Gustavo, and Tarago), the Orduño family have been instrumental in fending off Montaigne expeditions to the eastern bank of the Rio de Dios.

The Orduño have made an indelible mark on Castille's navy. Orduños retain the posts of Admiral General of all Castillian war fleets, Headmaster of the College of Naval Engineering, Master of the Naval Shipyards, Master of the Royal Artillery Academy, Harbor Master of the Castillian Armada's naval base at Tarago, and Admiral of the Castillian Armada. In fact, it is a rare situation to find a Castillian warship that doesn't contain an Orduño among its crew.

Recently, however, the family's fortunes have declined. Hernando Orduño's disastrous command of the Castillian Armada left a blemish that has yet to fade. The family was forced to relinquish command of the navy to Prince Javier, and only with his recent disappearance have they regained their former post. The war with Montaigne may allow them to erase Hernando's blotch, but if they can't, they may find their fortunes declining even further.

The current Orduño patriarch is Admiral General Don Julio Rivera del Orduño, who commands all Castillian strategic warship operations from his villa on the outskirts of Tarago. A brilliant naval commander, he is also arrogant and aloof, particularly with those he deems uneducated about the life of a sailor. Also of note is his brother, Admiral Enrique Rivera del Orduño, commander of the Castillian Armada that battles the Montaigne Navy, and Margareta Vasquez Soldano del Orduño, Enrique's wife. Don Julio's eldest daughter, Commandante Lorena Rios del Orduño, is the Headmistress of the College of Naval Engineering, and her brother, Admiral Juan Rios del Orduño, is the Master of the Naval Shipyards, both at the port in La Pasiega. Don Julio's nephew, General Bardo Rivera del Rios, is the

Master of the Royal Artillery Academy and garrison commander of El Morro, and his brother, Manuel Rivera del Rios, is the Harbormaster of the Armada's Naval Headquarters at Tarago.

Noble Heroes whose father is an Orduño receive the Sailor Skill for free, but they may not purchase the Hunter Skill.

Noble Heroes whose mother is an Orduño receive a 2-point discount (minimum 1) when purchasing the Commission Advantage. However, they receive 50G less income each month.

The Sandoval Family

The Castillian royal line centers almost entirely in the bureaucratic capital of San Cristobal, in a sprawling rancho situated along the shoreline of La Boca de Cielo. Anyone is free to roam the rancho's grounds, though military presence has been increased there since the outbreak of the war with Montaigne. The Sandovals also keep private ranchos within both Vaticine City (the religious capital) and the inland port of Altamira, where they spend the winter months.

The recent return of the White Plague has struck the Sandoval family deeply, and Prince Javier's disappearance has dangerously thinned their central branch. The family currently encompasses Good King Sandoval and a vast number of cousins, "adopted" Dons (retired heroes, duelists, and statesmen), and relatives-by-marriage. The halls of the Sandoval ranchos are silent most of the time now, with the bold Salvador and his eldest son gone.

Noble Heroes from the Sandoval family receive twice their normal monthly income, and the Castillian Education Advantage for free. GMs are strongly advised against allowing Heroes from the Sandoval family for purposes of game balance.

The Soldano Family

Situated at the north end of La Sierra de Hierro, the Soldano are known for two things: their swords and their wine. The impressive Soldano Blades are greatly prized amongst duelists across the continent. Folded several hundred times each, these fearsome weapons are second



only to *dracheneisen* as the strongest, most durable weapons in Théah. The secrets to forging these incredibly strong blades are closely guarded, passed on only among those whose Soldano lineage dates back at least one hundred years, and whose loyalty is unquestioned.

The family also produces fine wines: the most exotic outside Vodacce and the Crescent Empire. Like their wines, Soldanos are tempestuous and fiery, living life to the fullest with every breath. The Soldanos are the “melting pot” of Castille: their hot tempers and stormy zeal are gifts of their Vodacce, Eisen, and Crescent heritage. All these influences are old; the Soldanos maintain no more contact with foreign cultures than any other Castillians. Most of their mixed blood came from a mass Crescent migration from the Aldana territories during the First Crusades, marriage and

breeding with Vodacce and Eisen soldiers during the Second Crusades.

Noble Heroes whose father is a Soldano pay only 22 HP to purchase the Soldano Swordsman School at character creation, but they may not purchase the Servant Skill under any circumstance.

Noble Heroes whose mother is a Soldano always receive one Free Raise when using the Repartee system, but they also receive 100G less income each month.

The Torres Family

Once the wealthiest of the Castillian nobles (save the Royal Sandovals), the Torres Family have suffered greatly during the war with Montaigne, and now live as refugees. Situated in the northwest corner of Castille between the Rio de Delia, the Great River, and the high seas, Rancho Torres contains rich farmlands supported by the tributaries of two of Théah’s mightiest rivers. Historically, the Torres family has exported goods along these waterways and taxed trade through the rancho’s largest city, Barcino (administered by the Ochoa family before their recent disgrace).

When Montaigne attacked Castille – through acts of treachery by Don Marco Ontiveros del Ochoa – Barcino and the grand Torres rancho became the main avenue of the invasion. The Torres attempted to defend their homeland, only to be forced back. Their generals eventually ordered a strategic retreat, so that they could return to fight another day.

The current matriarch of the family is the grieving Doña Elodia Avila del Torres, whose husband Don Fernando and three sons died in defense of their home. Elodia spends her time as a personal guest of Good King Sandoval at the Royal Palace in San Cristobal, and continues to be a confidant to her nephew, Andres Bejarano del Aldana. (Some say she is mad with grief, and Andres Aldana is the true executor of her family’s affairs in her stead.)

Also of note are Doña Elodia’s daughter and only living child, Elvia Avila Torres del Guzman, and her husband,

Javier Gallegos del Guzman, who wage a guerrilla war in the Montaigne occupied territories. Unfortunately, their adherence to the Torres style of fighting (see page 97) has stymied their efforts.

Noble Heroes whose father is a Torres pay only 22 HP to purchase the Torres Swordsman School at character creation, but they may not purchase the Dirty Fighting Skill under any circumstance.

Noble Heroes whose mother is a Torres receive a free 3-point Dispossessed Background and 100G extra starting money, but they must purchase a Hubris and only receive 6 HP for it.

The Zepeda Family

Another of Castille's refugee families, the Zepeda have fared somewhat better than their Torres cousins. As the Montaigne advance began to lose steam, the Zepeda rallied a Castillian army and made their stand at La Muralla al Ultimo.

Prior to the war, the Zepedas made their fortune in much the same way as the Torres. Prosperous farmlands and access to waterways has allowed them to marshal considerable resources against the Montaigne. Now Rancho Zepeda and its surviving family members symbolize Castille's determination to resist the invasion. The family has turned its resources to wartime production and defense, using its farmlands to feed the troops, its sparse woods to maintain La Muralla, and its few ports as logistical supply and staging centers.

The current patriarch of the family is General Don Ciro Lopez del Zepeda, who was thrust into his role when his parents, Don and Doña Zepeda, were captured and executed during the invasion.

He harbors an extreme hatred of the Montaigne for his family's death, and occasionally lashes out at whomever happens to be near. Zepeda knows that the defense of this area is best left to professional soldiers while he manages the steady flow of supplies. So far, his fervor to excise the Montaigne from his homeland has fueled General Montoya's effective campaign of unexpected attacks along the enemy flanks. Also of note is Montoya's son, Captain Jorge Vasquez del Zepeda, who commands an artillery battery in the western sector of La Muralla.

Classically, Zepedas are incredibly pious and isolationist, the remnants of a Vaticine colony established following the Hieros War. Most inland Castillians see their holdings as the "wilds" of the nation, far away from anything that matters. The Zepeda's sudden shift to the front line of the war with Montaigne has forced both their own nobility and that of the central basin to reassess their relationship. If the war is to be won here, it will have to be with the cooperation of both parties.

Noble Heroes whose father is a Zepeda pay only 22 HP to purchase the Zepeda Swordsman School at character creation, but they may not purchase the Performer Skill under any circumstance.





Noble Heroes whose mother is a Zepeda receive the Priest Skill for free and receive 12HP if they take the Overzealous Hubris, but they may not take a Virtue under any circumstances.

Lesser Nobility

As discussed at the beginning of this section, the Lesser Nobility of Castille are widespread and diverse. Castille has more nobles per capita than any other nation on Thêah, and its social ladder is far easier to climb. In Castille, it is into uncommon to find Dons less wealthy than the commoners they walk among, or commoners who are as rich as the courtiers that they hail.

Recently, the influx of disenfranchised Dons has begun to take its toll. More and more lesser nobility are arriving at the doorstep of those in the central basin, looking for food, shelter, and company. This is placing an unprecedented strain upon the economy of the remaining landed Dons, who are doubly troubled by the needs of the armies on the front line.

The following is a list of most remaining noble lines in Castille. Others exist as well, but they are left open for players and GMs to develop as they see fit. The lesser noble lines all fall within the purview of one of the major families, depending upon where their lands are.

Acedo: Now under Montaigne dominion in Rancho Zepeda, the Acedos are known for their shallow port city of La Reina del Mar and its productive fisheries.

Arciniega: Descendants of original Vodacce colonists, the Arciniegas are renowned scientists based in the sophisticated city of Altamira.

Avila: The Avilas are administrators, alcalde, and gubenedores (governors) within the city that they founded. For more on the city of Avila, see page 38.

Bejarano: The lands of the Bejaranos are located to the north of Tarago. Their rich farmlands flank wide, well-constructed roads left over from the Old Republic's occupation of the Acragan basin.

Garcia: Located at the foot of the northern end of La Sierra de Hierro, the Garcia family's primary trade is the resale of Gallegos ore to the Soldanos.

Grijalva: Once fervent supporters of the Vaticine Church and religious pilgrims who traveled as far as Ussura and Avalon, the Grijalva were forced into exile when the Inquisition found a heretic within their number. Now the family lives within *La Selva de Fendes* ("The Forest of Fiends", north of Vaticine City), and can occasionally be hired as guides.

Guzman: Famed boatsmen with holdings in the center of Rancho Aldana, the Guzman family ferries troops and ammunition along the nation's many rivers.

Lopez: Owners of the territory across the Rio de Delia from El Morro, the Lopez family has been scattered by the Montaigne armies. They now wage a bitter guerrilla war with the Montaigne. If the forces at El Morro could contact them, the situation along the Rio de Delia would improve dramatically.

Montoya: Half of the remaining nobility behind La Muralla al Ultimo, the Montoya family have always been known for their remarkable military minds and burly warrior stock. The general currently defending the southern front is a Montoya.

Nuñez: The Nuñez family – peaceful artists and farmers – were quickly overrun by the Montaigne invaders immediately after the fall of the Ochoa lands. Nuñez holdings have been annexed and their children "conscripted" by the Montaigne.

Ontiveros: Cutthroat politicians and diplomats, the Ontiveros are found along the shores of the River across from Eisen in Rancho Soldano. Their matriarch, Doña Angela de Garcia del Ontiveros, delights in exiling enemies into Vodacce, where they are "doomed to fate."

Ramirez: The second half of the Castillian forces defending La Muralla al Ultimo, the Ramirez family was founded by repentant criminals who turned to Theus.



Today, they proselytize among the dying and offer last rites to the fallen dragged back within the fortress.

Rioja: Another bloodline that founded a city in Castille, the Riojas are some of the oldest of the nation's nobility. They are also decaying from within, corrupted by the illicit trade and pirate activity within their city.

Rios: Owning much of the fertile lands flanking Rancho Aldana's swift rivers, the Rios family is among the wealthiest of the lesser nobility. Their fruits, vegetables, and wine are world-renowned.

Rivera: Controlling the Soldano lands adjacent to both the Gallegos and Aldana Ranchos, the Riveras are extremely careful about who passes through their holdings.

Rodriguez: All but obliterated by the Montaigne, this Torres family is mostly in hiding now.

Vasquez: One of the few noble families to enter La Sierra de Hierro on a regular basis, the Vasquez family are miners and lumberers.

Velasquez: Absorbed by the Montaigne in Rancho Zepeda, the Velasquez produce excellent crafts.

Yañez: The Yañez are horse-breeders, trainers, and traders from Rancho Gallegos.

Naming Practices

Names in Castille are more than a unique identifier for the individual; they are also reflective of the families the individual was born into. The following model shows the distinct parts of a Castilian name. Keep in mind that these are guidelines, not unbending rules. Constant ethnic mixing and local naming customs have produced a great deal of variety.

Noble Title – Given Name – Maternal Family Name – de – Paternal Family Name – del – Native Country

Noble Title: If the individual has a title of nobility, it precedes their name.

Given Name: The first name, given by parents at birth.

Maternal Family Name: The middle name, taken out of respect for the mother's family.

“de”: lit. “of”; used to preface the paternal family name.

Paternal Family Name: The last name, taken to identify the individual's direct paternal lineage; may also be used to identify the region of Castille the individual is from.

“del”: lit. a contraction of “de el” meaning “of the”, but more commonly accepted as meaning “from” (to indicate what country the individual is from).

Native Country: Used to indicate which part of Théah the individual is from.

ex. Don Pablo Aldana de Lopez del Castillo

“Don” signifies that he is a landed noble (lit. “sir”), and Pablo is his given name. “Aldana” is his mother's maiden name, and “de Lopez” signifies that he is of the Lopez family. If he were traveling outside of the country, “del Castillo” would signify that he was from Castille.

Married Women

Married women and non-nobility follow the same model as above, but with a few variations.

Noble Title – Given Name – Maternal Family Name – Paternal Family Name – de – Husband's Paternal Family Name – del – Native Country





ex. *Doña Celina Bejarano Aldana de Ontiveros del Castillo*

“Doña” signifies that she is, or is married to, a noble. “Celina” is her given name, and “Bejarano” is her mother’s maiden name. “Aldana” is her paternal family name (and likely the region of Castille where she grew up). “De Ontiveros” signifies that she is married to a noble of the Ontiveros family. “Del Castillo” signifies that she is from Castille.

Non-Nobles

Given Name – Paternal Family Name – de – Native Region
– del – Native Country

ex. *Juan Garcia de Vasquez del Castillo*

“Juan” is his given name, and “Garcia” is his father’s family name. “De Vasquez” signifies that he is from Rancho Vasquez in eastern Castille, and/or serves the noble Vasquez family. On the rare occasion that a non-noble travels abroad, he too would use “del Castillo” to signify what country he is from.

In the case of married a non-noble woman, simply replace her Paternal Family Name with her husband’s paternal Family Name.

Children

It is formal tradition for children and noble heirs to introduce themselves as above (when their parents are not with them), and then indicate their parents’ names.

ex. *Miguel Soldano de Jauregui, El hijo de José Ochoa de Jauregui del Castillo*

“El hijo de....” (lit. “The son of....”).

“La hija de....” (lit. “The daughter of....”).

Given Name: The child’s first name, given by parents at birth (or set at baptism during a church ceremony).

The suffix “-ito” (lit. “little”) denotes affection for a male child; “-ita” is used for girls. If the child’s name ends in a vowel, the vowel is dropped before “-ito” or “-ita” is added.

ex. *Miguel becomes Miguelito and Rosa becomes Rosita*



The nation of Castille is divided into five large regions called ranchos, each nominally administered by one of the major families. Each of these ranchos is described below, with information about its prominent cities, rulers, and other features.

Rancho Aldana

Ruler: Don Francisco Guzman del Aldana de Castillo

Dialect Spoken: Aldana *This is the Castillian accent described in the Players’ Guide.*

The heart of Castille and home to the courtly and gracious Aldana Family, this area embodies most outsiders’ notions of the nation as a whole. It contains nearly every feature the country is famous for – lush rolling hills surrounded by lush fields, thick forests of oak, pine, and carob trees, and oceans brimming with lobsters, salmon, and sea bream.

Rancho Aldana is also home to several of the most important cities in Castille. Vaticine City – the nominal capital and home to the Castillian Church – rests at the larger confluence of rivers within the central basin, surrounded by sprawling ranchos, private homes, open-air merchant galleries, and simple farms. Tarago and La Pasiega – commercial trading centers – rest along the coastline of La Boca de Cielo, accepting cargo shipments from all across Théah.



El Morro – the most important defensive location in Castille and strategic headquarters for the main front – lies at the far border of Rancho Aldana, where new recruits, crops, and arms are abundant and easy to distribute. Finally, San Cristobal – the seat of national politics – covers a large outlet jutting into La Boca de Cielo, several hundred feet above the crashing waves of the bay.

El Morro

Population: 2000 infantry, 500 artillery crewmen, and 500 support troops

Quite possibly the single most impenetrable fortress in all of Théah, El Morro (literally “The Black One”) stands as a testament to Castillian ingenuity and engineering acumen. It stands upon a rocky knoll at the confluence of El Rio de Dios and El Rio de Delia, its massive, ominous parapets rimmed with the finest cannons Castillian foundries can produce. The four-story walls of solid black granite, quarried from La Sierra Hierro, are flush with the water lines to the west and south east, and the Pantano Grande – a massive swamp – forms its northern defense line. Because of the surrounding terrain’s peculiar triangular arrangement, the only practical methods of seizing the

fortress are an amphibious assault across one of the rivers to scale the walls, or trudging through the thick swamp. Both prospects are nearly impossible.

El Morro houses the Royal Artillery Academy, where all of Castille’s land and naval gunners are schooled, and serves as the testing ground for new cannon designs, powder mixtures, and gun carriages. Dons Grijalva and Guzman – the commanding officers at the fortress – frequently call upon these resources to help defend Rancho Aldana’s western border, and have field-tested several new innovations here with great success.

The secret to El Morro’s defensive might are the cannons, their well-drilled and disciplined crew, and their pivoting gun carriages. El Morro’s engineers sought ways to best maximize their firepower, and devised a pivoting gun carriage that allows the cannon to swivel 45 degrees from center in either direction (90 degrees on the corners of the fortress). This allows the crews to continuously fire upon enemy ships as they sail alongside the fortress. So far, no ship has been built strong enough or fast enough to outrun the guns of El Morro.





El Morro's garrison crews are currently commanded by General Bardo Rivera del Rios, who is also the Headmaster of the Royal Artillery Academy. El Morro boasts a garrison of 2000 infantry troops who supplement the site's firepower with their muskets. These men and women are perpetually posted at murder holes and gun slits that ring the perimeter of the building's third floor.

Meanwhile, El Morro's parapets are the heart of its defensive strength, adorned with 150 siege guns of varying sizes (20–30 pound cannon are common along the riverfronts, with 10–15 pound guns are posted along the swamp). El Morro also maintains a hospital, blacksmith, and cannon repair foundry, a well-protected powder magazine and weapons arsenal, food stores, and enough (cramped) living space for the entire garrison.

La Pasiega

Population: 30,000

While Castille has many ports, none is more important than La Pasiega (save perhaps the capital of San Cristobal). La Pasiega is the home of the College of Naval Engineering, where Castillian shipwrights learn their craft, and the Naval Shipyards, which equip the Castillian Armada and merchant fleets. The city is situated only a few miles east of the southern mouth of Rio de Delia. Its sandy beaches and shallow inclines allow for excellent dry dock facilities as well.

Until the war, La Pasiega's population was close to 20,000, and most citizens worked at either the shipyards or the college. However, the need to protect Castille's coasts has created a demand for labor in the outlying areas, and La Pasiega's population has swelled to nearly 30,000. These are citizens the city needs to keep up with the war effort, but that it is also ill-equipped to handle. Needless to say, this has created tension among its populace, who, while remaining patriotic, are feeling the pressure of wartime production.

There is no siesta in La Pasiega, and the shipwrights work from sunrise to sunset. Several units of the Castillian army are stationed here as well, to prevent the Montaigne from crossing the river. Their huge cannons, high walls, and

occasional forays across El Rio de Delia have kept the Montaigne from disrupting work at the shipyards. Tavern brawls are common in the evening, when laborers, soldiers, and sailors all seek refuge in tankards of beer. La Pasiega's constabulary are overworked as well; if they're not throwing the *borachos* (drunks) in jail, they're sniffing out Montaigne saboteurs. El Vago has even been seen assisting the poor *alcalde* here, and rumors persist that the legendary hero may in fact be a resident of the city.

La Selva de Fendes (“The Forest of Fiends”)

Population: Unknown

There are many theories about Castille's northern forest. More than anywhere else in Castille save perhaps La Sierra de Hierro, this place has become the root of superstition and fear. Everyone from the scholars of nearby Altamira to the local Grijalva guides has their own idea about the strange occurrences within the area. Wild tales of demons and hidden cults regularly circulate through the nearby communities.

Recently, the Théan Explorer's Society has taken an interest in La Selva de Fendes. At first, their investigation focused on the stories of demons and their monstrous minions, but several of their more pragmatic observers have become fascinated with the mundane possibilities as well. Currently, two camps are each racing to publish their findings, in the hopes of obtaining new funding from the Society's founders.

The “monster-hunting” camp is headed up by a feisty cartographer named Sienna de Guzman del Torres, who spent much of her early career hunting what she calls “roaming dead” in the sewers of Charouse. Sienna has faith in the fantastic, and believes that the forest is haunted by denizens of the mythical Eisen underworld. After studying the ancient lineages, birth and death records, and anecdotal accounts of the Fischler and Sieger königreichen for several years, Sienna believes she is ready to tackle the truth behind the superstition.

Almost immediately upon setting up camp within La Selva de Fendes, Sienna's group ran into trouble. Food stocks were first ransacked and then stolen. Landmarks they used



moved or vanished, as did tracking markers they set in place; several of their party went missing. Soon enough, the guides discovered that someone (or something) was following them through the forest. But still, Sienna and her stout assistants have emerged from the forest three times, each without any proof of a supernatural presence. A fourth trip is currently being planned.

The second group is composed of independent scholars who believe that the legends surrounding La Selva de Fendes are nothing more than an elaborate hoax. Led by an Eisen Objectivist named Gregor Wische, they contend that the menace within the forest is human, most likely a group of criminals escaped from a Sieger prison several years ago. The fugitives were convicted for terrorizing a small village during the War of the Cross, a tactic the Wische expedition believes they continue to use under the disguise of Castillian folklore.

Outside these two expeditions and occasional military envoys, most Castillians avoid La Selva de Fendes. Whether or not servants of Legion actually haunt this place, the locals certainly don't seem eager to find out.

San Cristobal

Population: 180,000

The traditional Castillian capital is famous for its architecture and complex aqueduct and sewage systems (both designed primarily by Crescent occupants). The center of the city is both beautiful and highly defensible, rising and falling by slight grades which accommodate its many guard towers and ramparts. Even the highly-regarded mosques and cathedrals designed by the Crescent invaders are decorated with exterior alcoves spaced to allow for maximum defensive troop placement.

At one time, the Vaticine Cardinals threaten to tear down the city's numerous Crescent structures. But Castille's military lodged an effective argument in the halls of Vaticine City's courts, ensuring that San Cristobal's relics would remain intact. Today, new buildings stand around the original Crescent designs, forming an "outer ring" where most commoners and roving Dons live. This ring contains

countless promenades and plazas, painted in brilliant colors to blend in with the lasting vibrancy of the Crescent structures.

Perhaps the most impressive structure in San Cristobal is the *Turbe Malik* (the "Crypt of Kings"), where the greatest weapons and works of art left behind by the Crescents are displayed beside the tombs of their most honored dead. At one time during the Crescent occupation this building was used as a monastery and royal residence, but it was closed during the First Crusade to protect its precious contents from possible theft or vandalism. Today, the sprawling complex (located at the pinnacle of the highest man-made hill in the city) is among the first buildings seen by approaching visitors.

In addition to the nation's bureaucratic headquarters, San Cristobal also houses one of the world's foremost universities. The University of San Cristobal was built within an old Crescent garrison, and houses a substantial percentage of the nation's scientists. The Inquisition has been unable to close its doors thus far (although they're not above abducting an unwary professor or two), making it a haven for displaced students and teachers. Hundreds have flocked here from occupied Castille, pushing its resources to the limit. Still, the faculty makes do, and the University continues to make impressive advances in the scientific arts.

Tarago

Population: 75,000

Tarago stands within easy defensive range of both La Pasiega and San Cristobal, and is the home port for much of the Castillian Navy. After being launched from La Pasiega, new ships venture out for a test cruise around La Boca de Cielo and return to Tarago for their guns, crew, and orders. Thereafter, most naval ships call Tarago home.



Castille



Unlike its sister city, La Pasiega, Tarago's population has remained fairly constant throughout the centuries. Even with Castille's navy growing by leaps and bounds, Tarago has more than enough room in its port facilities to house it. Over 200 warships are currently housed and supplied in Tarago.

The city also houses the Orduño family, whose patriarch commands all Castillian war fleets. The Orduños hope to use Tarago as a marshaling ground for the newly restored Castillian Armada as they venture out against the Montaigne fleet.

The bulk of Tarago's citizenry works to support the navy, resupplying and repairing the ships as necessary. Tarago boasts the most sophisticated and complex naval supply depot in all of Théah. Like La Pasiega, it has indefinitely suspended the tradition of siesta (afternoon break), and divided the labor force into two shifts to maintain round-the-clock operations at the naval base.

Vaticine City

Population: 140,000

Though San Cristobal is the hub of most trade and military conventions within Castille, Vaticine City is the official capital – at least these days. It is also the religious center of the world, housing the seat of Vaticine power (vacant since

the death of the Hierophant in Montaigne four years ago). Finally, Vaticine City currently hosts Castille's political forums, which take place in a sprawling Crescent-designed labyrinth affectionately called "the Palace of Wolves." This is where all the diplomatic decisions for the nation are made, where tax rates are set, and where regional boundaries are demarcated. These are the functions of the Gubenadores (see the Government section, page 58).

Currently, the situation in the Palace of Wolves is dire. The Gubenadores are faced with reorganizing and redistributing land after the loss of Rancho Torres and most of Zepeda. They are besieged by roving Dons who seek recompense or the right and resources to seek retribution.

Until the war erupted with Montaigne, the ranchos of Castille were always divided equally among the landed Dons. Since few new Dons were named each year, the shifts were gradual and few quick judgments were required to sustain the system. But with so much land suddenly gone, and fallen lords coming out of the woodwork to claim recompense, it is becoming harder and harder to accommodate everyone's needs.

The Gubenadores have recently frozen land distribution until a satisfactory solution to the current problem can be found. This disturbs many, as it stagnates the Castillian government, a condition the people have never had to deal with before. Some have even said (in guarded company) that this is the first step toward a centralized, unrelenting government like Montaigne's.

In addition to housing the Church and the *de facto* government, Vaticine City also contains the famed La Ciencia university, the spearhead of knowledge for the entire country (more information on La Ciencia can be found on page 58).

Rancho Gallegos

Ruler: Don Samuel Vasquez de Gallegos

Dialect Spoken: Gallegos (see page 101)

Rancho Gallegos is one of Castille's most important resources, though newcomers to the nation would never discern it as such. Castillians tend to avoid the area, treating it like a separate country altogether. But this does not stop them from enjoying the area's rich mines and sea ports. Gallegos exports are devalued while its mines are stripped for the war effort. Gallegos fishermen must construct their own ships and train their own crews, but the populace of the central basin are more than willing to rely upon their abundant catch each year to feed their own.

This antipathy rises from a combination of physical separation (most of Rancho Gallegos is lost between the rocky shores and the craggy peaks of La Sierra de Hierro) and centuries-old superstitions regarding the mountain range. Most Castillians believe that the Gallegos Family trade with the infidel Crescent Empire against the express orders of the Vaticine Church. Even worse, the last practitioners of *El Fuego Adentro* supposedly fled here following the Second Crusade and their descendants may still exist amid the hidden villages and lonely peaks. Occasional reports of fiery monsters and men who walk unharmed through raging infernos lend credence to these rumors.

Still, regardless of the average Castillian's feelings, Rancho Gallegos is both productive and picturesque. The oceans surrounding the peninsula are calm and well-mannered, and the fishermen that tap them are friendly and well-meaning. The mountain ranges are physically wild, exotic, and largely uncharted, filled with wild animals and lost gullies and ravines. Shepherds, miners, and reclusive settlers dot the edges of La Sierra de Hierro's snow-capped peaks, where

the heaviest rainfall in all of Castille can be found (between 30 and 60 inches a year). The highest mountains reach over 10,000 feet high, surrounded by dusty brown highlands, sharp valleys, and occasional Crescent-style castles along the high cliffs overlooking the western Forbidden Sea.

Rancho Gallegos' interior houses a sturdy and aloof people, who refer to themselves as Acragans in honor of the original settlers of the Castillian basin. They do not accept strangers or outsiders very easily, and are defensive about their holdings. Though these people are considered part of Castille, they are generally left to their own devices.

Avila

Population: 18,000

Resting on what is commonly known as the "Peninsula of Oranges," Avila's claim to fame is its bountiful crops of the tasty fruit. The orchards begin practically on the beach and extend as far as the eye can see. Three times per year, the orange trees blossom, a strikingly beautiful sight to behold. The famous Sea Dog, Jeremiah Berek, once approached the coastline with the *Black Dawn* just to marvel at the orange blossoms' beauty. As he was leaving the Avila coastline, he attacked an inbound merchant ship and made off with nearly one thousand barrels of Sherry-sack wine. (The drink





was once unknown to Avalon, but now graces the tables of most of its nobles.)

La Sierra de Hierro (“The Saw of Iron”)

Population: Unknown (at least 10,000)

The mountain range of La Sierra de Hierro stretches from the southern end of the Peninsula of Oranges nearly to the edge of the River. Though most outsiders look on its jagged cliffs and deep channels with suspicion, its inhabitants embrace its stark beauty, considering it a point of pride. Having little contact with the outside world (or its deceit, bickering, and paranoia), the inhabitants of La Sierra de Hierro have developed an attitude which is more egalitarian and less pretentious than elsewhere in the nation. They are also physically distinctive, less swarthy and stockier, with prominent facial features and stubby fingers.

There is also rumored to be a collection of rogues and outcasts within La Sierra de Hierro, called Los Nublados, which means “Those of the Clouds.” Some believe they are the last practitioners of *El Fuego Adentro*, carving their own kingdom in the mountains. Others maintain they are the ghosts of those who refused the wisdom of the Second Prophet, and who perished in immortal peril. Either way, stories of a band of spectral renegades regularly emerge from La Sierra de Hierro.

In the 1500s, a group of explorers led by Don Louis Trejo went in search of these elusive individuals, but returned empty-handed. Trejo himself was committed to a Castilian asylum shortly thereafter, claiming night terrors about “men bathed in blue fire shot through with the shadow of death.” None of his men would speak of his strange rambling, and all retired or died within the following decade. No one has dared go searching for Los Nublados again, but stories continue to circulate. The mystery remains.

Malaca

Population: 12,000

Malaca is known for three things: logging, shellfish, and the independence of its inhabitants. The remote, isolated city is battered by high winds and merciless tides, cut off from the

mainland by La Sierra de Hierro. Due to their isolationism and ancestry, the people of this area remain fiercely independent, and since much of their culture and ancestry has been influenced by the Crescents, they maintain their own culture and beliefs.

Unlike most Théan cities, which spiral out from a central hub, Malaca emerged from the union of a wooded logging operation and a small Crescent settlement near the beach. As a result, the city sprang up on either side of a road leading from the loggers to the docks. The majority of citizens make their living as loggers, while the rest work in support positions in town or on the fishing boats.

When the tide goes out during shellfish season, hundreds of people scour the beach on foot or venture out in boats. Cockles, clams, oysters, barnacles, and scallops all wash up on the beach by the thousands. This peculiar crop not only feeds the town, but is traded for a handsome income when merchant ships arrive.

Puerto de Sur

Population: 27,000

The second-most affluent trading port in Rancho Gallegos after San Felipe, Puerto de Sur is a pleasant port town which – surprisingly enough – has virtually no fishing trade. Originally a Numan stronghold, a small town swelled when a wealthy Castillian philanthropist devoted huge sums of money to restoring the old ruins. Now a combination of tourist attraction and trading post, Puerto de Sur has become a remote vacation spot for the illustriously rich.

Visitors to Puerto de Sur can marvel at the preserved Numan monuments dotting the hills surrounding the city, including a three-mile long aqueduct system (which engineers say would function if water were diverted from the lower mountain lakes), fountains built to recycle water constantly through systems of subterranean pipes, and a complex series of cavern-cathedrals dug out from the side of nearby cliffs. The cavern walls absorb light in the morning and cast it out by degrees throughout the day; some of the stalactite formations create vibrant, hypnotic patterns, which can put viewers to sleep.



Rioja

Population: 31,000

This quiet fishing port is famous for its lobsters, coves, and picturesque beaches. The ruins of a castle, sacked by pirates over a century ago, can still be seen at its edge. A lone watchtower still stands at the site, occasionally illuminated by the locals during special occasions.

Although only a modest community, Rioja produces one-third of Castille's seafood supply. Some of the best marine dishes in all of Rancho Gallegos can be found locally at the Aquilas Inn. The proprietor, Martin Guzman, is as famous for his colorful banter as he is for his cuisine. Although a bit expensive for the area, many of the locals are willing to pay Martin's high prices just to hear the stories of his "glory days" as a privateer.

San Eliseo

Population: 22,000

With a population of over 20,000, San Eliseo is the second most populated city in Gallegos. The bustling mercantile port boasts palm-lined promenades, splendid taverns, and outdoor cafes. Its beaches are vast and beautiful, and hundreds of people flock to their shores each day. Anything one could possibly need can be found here, as trade comes in from all over Théah.

The great Castillo de Santa Marillo watches the city from atop the nearby cliffs. The castle not only appears impregnable; it has proven to be so time and again. Many years ago, the castle was besieged by Crescent invaders, who captured the commander's son, Hector de Basquez, and threatened to slit his throat unless the garrison surrendered. The elder Basquez threw them his own knife from the ramparts, saying "It is better to lose a son with honor, than lose a castle in disgrace." Basquez lost his son that day, but Castillo de Santa Marillo has yet to be conquered by a foreign power.

San Eliseo is also the headquarters for the mining operations throughout La Sierra de Hierro. Gold, silver, weapon-quality iron, and other valuable metals are mined

throughout the mountains, and an organization has been established to oversee the operation (under the watchful eye of the military, of course). The head of the mining company, Miguel de Trujillo, grows richer with each passing day. It is rumored that miners have been disappearing in the mountains, and that Miguel may be looking for some heroes to look into the matter.

San Felipe

Population: 13,000

San Felipe offers neither good beaches nor sunny weather, and with the exception of the Dragos tree (see below), is barren to the point of desolation. However, the waters off its coast teem with fish. Although San Felipe began as a fishing village, it has since transformed into a permanent military garrison and a staging area for the Castillian Navy. It hosts one of the largest docks in the country; from this location, Castillian ships can easily protect the gulf from





marauding pirates and brigands. The city supports a modest civilian population of fishermen as well, though the military restricts when and where they may ply their trade.

A primitive plant known as the Dragos tree is native to the region. Dragos trees sport bizarre, pointy foliage and thick red sap which resembles blood. The largest specimen in the area is over 70 feet tall with a girth of more than 25 feet, and is believed to be over two thousand years old. Montaigne sorcerers believe that the sap of this tree contains magical properties, which can be tapped with the proper preparation.

San Gustavo

Population: 19,000

In the valley east of La Sierra de Hierro rests one of the most fertile sites in all of Rancho Gallegos. Here, the stark geographical contrast of the region is readily apparent, as the limy soil of the hills gives way to the intense lushness of a wide valley. Vegetables, oranges, peaches, and grapes flourish here, surrounding the capital of Rancho Gallegos, San Gustavo.

The city is completely surrounded by sheer stone walls, which boast more than eighty towers and 2,500 niches used by sentries and snipers. Although the city appears grim from the outside, its interior contains all the bustle and commotion common in Castilian trade cities. Notable locations within San Gustavo include the Plaza Mayor (Main Square), the Cathedral, and the University.

The Plaza Mayor is a vast open marketplace of cobbled stone, surrounded on three sides by towering buildings sporting more than four-hundred over-hanging balconies. The triangular Plaza can be reached on all sides through any of seven different archways. Although primarily used as a marketplace, the Plaza also serves as a stage for pageants, bullfights, and even executions.

At the heart of the city lies Catedral de Santa Arcusa, one of Castille's grandest religious sites. Its bell towers, which taper to a cupola with a wide turret, are easily the tallest structures in the city.

In the northwestern corner of the city, well away from the bustle of the streets, stands Colegio de Santa Lucio, the largest university in Gallegos and fourth-largest in the country. The structure was built not only as a place of learning, but also as a place of beauty. Its golden spires rise elegantly into the sky, casting shadows upon the green gardens below. The cloisters are immaculately detailed and trimmed with carved Crescent gold, as are the main chambers. The most striking aspect of the university, however, is the gold-lined engravings on the beautifully arranged tiles of the refectory.

Rancho Soldano

Ruler: Don Diego Ruiz de Ontiveros

Dialect Spoken: Soldano (see page 102)

Nestled between the high high inland peaks of La Sierra de Hierro and La Selva de Fendes (and technically containing part of both), Rancho Soldano is almost completely rural. In fact, with the exception of Altamira (see below), there are no major cities. A few remote military garrisons dot the wine fields, rocky lowlands, and light forest edges, but other than that, the area is completely devoid of urban renovation.

This is partly out of preference. The Castellians desired a natural border between themselves and the world. In the days of the Old Empire and the Crescent occupation, the Soldano territories were almost always the first to be taken. While this has given the area a rather cosmopolitan feel, it has done little to convince the government to build anything here for outsiders to seize.

The primary centers of activity within Rancho Soldano are along the foothills of La Sierra de Hierro, where the terrain has been carefully carved to create only two plausible entrances into the mountain range (both perpetually guarded by Castilian troops). The light forests at the eastern edge of La Selva de Fendes share little of the wooded interior's reputation. Much of the forest in this region has been "weeded" down and turned into a huntsmen's range, the popularity of which is growing by the month. More and



more avid trackers and marksmen are making their way here, and several have even constructed small homes in nearby Altamira.

Altamira

Population: 25,000 (native residents); 75,000 (day-to-day)

The riverport city of Altamira is far away from the ravages of the war with Montaigne and the bleeding throats of the gubenedores (see page 20). It has been called the most peaceful place in Castille, where the simplicity of rural bliss ease rigors of daily life. Altamira's unpaved streets evoke a lost age, when matters of love and sin were young, and man's innocence had yet to end.

Altamira is nestled within the far western cradle of La Selva de Fendes, at the northernmost edge of Rancho Soldano. The area was forever changed in the twelfth century, when the High King of Castille decided to establish a riverport for trade with the Eisen, Montaigne, and Vodacce. Early trade flourished, and a small township grew around the docks, followed shortly by an expanded trade center.

Today, Altamira is one of mainland Théah's chief mercantile hubs, hosting buyers and sellers from all across the continent. It is the home of the famed de Cordoba family, whose commercial and money-lending interests have shaped modern Castille's economy. The family owns the Altamira docks and everything within easy sighting distance (save the University; see below), and commands a slice of every penny made in every shop in town (commonly 1 doubloon [5 Guilders] for every 10 that exchange hands).

The de Cordoba family has many other interests in Altamira as well. Their shipwrights specialize in small, shallow-water craft, keeping them out of competition with the Orduño craftsmen of La Pasiega, and deriving a healthy dividend from the regular traffic passing along the Great River. They also own many of the deeds to businesses, private homes, and other buildings in town, ensuring that they receive a constant influx of money as the city grows. Finally, they also own and operate the local bullfighting arena, *La Vengaza*, named after its most famous bull.

Paseo Largo ("The Long Walk")

A long line of shops, merchant courtyards, and flea markets stands behind Altamira's riverside docks. These outlets are known for the wide variety of products they offer, featuring food and drink, crafts, services, and souvenirs from all across the known world. Except for the Vaticine guard station (where import and export shipments are inspected; see Church Embargoes on page 69 for more), it is rare to find anything strictly Castillian along Paseo Largo.

But the attitude here – unlike the paranoid stalls of Vodacce's merchant quarters or the stuffy arrogance of the Vendel ports – is purely Castillian. Prices are fair, quality is high, and service is second to none. Browsing is not only accepted but encouraged, and smiles adorn the faces of everyone who lives here. The stores of Paseo Largo all recognize siesta, and people often visit the boardwalk as an afternoon distraction. Fireworks, free lunches within the large plazas between shops, and children's games are all common during this time. Many of Paseo Largo's store owners even offer gifts to their patrons during siesta.

The Guild of San Marcos

This branch of the Théan Swordsman's Guild is one of the most frequently-visited centers in Paseo Largo. Recently established by Eduardo Montevada, a savvy man who holds several seats in the guild (and has for many years), this office handles matters in Montaigne, Castille, Vodacce, and Eisen. Its central location helped to establish the Guild of San Marcos, but their fair and courteous service ensured their popularity amongst the duelists of Théah. Today, the Guild of San Marcos is widely considered one of the world's foremost bastions of gentlemanly competition.

La Universidad de Arciniega

Centered within Altamira – between Paseo Largo and the private ranches that form the city's inner half – the famed University of Arciniega features several well-stocked laboratories, one of the most comprehensive libraries in all of Théah (especially concerning matters of mathematics and the natural sciences), and the tallest, most profoundly inspiring cathedral in Rancho Soldano. La Trinidad ("The



Trinity”) strikes into the sky’s heart at over one hundred and fifty feet, with three separate bell towers decorated with sculpted statues of the first Three Prophets, surrounding an immense Vatican cross. The university’s founder and former headmaster, Alvara Arciniega (see page 66), is currently in hiding from the Inquisition.

Centro del Mundo

The Montaigne call Charouse the center of the world, but Castillians steadfastly disagree. For natives of the central basin, Altamira is home to everyone – even those who reside elsewhere. Every major family maintains a private ranch here, including the royal Sandovals (whose property extends from the forest’s edge across El Lago del Reyes, the Lake of Kings). The royal family takes several months here each year, hunting in the nearby forests and visiting with their “extended family”, the people of Altamira.

Rancho Torres

Ruler: Montaigne/Doña Elodia Avila del Torres de Castillo (currently in exile)

Dialect Spoken: Torres (see page 102)

Rancho Torres hosts the richest farmland in all Castille. Nearly any crop can be grown here with ease (though the natives tend to focus on a few specific crops, in keeping with foreign demand). The topsoil benefits from the tributaries of the Rio de Dios to the east, the Great River to the North, and the Frothing Sea to the west.

Much of the labor force was killed during the Montaigne invasion; the remainder serve the Castillian armed forces or have fled to the east, seeking refuge in free Castille. Until the enemy can muster enough laborers of their own, the rich Torres fields will go unharvested, severely limiting Montaigne’s forward advance.

The once prosperous trade centers of this rancho are now only shadows of their former selves. Montaigne colonists seeking to seize its rich soil have encountered violent resistance from the remaining native populace, who have established a complex network of guerrilla factions. These resistance fighters are fueled by the deep religious faith that

all Torres citizens share, drawing strength from the knowledge that Theus supports their cause.

The remainder of Rancho Torres consists of sandy beaches, muddy estuaries, small fishing ports, and villages of low grey and white houses. In the west, storms from the Frothing Sea frequently batter the rocky capes, and townships dot the shoreline, hidden from the ravages of the elements by low-hanging cliffsides and deep lagoons. Some of these “pit stops” along the Castille border are known only to the Castillian navy, and have not yet been discovered by the Montaigne invaders. They survive by catching oysters, mussels, and crab, and drinking stores of freshwater kept in case of emergency.

Barcino

Population: 50,000

Companion to the Montaigne port of Buché, Barcino sprawls across the southern tip of the mouth of the Great River. Part of Rancho Ochoa (itself a part of Rancho Torres), Barcino is now a primary staging area for the Montaigne troops who strive to subjugate Castille’s southwestern peninsula. Barcino’s harbor offers excellent docking facilities for ships bound up the Great River.

Now that the Montaigne control both sides of the River, heavy tolls have been levied on all but Montaigne trade ships. Many Barcino citizens – of those who survived the invasion – have either fled into the surrounding countryside or joined the elaborate resistance movement. So far, their efforts have only destroyed one Montaigne merchant ship (which was docked in the harbor at the time it was set aflame), and razed a few supply depots.

Crushing this rebellion has proven quite a headache for Montaigne’s puppet-mayor and his pro-Montaigne constabulary. Barcino’s citizens have not forgotten Don Ochoa’s treachery (see page 23), and many have vowed to die to protect their fair city from the vile invaders.

Rancho Zepeda

Ruler: General Don Jose Rioja del Zepeda de Castillo



Dialect Spoken: Zepeda (see page 102)

Like its sister rancho to the north, Rancho Zepeda was once lush farmland that supplied most of Castille's grain. Now it is a wasteland of battles won and lost. La Muralla al Ultimo (The Last Wall) stands as the only barrier preventing Montaigne forces from conquering the whole of the western Castillian Peninsula. The bulk of Rancho Zepeda's populace now serves in the Castillian army at the wall, or has fled to the eastern side of the gulf. The farmland preserved by the Montaigne invaders is being worked by colonists or labor imported from Montaigne.

The Wall is a complex network of wood and soil abatis with trenchwork on the Castille side, allowing infantry to shower the Montaigne forces with musketry while maximizing their own cover. The area on both sides of the wall has been wiped clean of all natural resources to support the combatants' efforts.

Both sides have the time and space to build and rebuild between assaults, and the Montaigne aggressors have yet to penetrate any part of the wall. At first, the Montaigne assumed that they could simply starve the Castillians out, but that tactic has proven fruitless. The Castillian navy has apparently mobilized far more quickly than expected, and smugglers supply the troops behind the wall despite the fierce Montaigne blockade around the entire peninsula.

La Reina del Mar

Population: 15,000

This once-proud gateway to the High Seas is now only a shell of its former glory. Many of the city's native inhabitants have either died in the war or fled to the south and east. Those who stayed behind were too stubborn to leave their homes or too weak to offer able resistance. Now, the streets of "The Queen Of The Sea" are filled only with Montaigne soldiers, sailors, and laborers.

Control of this vital supply base was of the highest importance to Montaigne's invasion progress; before the army could continue south, La Reina had to be taken. The site of one of the few successful amphibious assaults ever

recorded, La Reina was easily seized by the enemy, and held fast even after the Castillian Armada arrived. Montaigne troops landed a few miles north of the city, and force-marched to seize the city by land, silencing its shore batteries, and allowing the Montaigne warships passage further south.

La Reina's port is quite elaborate, hosting separate facilities for naval warships (toward the mouth of the harbor) and merchant vessels (toward the interior). Local pilots must carefully navigate the mouth of the harbor due to its narrow draught channel, which allows only two ships abreast at once. The channel has been designed specifically to appear deeper than it is, to snare ships piloted by those not loyal to the port. The Montaigne, well aware of this through their own naval contacts, decided to seize the city by land, an unprecedented tactic that worked out remarkably well. Today, La Reina del Mar supplies all Montaigne forces in the south, making it one of the most important ports on the western peninsula.

San Augustin

Population: 37,000

Before the war, this port was nothing more than a way station, boasting a small university and a few orange groves. Today, it stands as an anchor for La Muralla al Ultimo. Its shore batteries have been improved, and – so as not to repeat the failed defense of La Reina – fortress-like walls now ring the city's perimeter. The Montaigne have laid siege to it for some time, and fighting here has reached a fever pitch. The few Castillian flotillas which grimly defend the harbor shove off daily to attack the Montaigne blockade. So far, this tactic has prevented the city from being overrun.

San Augustin is a growing city, and the war has only further encouraged her citizens to expand and thrive during this desperate time. The city now hosts several divisions of troops, as well as supply depots and repair facilities that rival those of Tarago (the Armada's traditional home). It has built up the surrounding area to contain the thousands of refugees from the northern regions of the peninsula.

Housing is a problem here: Montaigne artillery has battered many of the once-beautiful buildings to the ground and the northernmost streets are choked with rubble. Should the city be overrun, General Montoya has hastily prepared a fallback position to the south which preserves the integrity of La Muralla al Ultimo.

San Juan

Population: 1500 (all Montaigne)

Situated on the southern side of the border between Ranchos Zepeda and Torres, San Juan is proof positive of the power of the Montaigne invasion force, the arrogance of its commanding officers, and the deep-seated evil that resides in the hearts of men. If there were any battle to stain the reputation of the Castillian army, it would be the disgraceful defense of San Juan. From the first signs of attack, Don Montoya ordered an unprecedented evacuation of the city to allow for a better defense of La Reina del Mar to the south.

San Juan's citizens, disgusted by the decision, chose to make a stand without military support. The price of defending their city was paid in blood; as the Montaigne attacked from land and sea, the native Castillians were surrounded with no chance of relief. The city was taken in a battle that lasted for eight days. When the smoke cleared, no one stood to resist the city's new residents. Literally thousands had died, and more than sixty percent of the city had been put to the torch.

And the carnage would not end there; the survivors were forced to gather the dead and crippled in San Juan's plaza, delivering them into the hands of the Montaigne. The invading commander, General François Étalon du Toille, his pride wounded that *peasants* had held his offensive back

for eight full days, ordered the execution of every captured citizen. A black column of smoke and the stench of burning flesh signaled the final fate of San Juan's brave defenders.

Today, superstitious Montaigne soldiers keep far away from the plaza, believing that the area is haunted by the spirits of the fallen peasants. Mysterious disappearances of Montaigne soldiers and sailors are officially attributed to cowardly desertion, but many believe the vanished men and women have fallen San Juan's murdered patriots.

Only the buildings necessary to the support of the war effort have been rebuilt by the Montaigne conquerors, and San Juan is being used less and less in this phase of the war, possibly due to the rumors about Castillian spirits of the dead still defending their lost cause.



San Teodoro

Population: 40,000

The westernmost port at the mouth of La Boca de Cielo, San Teodoro originally housed a fleet of warships to protect the western reaches of the gulf. But when the Brotherhood of the Coast became a threat, the port expanded to deal with them. Since there has been an unspoken pact of non-aggression between the Armada and the Brotherhood in recent years, San Teodoro has become the main port for keeping La Muralla al Ultimo fed, armed, and steadily reinforced.

Most of San Teodoro has been converted to additional housing for refugees of the war and troops heading to the front line. The remainder stores supplies. Many ships passing in and out of the harbor carry supplies and troops, so the city maintains its own flotilla of 30 or so warships.



Culture

Until recently, Castille's warm demeanor and hearty appreciation for life attracted many to her music halls, theatres, and museums. The incorporation of so many foreign influences ensured that outsiders could enjoy the Castillian lifestyle, and sustained the nation's cultural exchange for many centuries. Art, customs, mannerisms... many were borrowed from or imitated those of neighboring countries, such as Vodacce, Eisen, Montaigne, and even the Crescent Empire. Castillian culture has always developed in tandem with that of the rest of the world.

Castille's government has always supported its artists and cultural leaders, devoting much money to the construction of museums and galleries, displaying local achievements alongside those of Numan, Eisen, and Vodacce creators. But with the death of the Hierophant and Montaigne's invasion, Castille's artistic and cultural development has stalled. Resources now go primarily to the war effort, and artists (particularly satirists who poked fun at the enemy) are fleeing occupied Castille.

The Inquisition, too, has taken this opportunity to enforce "the purity of the Vaticine Church", persecuting writers and other artists, censoring and destroying "heretical" works, and excising "dissident" statements wherever they find them.

Art and Music

Architecture

Like many things in Castille, buildings and their purposes have changed substantially throughout its history. In the early days of the Old Republic, things were simple. There was one style of construction – preeminently defensive, highly ornamental, and incredibly stagnant. It was an unchanging balance of fashion and function, and the only aspect of their design that suffered was diversity.

Today, hundreds of years of foreign occupation has shattered that balance. The influences of the Crescents, Eisen and Montaigne have resulted in permanent changes in Castillian architecture. It can be seen in the soaring minarets of Vaticine City as much as the rugged engineering of El Morro. The people have come to accept and even appreciate these foreign influences. A fascination with new and different designs is blooming, fed by the fragments of lost civilizations that have recently been uncovered.

Dancing

Contrary to popular belief, dancing did not originate in Castille, though it became more popular there than anywhere else. Social dancing (formal steps mainly taken by the nobility at court) originated in Montaigne. Theatrical dancing (choreographed and performed for an audience) originated in Vodacce. In Castille, dancing began among the commoners and only spread to the nobility within the last 300 years, when the "socially conscious elite" began to notice.

Today, however, dancing is a respected and widespread art form in Castille. Castillian dancers know how to love and how to hate, how to feel life down to their very bones. They are hot-tempered, charming, fiercely devoted... qualities that describe the average Castillian as well. Ask any of them about their craft, and they will tell you that it comes from the most treasured part of their soul.

Watching a Castillian dance is mesmerizing. Regardless of the style, there is always a deep immersion of the individual within the moment, as if the dancer loses herself to her own imagination. For this reason alone, Castillian dancers are

among the most highly sought-after in all of Théah. Patrons, theatre-owners, and dramatists seek out potential employees amongst the commoners with unparalleled enthusiasm, hoping to discover the next great ingénue.

There are two broad forms of dance in Castille and two general types of dancers. *Danza* is regimental in style and involves very measured movements, which can be quite draining. It requires formal training, and is very difficult for casual enthusiasts to attempt. *Danza* is primarily the purview of *bailarina* (theatrical dancers who perform as a career, usually for money), who must learn their craft through years of painful training; very little instinct is involved.

The second form of dancing is called *Baile*, and is more of a folk-dance, originating among the commoners of Rancho Gallegos. *Baile* is instinctual in nature, and generally

frowned upon by the nobility for its rugged (and often libidinous) style. It is passionate, fast, and infectious; onlookers are often lured into the open-air “festivals” themselves, finding the movements both foreign and intriguing. *Bailadora* (common dancers) are the practitioners of *Baile*, and can frequently be found in semi-competitive gatherings around the homes and shops of commoners all over Castille. *Bailadora* often dance to entertain those passing by them on the street.

Danza is the dance of nobility and faith. Vaticine rituals have included slow and serene *danza* steps for hundreds of years (most Castillian mothers will not allow their daughters to engage in *baile*, which is often considered vulgar). *Danza* academies can be found all across the nation, where stoic dance suites are taught to precision. Outside these academies, dance suites are never recorded; they are simply taught from generation to generation.

Danza Theatres

In the last fifty years, *danza* theatres – called *coralles* – have become fashionable among Castillian nobility. These formal stageshows are “constructed” between existing houses in major cities, with curtains, portable planks, and other simple means. Patrons are strictly segregated by gender as well as by social standing. Women watch the dancers from an area level with the stage, called *La Cazeula* (the “ladies’ pit”). Scholars, monks, and priests observe from a gloomy box above *La Cazuela* called the *tertulia*. Gentlemen and nobility sit in front of the stage, in an area called the amphitheater. Nearby tenants can also throw open their windows and invite (or charge) anyone they wish to see the show. *Coralles* presentations are wildly popular in Castille, and the dramatists who choreograph them strive make their shows as diverse as possible. But with so many varied customers now visiting, they are finding it harder and harder to please everyone. Dramatists are always on the lookout for new and interesting themes to incorporate into their shows: love, social satire, comedy, and the occasional “current topic.”



Styles of Commoner Dance

Baile can be broken down into specialized styles of dance that are found across Castille. The following is a general list.

Canario: Flashy and quick, this style of dance can be found primarily in Rancho Soldano.

Flamenco: Convivial and informal, flamenco dancing is primarily practiced by nomadic commoners (especially those found in the mountain villages of Rancho Gallegos). Flamenco is incredibly popular, and Castillian nobles have been known to clandestinely hire nomads to come to their homes and teach it to them. Flamenco features castanets (finger cymbals), and wild hip movement.

Folia: Wild and unruly, this style of dance is commonly associated with drunken crowds.

Sarabande: A Montaigne-influenced folk dance, featuring flashy moves and exciting flourishes. Arms and castanets are never still.

Villano: A dance engaged in strictly by peasants, the movements of villano occur both on the floor and when standing, with the surrounding crowd clapping their hands and stamping their feet to keep time.

Zarabanda: The zarabanda style of dance has been forbidden by the Vaticine Church for over one hundred years (they claim it is obscene), yet the commoners pridefully continue to practice it.

Literature

At this time, Castille is perhaps more famous for literature than any other nation in Théah. The last century has produced hordes of talent from the halls of Vaticine universities (and a handful of uneducated artistic geniuses as well), and the words of Castillian authors are read as far away as Avalon and Ussura.

Presently, there are two predominant literary camps in Castille, following the work of two pioneers of the written word. The first was Clement Garcia de Aldana, a Vaticine priest whose strict historical texts read like the most heartfelt poetry. Clement's depiction of such events as La Fin de

Ciclo and the appearance of the Second Prophet are permanent fixtures in the Universities of Castille today, presenting the "proper balance between history and distraction."

The second – Anabel Zepeda – was a commoner with no formal education, whose social, political, and moral satire shocked and delighted her readers. Though she ruffled many feathers amongst the Dons and Vaticine representatives at home, her work continues to delight the nation's populace, and more and more authors are following in her stead.

Castillian playwrights are currently focusing on the complex realities of their society, shining an unforgiving spotlight upon the troubles the average Castillian faces every day. They also deal regularly with high-minded ideological ideals and social values, the benchmark for modern morality. Novelists often mix humor with bitter irony, depicting everyday Castillian life through the eyes of crude social misfits, beggars, petty thieves, and tramps. Most modern Castillian novels tend to focus upon justice and episodes of retribution.

Castillian literature is not presently in sync with the mentalities of most Castillians, though it can be argued that it is merely ahead of its time, depicting the nation Castille has yet to become.

Music

"Common" music – like its dance – has a life of its own. The vitality, daring, and *aliento* ("breath", a term attached to things that demand fierce emotion) it acquires through a skilled Castillian commoner is awe-inspiring. The nobility of other Théan nations often hire Castillians to play at their own galas, and more than one such encounter ends in tears for the nobles and their guests. Instruments used by the commoners include the tambourine, castanets, *qaita* (the Castillian bagpipes), and the famed Crescent innovation, the guitar.

Meanwhile, Castillian nobility (and especially the Vaticine Church) adhere to a much duller and more regimented style of music called *metro y método* ("metre and method").

The martial sound relies mainly upon rhythm (drums and horns) to convey its message, with few spontaneous expressions. This form of music is highly mathematical, and finds its roots in the scientific revolution, when Church scholars discovered that the tone and beat of music has a direct correlation with the physical reaction of the audience. Today, metro y método is used to placate as much as entertain.

Painting

No form of artistic expression has had as much impact as painting. It has caused marriages, duels, treaties, and even wars; it has reinforced faith, and reduced stable governments to chaos; it has become the livelihood of scores of fledgling celebrities, and sent many more into the depths of insanity and despair.

On modern Théah, people are just beginning to understand and tap into the emotions that rule them. Lifelike portraits, picturesque landscapes, and religious iconography draw these emotions to the surface, forcing the viewer to contend with their innermost joys and demons.

Castillian art tends to focus on religious themes and figures; many of the world's finest monasteries, temples, and parishes feature the original work of Castillian natives. Unfortunately, the over-reliance on Vaticine subjects has led to a slight creative stagnation: there are only so many ways you can paint the Third Prophet, after all. As would be expected, many Castillian painters share styles and interests with those of Vodacce, where Vaticine interests remain strong.

Several living and recently-passed painters have forged Castille's current artistic identity. All share a love of starkly contrasted light and shadow to enhance the features of central figures, and most have spent significant time with the accepted masters in Montaigne and Vodacce. A brief list of the most notable Castillian artists – along with notes about their styles, themes, and lives – follows.

Antonio Ruiz del Carlaggio de Vodacce: Antonio Ruiz is perhaps the most widely-regarded and well-respected of any artist in the nation. He is considered a

member of the royal Sandoval family. Discovered in his homeland by an Ambassador to the Crown, Antonio's early works were dedicated to Good King Sandoval's father, who was enraptured with his rich use of texture and wide variety of themes. Ruiz earned a position in Castille's court, where he completed over thirty portraits of the royal family which still hang in the halls of the Royal Palace in Vaticine City. He mixes religion with oft-ignored mythology and visions of daily life in a way that few have seen before. Today, with the King distracted, Ruiz is considering returning to his homeland.

Don Efrain Rivera del Aldana: Another transplant from Vodacce Rivera's specialty was the full-length (full-body) portrait, which he often completed without the benefit of a model. Rivera refused to work with sketches, painting a finished work from scratch in one step – a skill that stunned most of his contemporaries. His use of foreshortening (the presentation of shorter lines to order to offer the illusion of depth) and simple backgrounds were also widely regarded, and eventually copied. Unfortunately, Rivera died last year of an unknown ailment.

Claudio: An enigmatic painter whose native origin is unknown, but whose contribution to Castillian art cannot be underestimated. Claudio's career focused on religious themes, but he was popular for his work with daily life – especially street urchins and the underprivileged. Claudio founded an Academy in Vaticine City, training aspiring religious artists in their prime.

Padre y Hijo (“Father and Son”): Soledad and Baltazar Nuñez, recently disenfranchised by the Montaigne invasion, have turned their attentions to “political” art. Their panoramic landscapes are littered with fallen Castillians, unjustly cut down by the “heathen Montaigne”, who are depicted as minions of Legion. The Nuñez family – also well-regarded as architects – have offered their skill to aid the construction of new fortresses.

Lucrecio Thale, “La Tormenta” (“The Storm”): One of the most controversial artists of the modern era, Lucrecio Thale received his nickname from his former Vodacce patrons after he fled their lands. Rumor

persists that Vodacce Sorté witches have been hunting him since he crossed La Sierra de Hierro, but no proof of this exists. Regardless, Lucrecio's work briefly found a home in Castille in the early decades of this century, shaking up the perceived limits of artistic expression with deep portraits and landscapes featuring turbulent movement and subdued pain. He died in a mysterious fire that consumed two-thirds of his collection; the remainder were moved to a monastery designed by Soledad Nuñez, one of his close friends.

Aurora Bane: The second controversial artist of the modern age is presently hunted by the Inquisition for her bold (and often morbid) interpretation of the Abyss and Legion. Her works are destroyed when the Inquisition tracks them down, but fetch a high price on the black market.

Sculpting

Sculpture has not been popular in Castille since the Old Republic's occupation of the central basin. Though many early Republic sculptures remain in Vaticine City, San Cristobal, and Malaca, the art form has largely dried up. Today, the only form of sculpture regularly attempted in Castille is woodworking, which is limited to Altamira and parts of the Soldano and Gallegos ranchos.

Theatre

Castillian theatre is communal. Landed Dons work side-by-side with commoners and even vagrants to construct sets, design props, and derive plots from modern and past events. Performances are open to the public and rarely charge for entrance. New presentations are held in each town every month or two, and are boisterous and loud. Generally, the first few weeks of any show become the focus of that region's entertainment, regardless of its quality.

The Castillian people tend to favor comedies and light-hearted dramas, and playwrights work hard to ensure a high degree of levity at all times. Fortunately, Castillians are not easily bored, and generally accept long interludes required to maintain the integrity of a story or legend.

Academia has recently taken a hand in the theatrical world. The last ten years have seen a sudden shift in the Church's attitude toward theatre, from indifference to cautious appreciation. Scholars in Vaticine City, San Cristobal, Altamira, and other major population centers have constructed amphitheatres that double as university classrooms, and students of any artistic subject typically study at least some theatrical history and design.

University theatres all share a few characteristics, including the presence of religious icons onstage. Perhaps the most invasive are seen in Altamira's *Teatro Titere* (The Festival of Puppets), where plays take place between two looming, open-mouthed faces – one representing Theus and the other Legion. Throughout performances, characters exit through whichever face their actions have procured for them.

Ceremonies and Special Events

Festivals and celebrations in Castille are a way of life. From region to region, hundreds of small, localized festivities take place throughout each year, venerating saints and ancestors, seasonal changes, and crop harvests. Friends and family gather and passionately celebrate the diversity of life. While most holidays are influenced by Vaticine beliefs, they are usually observed on days previously associated with early pagan celebrations.

Spring: The Festival of Flames

While every day is a holiday somewhere in Castille, each season has at least one celebration that defines it. In the spring, that celebration is El Festival de Llamas, the Festival of Flames. While this honored day's origins have been lost to time, Gallegos natives believe it has some connection with the legends of Los Nublados (see page 39).

The Festival of Flames is highlighted by the building and burning of *ninots*, giant paper-maché figures. These life-like (and sometimes bawdy) creations usually depict some current or unpopular historical event in a satirical light, and are placed on street corners and plazas on the fifteenth of Tertius. Lampooning the Montaigne army is now popular,

but a few recent niños have even targeted Ésteban Verdugo and the Inquisition (these tend to disappear quickly). Four nights after the niños appear, they are crammed full of fireworks and set ablaze.

There are plenty of other activities to enjoy during the Festival of Flames. The days prior to the burning are filled with parades, dances, and various competitions. Spur-of-the-moment fireworks displays are common, highlighted by the daily *masclata*, when a giant pile of firecrackers is ignited in the central plaza.

Summer: Los Borrachos

Every summer, a festival dedicated to Don Juan Kerenyi de Torres del Ussura, the patron saint of Drunks, is held across all of Castille. While celebrated in many cities, Los Borrachos (“the Drunks”) takes on special meaning in San Juan, which is named after the saint. The festival begins in San Juan at midnight on the sixth day of Julius with an incredible fireworks display, followed by drinking and dancing until dawn. Los Borrachos continues for an entire week, with parades, dancing, music, and copious amounts of food and alcohol.

Fall: The Feast of All Souls

The most important celebration during the fall season is El Banquete de Todas las Almas, the Feast of All Souls. This Vaticine holiday, held on the first of Nonus, honors Theus and all of his saints, both known and unknown. It is also a

time to make up for any failure to observe the feasts of other saints throughout the year.

The Feast of All Souls is perhaps the most somber holiday found in Castille: a respectful time to remember those who have lived good lives and reflect upon how to emulate them. The Feast usually includes the lighting of candles, visiting graves and shrines, and climaxes with the attendance of a special mass.

Pelota Vasca

The people of Rancho Gallegos enjoy a dangerous sport they call “pelota vasca.” Though its origins are unknown, it is assumed to be an innovation of the original Gallegos settlers, and is isolated to their region.

Pelota vasca is fast-paced and exhilarating, though extremely hazardous (which may account for the first two). Two players meet in a three-walled arena (or canyon, in the old days), wearing long hardwood scoops over their hands, called *cesta*. A server pitches a pelota (ball) at the opposing player by flinging it out of his scoop. The ball may be rebounded off any of the walls, and must be caught by the opposing player in his cesta, or the server gains a point. The opposing player then returns the pelota, with the same conditions and goal. This process continues until one player acquires a set number of points (usually ten).

The pelota travels at speeds of up to 150 miles per hour, and has been known to kill players who fail to get out of the way.

Winter: La Noche Divinos and Año Nuevo

Winter brings two important events to Castille. The first is the joint commemoration of the births of the Prophets – La Noche Divinos, the Divine Night. This holiday, which coincides with the winter solstice (around the twentieth of Decimus), is celebrated differently across the nation (towns no more than several miles apart often have radically different methods of honoring the Prophets). All festivities, however, revolve around midnight mass, where the faithful contemplate the lives and teachings of the Prophets. The Divine Night is a time of forgiving and reconciliation, as well as inner monitoring; during this time, Castillians set aside their own beliefs, following the Vaticine

lead and honoring all four Prophets (including “he who has yet to come”) with equal grace.

Some of the more unusual local traditions include re-enacting the story of El Olentzaro, during which a charcoal burner is brought down from the mountains to share the good news of the Prophets, and villagers play the game of

caga tió, in which a tree trunk is filled with gifts, candies, and nuts and hit by children with sticks until the items pour out. Plays are common as well, usually depicting the story of the Prophets' lives, their arrival, and the manifestation of their messages.

The second important winter event is the arrival of El Año Nuevo, the new year, on the first of Primus. The days between La Noche Divinos and El Año Nuevo are filled with smaller festivals, culminating with bonfires and fireworks as the old year gives way to the new. Most of the bonfires are made with dry pines, which symbolize regeneration and a fresh start for the year to come.

In honor of these events, the High King of Castille often doles out favors and gifts. A common occurrence is the release of any prisoner who has been held for more than ten years (five if the King is being particularly generous). This is a relatively modern notion, and no prisoners of La Bucca were ever released when it was still operating as a prison. This has infuriated many pirates who escaped the yoke of the wardens at La Bucca, and they have ruthlessly pillaged Castillian seaports during the first hours of each new year.

Bullfighting

The art of bullfighting (called *corrida* in the Castillian tongue) first took place in Tarago in 1133, in honor of the coronation of King Guadalupe IX. Originally intended as a distraction for the attending nobility, *corrida* soon became a respite between martial demonstrations and periods of war (like a siesta from fighting). Since its inception, *corrida* has become a forum for Dons, squires, and others to exhibit their courage and zeal.

As a permanent and integral part of Castillian society, *corrida* is taken very seriously. With the single exception of the Order of Muleta (see below), no deviations from the pattern that was established and endorsed by Castille's High King five hundred years ago are accepted.

A *corrida* begins with the *paseillo* when all the bullfighters for the day parade through the arena on horseback, escorted by *alguacillos*, or hand-servants. After making themselves known to the assembled crowds with as much

pride as possible, the bullfighters next station themselves beneath an observing balcony, where the hosting nobility are seated. They salute the hosts, commonly by taking off their *montera* (a wide-brimmed hat, much like a sombrero) in the direction of the highest-ranking noble (females are favored first in such cases). This salute is called the *brindis*.

Next, each bullfighter takes their place in the arena. During the first *tercio* (third), a bull is brought out and placed in the center, from where it can see the bullfighter currently engaged. Picadors then ride forth on horseback, using blunted lances to strike and enrage the beast. They then retreat, leaving the matador alone with his adversary. A game of touch-and-go ensues, in which the bullfighter studies the animal's strength, temperament, quickness, and other traits through its reaction to his *capote* (red cape).



Occasionally, multiple bullfighters will engage a single bull, though this usually only occurs when training *novillero* (juvenile bullfighters) or for demonstrative purposes. The reverse (one matador against several bulls) is so rare as to be nonexistent.

The sound of clarinets (a rare use of a wind instrument during a noble event) announces the *tercio de varas* (Second Third), when bullfighters receive picks and lances. In accepted (read: legal) ceremonies, the tips of these weapons are never sharpened; bullfighting is considered a humane sport in Castille, except by the Order of Muleta (see below). The picks and lances are used to draw out the beast's strength and tire it. This must be done while avoiding the enraged animal's horns and charging hooves. A good bullfighter can reduce the animal to exhaustion without taking a scratch.

By the end of the *tercio de varas*, each bullfighter is judged by a panel of his peers (all senior to him in skill, and accepted as masters of the art). In competitive *corrida*, a single bullfighter is chosen, who receives the title "Valiente" ("fearless"), which he carries within his name until he is dethroned within a given region or competition. Other honorifics are also bestowed upon the winner, according to local custom. These gifts range from hand-crafted weapons (whips are a favorite, especially in Rancho Zepeda), additional titles, land, castles, and other holdings, and even small seacraft.

Bullfighting is a sport of precision, intuition, and absolute concentration. The bull, by its very nature, attacks anything that moves. One false move – especially during the Second Third – can maim the matador, or even end his life. This is the reason that all *novilleros* are carefully selected and monitored throughout their training; no potential bullfighter is ever allowed to face a real bull until they are prepared.

The Order of Muleta

The lost *tercio final* ("Final Third") is no longer accepted tradition in Castille. It involves the death of the bull, and has been outlawed for almost a century. But there is a small, sequestered movement – mainly within Rancho Gallegos –



that continues to practice the blood-letting, against the wishes of the Church and alcalde.

During the Final Third, the matador is armed with the *muleta* (ritual rapier) and left completely alone within the bull inside the innermost ring. The mortal duel between the matador and bull is called the *faena*, and is when calls of "Olé!" are heard. After several passes, the matador faces the bull for the *estoque*, or final touch to the death. Usually, this strike comes to its head, inside its torso, or between its shoulder blades. The matador is judged not only by whether he kills the beast (if he fails, there's no point in judging him at all), but also by the length of time that it takes for him to reach *estoque*, and the cleanliness of his strike.

Muleta (members of the Order share the name of their weapon) who fail to kill their prey quickly and cleanly are chastised within the Order. No matter how humiliating the

matador's "defeat", Muleta are never expelled; to do so would risk discovery. Champion muleta, however, are applauded and awarded the ears and tail of their kill. They are also periodically trained in the secret fighting style exclusive to their highest ranks, a swift-moving thrusting school which focuses on single-strike kills.

Muleta have the right to dedicate their prey's death to someone in audience during the *corrida* – a single person, another matador, or even the whole assembly. If one person is observed, they retain the muleta's *montera* throughout the *faena*. If the *corrida* is dedicated to the entire audience, the *montera* is thrown down in the center of the ring, or over the muleta's shoulder (for good luck); if it lands upside down, it is considered a bad omen.

Dueling

While only members of the Swordsman's Guild are legally entitled to issue a duel, most Castellians prefer to take matters into their own hands. Castellian Dons, in particular, rarely involve an outside party unless they are dealing with a dishonorable enemy, are physically disabled, or have some kind of ulterior motive.

Castellian duels are both public and private. The challenge is always made in public, demonstrating bravery, loyalty, and a willingness to die rather than suffer dishonor, while the actual fighting is conducted in seclusion to avoid legal prosecution and the wrath of the Swordsman's Guild.

Each duelist chooses a close friend or family member to act as a second, who witnesses the event and mediates between opponents. Seconds also bring a doctor, just in case. These physicians are often ordained Vaticines who can offer last rites if needed, further reinforcing the Castellian belief that "every battle is a prayer."

As in other parts of Théah, duels are either to the first blood or to the death. Neither style is taken lightly, and families quarrel for generations after the fact if mutual terms are not followed to the letter. The terms are usually written down, and include the reason for the duel, rules that must be followed (e.g. facing an opponent with the whole body or turning to the side), and the weapons to be used.

Daily Life

When referring to the Castellian people, the first word that comes to most minds is "detached" (or in the case of their enemies "afraid"). This is because, outside of common trade relations, Castellians rarely consort with foreigners due to a deep-rooted apprehension about invasion. Of course, in the last two years, their worst fears have been realized, with the Montaigne sweeping down into the eastern third of their nation.

Castellians are very territorial, and while they may abide much outside their homeland, they are not so accepting within their own borders. They take steps to warn outsiders of possible breaches of etiquette or outright insults they may unknowingly commit. The number of actions considered either heretical or taboo is staggering, and punishment characteristically severe. PCs should consider themselves well-warned of the danger of impropriety in this judgmental land.

The war with Montaigne has exacerbated these tendencies terribly. Old grievances have resurfaced, and the people have grown angry once again. The forgiveness that took so long to breed into them has been forgotten, and now they stalk the streets with sour, vindictive stares upon their tired faces. Visitors find their fledgling tolerance gone, lost to the aggression that has wracked a third of their nation and threatens much more.

But Castellians have a phrase that goes, "a mal tiempo, buna cara", which means "to bad weather, a good face." Historically, it refers to the thick skin that Castellians have had to grow over the centuries to help them endure their many unfortunate run-ins with those of other nations. Since the Montaigne invasion, optimistic Castellians have begun quoting this phrase when their own lives become difficult, or when those around them become mired in pessimism. Regardless of their current predicament, Castellians have seen worse; sometimes, they just have to be reminded of that fact.



love for their country, a bond which unites them as one giant, extended family. As a general rule, Castellians never turn away travelers, and beggars never go hungry (the custom can be traced back to the occupation of the Crescents, who believed that any wayfarer might be an angel in disguise; the Second Prophet often spoke of meeting such a being, and the magnificent wisdom it imparted in return for a kind word and shelter for the night).

This standard does not hold true with outsiders, though. Foreigners, while treated well (or at least politely tolerated), rarely feel the warmth Castellians reserve for one another. Only rarely will an outsider prove worthy of true Castellian hospitality. When this honor is given, however, it is never forgotten. Castellians remember such loyalty until their last breath.

Children receive special attention in Castille, for they are the future of *la familia*, and – by extension – the nation. They generally overlook behavior condemned in other lands (including rowdy and noisy games, and tantrums), and even encourage it in certain circumstances. Festivals and holidays almost always include special activities exclusively for children, and most families go to great lengths to entertain (some might say spoil) their progeny.

Etiquette

If there is one word that can summarize Castellian etiquette, it is respect. Children respect their elders, peasants respect the Dons, and the Dons respect their charges by treating them as fairly as possible. Everyone recognizes and appreciates the contributions each individual makes for the good of society. In public, it is not uncommon to refer to family with their proper titles, and friends with only their last name. Children (regardless of their age) must respect their family matriarch or patriarch, who always has the final word concerning *la familia*, from approving marriages to financial dealings.

Despite this formality, Castellians are a cheerful and gracious lot, exchanging gifts and verbal pleasantries with unequaled grace. At heart, all Castellians share a fervent

Clothing

Montaigne may set the fashion for Théah, but Castille has a vivid style all its own. Powerful black, orange, white, and red hues dominate the typical Castellian ensemble, whether male or female, young or old, rich or poor.

Castillian men enjoy tight-fitting trousers, loose shirts, and either vests or jackets, complemented by a sash or cummerbund. Common accessories include a sombrero, collar, gloves, and cuffs. Every piece of clothing is adorned with some form of decoration (gold-braid, embroidery, or buckles, for instance). Common materials are cotton, wool, silk, satin, and velvet.

Castillian women take great pride in their appearance. They wear a great deal of silk, muslin, swanskin, and soft flannel, all of the best weave they can afford. Skirts are long and

flowing while blouses are snug in the chest and loose in the sleeves. Young and unmarried women do not employ the same color spectrum as their older and married counterparts, but – with the possible exception of Vodacce – even the most prudish Castillian girl has a more varied wardrobe than her peers in other nations.

The trendiest female garment is currently the *guardinfante*, a framework of padded hoops constructed out of wood. It rounds out the petticoat that conceals it and the gown that covers it, giving the woman's lower half a bell-shape. This outline is further accentuated by a tight-fitting jacket, worn over a tight corset which cradles the breasts and restricts the waist. The sleeves balloon at the shoulders and are slashed at the wrists to reveal their colorful linings, ending in tight cuffs. Gowns are usually made of heavy materials, like taffeta, watered silk, or brocade, and are always full in length, modestly hiding the feet. Leather shoes are a common accessory, but it is also customary to wear clogs (*chapines*) featuring wooden soles and cork heels to add a few inches in height.

Outside her home, a proper Castillian lady wears a cloak or sleeveless cape called a *manta*. This garment is usually made of tulle, or transparent silk, forming a “mantle of mist” about her form.

To enhance their natural beauty, most women apply cosmetics to their faces, shoulders, necks, and ears. They pay special attention to the eyes, cheeks, and lips, the latter being painted or covered with a thin layer of wax to make them gleam. Perfumes are also popular, especially rosewater and ambergris.

A woman's long hair is her crowning glory, treated daily with a regimen of brushing and special care. Most Castillian noblewomen weave their hair in a series of coils, braids, and loops, an intricate process which takes many hours.

Food

Thanks to discoveries made by the Vaticine Church (improved irrigation, crop rotation, and the like), Castille has the most advanced agricultural techniques in all of

Théah. As a result, the diet of the average Castillian is more healthy and diverse than that of anyone else on the continent. Grain, rice, vegetables, peppers, olives, sugar beets, citrus, beef, pork, poultry, dairy products, and fish are all of the highest quality... at least in unoccupied Castille.

Castillians enjoy seafood. Fish, squid, crab, and baby eels are common coastal cuisine. Paella is a popular recipe, combining shrimp, lobster, chicken, ham, vegetables, and rice, all garnished with generous amounts of spice. As one travels inland, seafood plays is gradually replaced by such meats as beef, chicken, goat, lamb, pork, and rabbit.

White bread can be found in every region of Castille, baked in round loaves and served plain or with butter or cheese. In the hot summer months, Castillians enjoy gazpacho, a cold soup of strained tomatoes, olive oil, and spices. It is usually enjoyed with bread cubes, onions, tomatoes, and chopped cucumbers.

Due to an acute awareness of sanitary conditions, the water in Castille is especially clean and readily served as a beverage. Strong black coffee is also a popular drink, as is heated chocolate, both held over from the days of Crescent occupation.

Still, wine is the most popular drink in Castille by far, offered with every meal except breakfast. Almost every region of the country has at least one famous vineyard, allowing Castille to export a sizable portion of Théah's wine supply.

A new drink has recently gained popularity in Vaticine City, an invention of Brother Carlos Fidel Sangre, a monk known for his culinary creativity. The mixture of wine, fruit juice, fruit, and water is further treated by a curious method that causes the brew to fizz. Local taverns call it *sangre de Sangre* or, more commonly, *sangria*. The drink's bittersweet flavor and tantalizing “tickle” within the throat have earned it a prominent place in meals across Castille.



Leisure and Siesta

As a general rule, Castillians have a passionate disregard for boredom and solitude, placing great importance on leisure activities and the tradition of siesta. Contrary to what many outsiders believe, the customary siesta is one of the most active periods of a Castillian's day. This special time begins when the sun reaches its zenith and usually lasts between one and four hours, allowing workers to escape the often unbearable afternoon heat. The day's central meal is enjoyed during siesta, and socializing with family and friends is customary. It is also a period for communal activities, like parades, street performances, dancing, and "petty politics."

Castillians enjoy many distractions, including games, painting, novels, writing or memorizing poetry, and music. Folk singing and dancing are also popular, and each region has its own special songs and dances (see page 46 for more about Castillian dancing), like the bolero, fandango, and flamenco. Musicians are welcome in any home, providing lively entertainment on castanets, guitars, and tambourines (see page 48 for more about Castillian music).

Government

In theory, Castille's government is sound. The Dons are firmly rooted in Castille's political and legal system, and the nation's government follows the same model established hundreds of years ago. But with the nation's new leader perpetually countermanded by his advisory cabinet, coupled with the Montaigne invasion and increased interaction with the rest of Théah, the system is slowly breaking down.

The Hierarchy

One of the reasons that Castille's government has experienced so little change, and why the nation's ruling body is holding together under its current strain, is the simplicity of its original model. While the hierarchy is not clear, day-to-day life rarely depends on it, so if one level of authority breaks down, those beneath it can continue without an undue fuss.

The pinnacle of the Castillian government consists of two individuals, neither of whom is recognized at the moment. The High King (*Rex Castillium*) has the right to administer all rules of nobility, establish and enforce laws, determine national investments, holidays, and taxes, and control the military. In all these matters, he offers at least token consideration to the Hierophant, the head of the Vaticine Church, who advises him on religious, moral, and humane grounds. Currently, however, there is no Hierophant and King Sandoval is being circumvented by his advisors.

It is fortunate, then, that the remainder of Castille's government has been structured to operate without the King or the Hierophant in place. In the eventuality that any important Castillian official – even the Hierophant and King – is neutralized (including being ruled incapable of tending to his responsibilities), those below him are trained to take over in his stead.

This is the current situation in Castille. El Concilio de Razon (the "Council of Reason", a group of Cardinals assigned to the King and Hierophant as advisors) have chosen to circumvent King Sandoval's authority, relegating him to a figurehead only, and sequestering him in Vaticine City, where "he can do no more damage to the nation."

This has been accomplished by virtue of an old (though rarely used) stipulation left over from the time of the Old Empire. Any single member at any level of government (even the King) can be countered by those directly beneath him... but only if all of them agree *unanimously*.

El Concilio de Razon recently tendered just such a vote. As the second-highest rank in the Castillian government, they now run the nation, making all the decisions that the King and Hierophant normally would. Were it not for their unanimous vote, they would be nothing more than an advisory board, with no real authority beyond being able to speak their mind to the King and Hierophant.

Technically on the same level as the Council of Reason are the *recouadores* (tax collectors, who answer directly to the King and have the authority to enforce law in his name), and the *alcalde* (sheriffs who are the nominal police force in



Castille). These two groups are merely servants of the crown, however, and do not have any real power. They have, however, managed to keep King Sandoval from being completely deposed by El Concilio de Razon. As long as they obey the king and not the Church, Sandoval will have to remain.

The next level with any true authority is that of the landed Dons and Vaticine Bishops, both of whom have direct control over the King's resources (in this case, his land and constituency, respectively), and who may make any decisions to protect or administer said resources.

The next level down (the third-highest governmental body, and the lowest that actually makes law) are the *gubena*dores, or national diplomats. In the time of the Old Empire, these politicians were true governors, having the role now given to the landed Dons, but they have since become Castille's legislature, responsible for creating and applying national law (see page 58). The *gubena*dores reside in Castille's physical court system (see below). Judges who preside over cases of criminal misconduct are also *gubena*dores.

Beneath Castille's legislature are several more political tiers, none of which have any real power except in the most unusual of circumstances. From highest to lowest, they are:

Monsignors: Church officials representing parishes on the Diocese Council, and who therefore fall immediately below the Bishops. They command the High Priests on the Parish Council, and have the ability to interpret (though rarely establish) Church doctrine.

High Priests: The next-lowest step in the Church, just above non-ordained clergy (next). They represent Churches on the Parish Council.

Non-ordained Clergy: The footsoldiers of the Church, who have control over little more than their own Churches.

Caballeros (non-landed Dons): Named after their tendency to travel Castille on horseback, these "title-less" nobility have no rights other than to request food and shelter from the landed gentry.



Courts

The courts of Castille are very informal, like being at an extended family gathering. Visitors are either accepted into the family, or excluded. Castillian courts are straightforward and friendly, considered more of a party than a duty. Court is usually held during afternoon siesta. Guests exchange small gifts between them, using the occasion to bargain or politick. Large gifts can be seen as an insult, since they make the receiver's gift look cheap in comparison. Once a person has mastered the art of gift giving, they've nearly mastered Castillian diplomacy.

Physically, Castillian courts are generally open-air events, and far smaller than found in other nations. The setting is much like the attitude – community more than conspiracy. Castillian *gubena*dores pride themselves on their

“professional courtesy” and are intensely devoted to understanding opposing viewpoints (even if they do not agree with them).

Laws and Justice

While laws come from the gubenadores (following the dictates of the King or Church), it is up to the alcalde (and sometimes recoucadores) to enforce them. There are four kinds of legal courts in Théah, each with its own jurisdiction (crimes that it deals with). All four jurisdictions covetously guard their territory against the others, and periodic arguments about whose jurisdiction a crime falls in add to the workload of the gubenadores.

Secular Courts

Secular courts deal with crimes against the kingdom and the people. They deal with murder, theft, and treason, and are the sole concern of the local region. Towns and cities provide magistrates, executioners, and others, who answer to the gubenador-judges within their territories.

Religious Courts

Religious courts deal with crimes against the Church of the Prophets and crimes against Theus. While the Church would like to begin trying secular crimes, it cannot afford to lose political favor by violating the jurisdiction of the secular courts. The Inquisition currently dominates religious courts, trying heresies of every variety.

Guild Courts

The Guilds have established their own courts to deal with crimes between guild members. These have only been in existence for a little over two hundred years, and they have struggled to gain jurisdiction within the religious and secular courts.

Military Courts

Military courts are strictly private affairs. Castillians believe that every military branch must handle its own affairs in its own way. Neither the Church nor the Crown meddles in the affairs of the military; interfering with the pride of soldiers is a little too dangerous for their tastes.

Economy

Since the Montaigne invasion, Castille has made use of every available resource, and anything found to be unprofitable is excised. The Church’s highly educated planners excel at managing each rancho’s existing supplies against both internal and external demand to avoid exhausting any resources. Even when the war pushes supplies to their limits, stockpiles of non-perishables are regularly maintained to supplement the standard.

Dons are held accountable for the output of their own regions, according to an annual taxation rate set by the King and El Concilo de Razon. This rate is entirely subjective, however, based upon the council’s impression of what the Don can produce; it is not uncommon to tax them far more than they can actually provide.

No one save the King and Church officials are exempt from this equation. In theory, many land-owning Dons could choose not to take an active hand in the daily duties of the people, but few do. This is partly because they must present the year’s taxes to their King, but more because of their intense sense of duty to Castille. It is hard for any proud national to look on the grand spectacle of their country and not feel obliged to support its prosperity. It is not the Castillian way.

The system has impediments, though. Erratic weather has always been a problem, and Church embargoes with Montaigne and others have hindered export business (though many Dons continue to trade with established clients – even against the orders of the Church).

Other Nations

Though it is difficult to represent the opinions of an entire nation in a few brief descriptions, there are certain trends that pervade all the Castillian families.

Castillians are fervent critics of Avalon culture, wondering why anyone would ever want live in a place where nothing is real. “The people, the buildings, the boats. You cannot trust anything there. It is like a plague for our eyes, and a plague for their souls.” As an example to their contempt

(and fear) of Glamour sorcery, one must only look to their recent ambassadors to Avalon: three of the five men have been blind.

Even if Montaigne were not invading Castille, its people would find Porté blatantly sinful, and Church officials constantly preach against its use. Some have even clamored for the Church to aid the Castellians in their war with Montaigne, declaring it another Crusade. But with the absence of a Hierophant and the chaos in El Concilio de Razon, this looks unlikely.

Castillians have a long-standing hostility toward Vodacce, stemming from the differences of opinion regarding the Church. This, combined with the fact that Castellians deeply distrust sorcery in general, ensures that most Castellians have little or nothing to do with the Vodacce. Fate Witches are largely regarded as little more than Legion's servants made flesh.

As for every other nation, the people of Castille remain largely uninvolved. The Eisen are dealing with their own troubles in the aftermath of the War of the Cross, which provides the citizens of both nations a common ground. The Eisen are generally easy enough to understand, and their aggressive military history is easy to forget in light of the Montaigne invasion.

The Vendel and the Ussurans are both so far away that most Castellians never come in contact with them. Those who do have yet to form any "national" predilections.

Legends and Superstitions

Castillians are a superstitious lot, stemming from their origins as isolated hunter-gatherers of the plains-basin. Though they have evolved as a people, and shed their irrational fears, they have retained a nervous fascination with the unknown. Castellians enjoy a good mystery as much as the next culture, though adding an element of horror only heightens the appeal for them.

The following are two popular legends spread about Castille, generally by word of mouth (Castillians rarely dilute a legend's ferocity by writing it down).

La Llorona (The Woman Who Cries)

Several hundred years ago, a legend arose of a woman who had committed a great atrocity during a cold winter night when food was scarce. She drowned her children to save them from the agonizing fate of starvation, and then took her own life out of grief. Her unspeakable act would not allow her to pass into the afterlife, and she was sentenced to roam the Castellian countryside forever, bemoaning the loss of her children and wailing with grief for all to hear. This terrifying sound is considered a warning to children, and parents admonish their offspring to lie fast asleep (whether they are or not), lest La Llorona come to take them away.

To this day, no one has proven a link between any missing person (child or otherwise) and La Llorona, but whenever the wind howls at night, children lie still in bed, hoping that La Llorona is merely a myth.

The Legend of El Vago

Whispers have spread throughout San Cristobal about a mysterious masked individual who saved a peasant from fiery death at the hands of the Inquisition. Soon after, the same person appeared near Vaticine City saving a village from a band of brigands. Numerous other stories about this strange crusader soon arose all over the nation, most romanticized and exaggerated to entertain the locals at a cantina or in the village plaza. But all shared one element — good deeds performed to protect the just and pious people of Castille, regardless of their social class. Reports continued to pour in and grow in popularity, and soon the mysterious hero acquired the name "El Vago" (The Vagabond).

Then, one fateful day shortly after Good King Sandoval's coronation, a band of assassins made their way into the palace, intent upon his death. They might have been successful, had El Vago not appeared. The fight was quick and painless; El Vago dispatched the assassins with the aid of Sandoval's advisor, Don Andrés Aldana. Clad in a purple cape and clothes, black hat, and white mask with a

cheerful grin painted upon it, El Vago became more than a plaza tale of heroism and adventure; he became a living legend.

No one has been able to track down the crusader's origins, or where he vanishes to after his work is finished, but so far, he always seems to be in the right place at the right time, whenever someone is in need. No one can accurately describe the crusader beyond his mask. Sometimes he appears in multiple places at the same time, further tangling the question of his identity. All Castillians rejoice, however, that there someone out there watching over them, and that – at any time – he might appear to aid them.

El Vago may be a person with superhuman abilities or a guiding spirit in human form, protecting all of Castille's people. Regardless, El Vago has become a legend embodying the Castillians' resolve to remain free and enjoy the liberties they have fought so long and hard for.



The Vaticine Church

Since the seat of Vaticine power shifted from Vodacce to Castille almost six hundred years ago, the Church's influence in this nation has been substantial. Most average Théans can no longer conceive of the two as independent entities; they share resources, constituents, and ruling bodies. With the exception of the Inquisition (which is currently operating independently of everyone), Castille and the Vaticine Church are one.

The following sections further detail a few aspects of the Vaticine Church with regards to Castille. Information about the Inquisition-fueled church embargoes, some recent Castillian innovations, and a new group dedicated to long-abandoned Church doctrine follow.

History

Over seven hundred years after the founding of the first city, and almost fifty years after the first sorcerous bargains were made, a man walked into the halls of the Numan Senate, and spoke. His words were recorded by the secretary, and changed Théah forever. He was tall, dark-haired and black-eyed, his smile gentle, and his hands soft and warm.

The First Prophet was only 23 then, a young man with an immense task weighing heavily upon his slight shoulders – to spread the word of Theus' message to all of his people. Even at that young age, he had already traveled much of the world, speaking to whoever would listen and gathering followers to his side. No one knew where he had come from and he never spoke of his origins, but his words held truth that transcended physical location. He spoke of one god, not many. He spoke of the beauty of creation, and the need to understand it. He spoke of finding salvation through fraternity with one's fellow man. Finally, he spoke of three who would follow him, and the miracles they would perform in Theus's name. Those who heard him felt the power of his words, and he attracted new followers to his side wherever he went.

Among his followers were nine Witnesses, each forsaking their former lives to adopt the holy mission of the Prophet. He spoke more and more about acceptance and brotherhood, and they listened and wrote it all down, and thus the Prophet added to the message at every new destination.

Though the Emperor in Numa had been upon the throne for over six decades by this time, his influence over the people remained weak; the Senate had captured the power of sorcery, and this attracted the nobility of Théah, along

with their wealth and power. The Prophet knew about these men – knew about the Bargain which they had struck for their sorcery – and had preached adamantly against it. But that was not enough; more had to be done, lest the sickness of sorcery spread beyond the Empire’s capital. After five years of wandering, the Prophet gathered his followers and led them up to a nearby hill, where he called for them to sit and listen.

The Witnesses gathered and listened carefully as the First Prophet said flatly, “I am leaving you.” Stunned, they asked him how this was possible. “I am leaving, so that all of you may be saved. I cannot protect you, and Theus cannot protect you, but you can be spared.”

Again, they asked him of the justice in his actions, and he said in return, “I am also leaving so that the message can continue.” Even more confused by his contrary words, the Witnesses asked yet again why the Prophet was leaving, and he said, “You cannot understand yet, but I ask for you to leave this place without me. Go apart from one another and wait. In one year’s time, you may spread my word once again.”

The Witnesses did not comprehend the Prophet’s request, but they complied anyway. They stepped down from the hill one at a time, gathering their scriptures and foods, each walking away in a different direction. They did not return to their ways for one full year.

The hill where they had gathered stood within the mountain range known today as La Sierra Hierro, between the modern nations of Castille and Vodacce. The hill itself has become known as Monte Joyas (“The Mount of Jewels”); some believe that it may become the staging ground for the Fourth Prophet’s armies at the end of time.

The Prophet walked alone to Numa, spreading tidings of joy to those he met. When he arrived in the Imperial capital, he began preaching on street corners, and soon gathered large crowds to hear him speak. Among his listeners was a humble Senate page named Vesta, who was struck with his quiet courage and the power of his words. She knew a way to smuggle him into the Senate building, and offered him

the chance to speak to the gathered Senators. Smiling, as he had been expecting the offer for months, the Prophet agreed.

He arrived on the Senate floor and silenced the bickering lawmakers by his very presence. They simply stopped talking and turned to gape at this stranger who had appeared in their midst. He told the Senators of the true nature of the cosmos, of the Great Creator and his infinite works, and of the eternal struggle for knowledge intended for man upon this world. He presented them with the Seven Deadly Sins that the Numans unwittingly committed through their greedy and lustful actions, and of the fate that awaited them should they fail to abandon the fruits of their sins, and recognize their true roles as children of Theus.

Though at first amused by the newcomer, the Senate quickly grew weary of his accusing words. One in particular, Senator Castillus, angrily challenged his claims. “Who are





you that understands such things?" he cried over the constant bickering of his fellows.

"I am no one," the Prophet said, "yet I bear the burden for all."

Castillus stoutly refused to accept the validity of the Prophet's message, spearheading the opposition within the Senate. "If your god is as powerful as you say, ask him to show us!" he finally demanded.

The slender newcomer fell silent then, as if taken by a sudden sadness, and the House of the Senate calmed before him. When the Prophet's eyes finally rose to meet them – each in turn – they had grown cold and hard, filled with resolution. He walked to Castillus and gently touched his hand.

The Senator froze for one moment and then jerked madly into a series of twitching fits, spasming like a maddened leper. His colleagues erupted into frightened clamor once more – all but one, whose name was Tobias, and who had been sitting near Castillus. Unafraid or uncaring, he knelt down beside the ravaged man and tried to comfort him, and the spasms promptly ended.

When the screaming passed and all eyes were focused upon the Prophet again, one of the Senators called out, "That is Tobias the Meek. What has he done to Castillus?"

"He has done nothing that you should not have yourselves," the Prophet answered. "He has demonstrated courage, an understanding that he and a person in peril are part of the same organism, and due the same respect."

"But you caused this!" the Senator returned. "You made Castillus ill!"

"No. I have given him a gift – the chance to see what awaits him should he not repent his sinful ways. I have shown him the most awful thing that can happen to a mortal man."

"You... monster!" Castillus shrieked, and lunged forward, white flames exploding forth from his arms and eyes. Together, the leaders of the Old Republic assaulted the unassuming Prophet with one volley of sorcerous might

after another, but when the flames and terrible powers abated, he stood unharmed. Their power had no effect on him at all. Following the display, he walked quietly from the chamber, leaving a stunned and aghast assembly behind him.

What transpired after that has only been gleaned through historical reports from the time. The Senate quickly called for his arrest and trial. But that night, before his arrest warrant could be signed, he turned himself in to the authorities. They imprisoned him in the darkest cell they could find and held a trial in absentia. He was found guilty of crimes against the Empire and sentenced to death.

The night before his execution, Tobias the Meek came to visit him in his cell. They talked for many hours, and the Prophet told him of three additional Prophets to follow, each with his own message and duty. When they were done, he told Tobias to go forth and find his Witnesses, then tell them of his fate. The Prophet was burned the following morning.

The Return... and a Beginning

Tobias took the name Mattheus and renounced his duties as Senator. He left Numa forever, wandering from village to city, farm to fortress, preaching the way of the Creator. Along the way, he encountered the other nine Witnesses, and admonished them to return to their former ways. The Witnesses were saddened by the Prophet's fate, but knew that he had desired it and did not question the will of Theus. One year after he had left them, they returned to preach his word again.

The Witnesses soon discovered that a popular following had grown around their Prophet. As a martyr, the Prophet held power that he hadn't before, and he now had followers in Numa as well as the outlying territories. Each Witness spent the remainder of his or her life administering the faith and spreading the message of the First Prophet. They passed on the wisdom that the First Prophet had entrusted to them, and schooled humanity in how to treat each other. Through their efforts, the word of the Prophet spread, despite active persecution from the Senate.



Their efforts bore potent fruit. By the time they finally passed, the Church of the Prophets had faithful in every corner of the world. Every town and village had followers, some practicing their faith despite active oppression from their rulers. After their deaths, the word continued to grow, spreading with each new follower. Finally, in 203, the Emperor announced that he himself had converted to the faith. A new religion was born.

Flight From Heresy

In AV 305, three hundred years after the coming of the First Prophet, another man crossed through the mountains between Vodacce and the Empire of the Crescent Moon. He was also tall and slender, with dark skin and a swarthy manner. He had blue eyes, which is almost unheard of in the Crescent Empire, and with him were ten others, all born of other tribes than he, who kept a constant watch over him, recording his every word. His name was Malak and he had arrived just as the first Prophet had predicted.

The Second Prophet arrived in Théah when he was thirty years old, claiming a visitation by one of the Creator's angels had opened his mind to the glories of the Eternal Puzzle. The angel also showed him the plight of the people who worshiped in the Church of the Prophet and his role in their liberation and spiritual awakening.

"You are all deceived," Malak told the faithful of Théah. "This Church you follow has been corrupted by the very same sin it professes to absolve. By remaining here under its tutelage, you are denying your duty to the Creation. In all the small things, you have been betrayed, for you have become too wise to be led astray in the large."

The message of the Second Prophet was not received as quickly as that of the First. He was a thoughtful, intelligent man, but his message was more restricting than what had come before. He proposed a set of rituals and rules applying to nearly every conceivable situation and he professed that the very foundation of faith in Théah was corrupted by sin.

He said that drinking was a sin, which was unheard of at the time. He prayed relentlessly, asking his Witnesses and

followers to do so as well. And he fasted several times a month, according to a complex and very methodical worshipping practice. There was no hunting (in reverence of Theus' Creation, and to develop mercy), unnecessary foraging (so as not to be wasteful), or even weapons usage (so that people could abandon their hostilities).

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of Malak's ministry came after he and his Witnesses had traveled to most of the established churches of Théah. He preached that all races should be treated equally, regardless of creed or culture, which – in itself – was no different than his predecessor. But he also alleged that the sole avenue to salvation lay in a pilgrimage back into the Empire of the Crescent Moon, something most looked on with evident dread.

By this time, the Emperor had learned of this supposed Prophet and immediately ordered that the man be brought to him. He was uncertain whether this interloper was truly who he claimed to be, and wished to avoid any chance of a mistake. He sent out a squad of soldiers to apprehend him, confident that this new fraud would be little match for them.

They returned several days later, unharmed but without the Prophet. They told the Emperor that they had descended suddenly upon him, but were unable to reach him behind the ten he called "Witnesses." When they had tried to use their sorcery upon him, he had shrugged it off. Now worried, the Emperor ordered for an army to be massed against the impostor.

But the angel that had come to Malak had also told him that he could not be hurt as long as his faith remained true. When the army came, Malak stood without fear before them, sure of his inner strength. He was taken into custody, interrogated, and imprisoned for an entire year while his Witnesses pleaded his case before the Emperor. Throughout, he was never heard to speak.

Imperial records show that the morning of Primus 1, AV 306 was calm and clear. The sun had just crested the eastern mountains when one of the guards of the garrison where Malak the Prophet had been incarcerated saw something

descending from the clouds. When the guard recovered from the experience many weeks later, he told the Emperor's court that the image looked like a glowing blanket of light, flowing out across the sky and blotting out the blue.

None are sure what the being was, but by mid-morning, Malak had escaped his cell, leaving only a smoldering pile of rubble behind. The next time he was spotted was with a gathering of his Witnesses at Monte Joyas, where they had called for any constituents unhappy with the degradation of their Church to follow them into the sands.

Interest in the Crescent's message had swelled unexpectedly while he was jailed. Where it seemed that only a handful had listened just a short time before, over 40,000 surrounded the little hill to join in his holy pilgrimage.

Together, he and his Witnesses led the gathered faithful through the mountains and toward the Empire of the



Crescent Moon. All along the way, they continued his practices without fail, even when – at their arrival in Rahajeel, the first outpost of the Crescents – armies of the Emperor were spotted trailing behind them.

The Emperor was still not convinced of the Prophet's legitimacy, and did not want to lose so many citizens on a “mad journey into the hands of barbarians.” He sent three armies after the Prophet and his followers, with orders to prevent them from proceeding by any means necessary.

When they arrived at Rahajeel, however, they found only the remains of Malak and his followers, who had been cut down during High Mass by a group of Crescent tribes. The bodies had been staked into the ground and left to bleed into the sand, and vultures and other carrion-eaters were just flocking to the site. It was obvious from the remains that the Crescents had attacked unexpectedly, swiftly, and quite decisively. The followers were still prostrate as their skin gained a shade of jaundice, and the body of Malak himself had fallen where he had been speaking to them, his hand-scrawled notes blown about like dried leaves.

As the armies of the Emperor observed the scene, stunned at the ferocity of the attack, a sudden storm began to brew, whipping sand into their eyes and startling their mounts. They retreated to safe cover to wait the winds out, returning only five hours later.

The bodies were all gone.

No trace of them was ever found.

In response to the atrocity, the shaken Emperor ordered retribution against the Crescent Empire. Though still not convinced the Prophet was legitimate, he wasn't about to let such an atrocity go by unpunished. His faithful citizens needed little prompting; by then, their doubts about the Second Prophet had vanished and they were eager to avenge the fallen Malak. The First Crusades had begun.

The Ultimatum

In the early fourth century AV, Emperor Corantine came to power and changed the world. He seized control of the Western Empire from the previous Emperor and

established a sorely-needed political stability over a large swath of Théah. But his most important act was the unification of faiths, reconciling the philosophies of the First and Second Prophets, as well as the many branching faiths they had spawned.

Though based upon the same fundamental principles, Corantine argued, the messages of the first two Prophets differed enough that a division had grown between them. Corantine believed that both Churches had become like cults, endlessly disputing with each other in a vain effort to obtain more converts, with their true purpose largely lost in the process.

Being a devout man who valued his faith and center of worship, Corantine made an announcement at the eve of the year AV 312, declaring that “the bickering must end.” He gave them one year to conceive a unified credo. The result was the Reformed Vaticine Church, which – though its center of authority has since moved (see *The Hieros War*, below) – remains the largest, most universally-accepted denomination in Théah today.

The Second Crusades and the Hieros War

“The Final Prophet visited each Prophet before me, and has granted me knowledge of the world’s ultimate fate. He has shown me the path we must follow if we are to avoid falling prey to Legion before the end of time.”

These were the words the Third Prophet spoke to Il Concilio de Razon in the spring of AV 1000. He professed knowledge of the last days, including the Army of the Fourth Prophet, in which all good souls would serve. But the Vodacce – entrenched in nearly seven hundred years of favorable dogma – were unwilling to listen.

Those in Castille, however, had seen his power. They had watched as he rallied the nation against the “occupying” Crescents, sparking the Second Crusades. They had endured the loss of their own High King, who sided with the Crescents to salvage his precious holdings and the heritage that had granted them. And they had seen their own nation revolutionized by his radical obsession with scientific thought.

The Third Prophet condoned experimentation, especially when attached to theoretical science, preaching that the only true way to comprehend the Eternal Puzzle was by testing one’s limits. He adopted herbalism over bleeding and other archaic forms of medicine, claiming that it “fed the body, and brought it back into balance.”

But most importantly, the Third Prophet was extreme in his judgment of others, particularly regarding their faith. He coined the term “infidel”, telling his followers that those outside the Church of the Prophets were flatly wrong, and subject to punishment for it. “They have tried time and time again to do the same to us,” he counseled. “Why have we stood idly by and watched our brothers and sisters cut down? Why have we accepted the deaths of the First and Second Prophets without bloodshed?”

This sentiment eventually led to one of the bloodiest periods in history. Over the course of nine years, Théah (especially Castille) suffered two wars – one to rid themselves of the “infidel” influence of the Crescent Empire and another between the ancestral home of the Vaticine Church (Vodacce) and that of the Third Prophet himself (Castille). Details of these war can be found in the Castillian history section, pages 13–22.

The Death of the Hierophant

In 1665, the Hierophant grew ill and died following a trip to Montaigne. Shortly thereafter, Cardinal d’Argeneau – the head of the Church in Montaigne – disappeared, followed quickly by the nine archbishops beneath them. No one knows what happened to them, but until the archbishops turn up, Cardinal d’Argeneau cannot be replaced... and without a full complement of Cardinals, the Church cannot elect a new Hierophant.

In the wake of these events, the Inquisition has risen to fill the power vacuum, replacing Church’s traditional values with their own extremist agenda. They have seized Church assets, declared an end to scientific learning, and clamped down on dissent both in Castille and elsewhere. The outcome of this crises – and the future direction of the Vaticine Church – is still very much in doubt.



More information on the Hierophant's disappearance and its fallout can be found in the *7th Sea* basic books and the *Montaigne* sourcebook.

The Scientific Revolution in Castille

"The world is a puzzle, and the key to enlightenment."

– Book of the Prophet, Volume I, Verse Nine

The Church of the Prophets has always been about reason, not emotion. It collectively believes that emotion muddles human perception, and is therefore not as virtuous as the product of a human mind. "Seek what is within," they admonished, "and resist the temptations of what is without."

Before the coming of the Third Prophet, all forays into the realm of experimentation attempted to change the person, and not his environment. Before the advent of modern thinking (dubbed the "Scientific Revolution" by Castillian scholars), the Church believed that they could purify individuals through the pseudo-scientific operations intended to alter the tangible world. Alchemy is the best example of this mindset – a perceived attempt to distill the corruption from one's soul as the by-product of a series of physical reactions.

The Third Prophet forever altered the way that people looked at the world around them. He renounced quackery, claiming that treatments like bleeding were both barbaric and harmful. He endorsed learning in all forms and helped found the first modern universities. He paved the way for six hundred years of scientific progress.

This transition did not happen overnight, however. It took decades before his unfamiliar theories gained a foothold anywhere but among his colleagues, and it would be literally centuries before the world began to benefit from his insight. The scientific movement was most popular in Castille, perhaps because it pleased their meticulous aesthetic. It has flourished within their borders ever since; many of the most industrious inventions and brilliant minds emerged from Castillian ranks.

One of these minds in particular, Galeno Rioja, the pupil of popular Castillian scholar Lorenzo Alvarez, would eventually become one of the forefathers of modern scientific thought. Building on the foundation his patron had left behind, Rioja charted the movement of Théah and its neighboring planets around the sun, as well as their relative distances. He also helped further telescopes and lay the foundation that all visual sciences are based upon.

Castillians categorize everything. Beginning with their natural resources, they have carefully identified, quantified, and catalogued everything they have encountered for the last five hundred years. Ailments, flora and fauna types, seasonal and astronomical phenomena, unusual creatures, myths and legends, books, trade patterns – anything that can be observed has been collected and written down. "Montaigne may have the most beautiful libraries in the world," the Castillian scribe Umberto de Gaya once wrote, "but we have the most complete."

Other scientific "miracles" that have emerged from Castille include improved aqueducts, sewers, irrigation techniques, bath houses, and road construction (most of these innovations are left over from the Old Empire, which didn't collapse quite so completely in Castille as it did elsewhere). Public health and education programs have also been instituted across the country by order of the Church, which takes a special interest in their procedures and the values they endorse. "It is important to feed the children's souls along with their mind and bodies," they say.

The following sections detail the specific directions research is taking in Castille, where the heart of the Church has affected all walks of life.

Military Research

Until recently, military innovations were secondary to those of social and intellectual worth. But with the war raging in the west, the Council of Reason has turned toward more practical matters. As of the fall of 1667, more than half the scholars in Castille have been directed to investigate more improved methods of eliminating the entrenched Montaigne. Citing the effective use of Castillian powder,



prepacked charges, and swiveling turrets (all scholarly designs), the Council currently seeks a new weapon or tactic to use against the enemy. Rumors of a new Eisen invention known as phosphorus have attracted particular attention. If this substance could be applied on the field of war, it might be enough to turn the tide against Montaigne.

Soldano Steel

Another weapon the Council seeks to capitalize upon has been part of Castillian culture for hundreds of years. Soldano steel (see pages 28 and 29), the remarkably sturdy material forged only in Rancho Soldano, is highly sought-after by the military to arm its front line with. But the Crescent process entrusted to the northeastern Castellians requires enormous time and concentration, which curbs mass production. So far, the nation's scholars have been unable to discover a way around this pitfall.

Scientific Innovations

Castille's scientific community lumbers on, regardless of the war and the Inquisition's increasing fervor. At the forefront of this movement is the reclusive Alvara Arciniega, former headmaster of La Universidad Arciniega and the foremost astronomer in Théah. His recent theories of gravitation and forays into a new branch of mathematics he is currently calling "fluxions" have captured the rapt attention of the scientific community. Unfortunately, he remains in hiding, doggedly pursued by Verdugo's Inquisition.

Castillian Universities

Castille has remained at the forefront of the educational front since the time of the Third Prophet. La Ciencia (full name: La Academia de Ciencia del Profeta y Salvador, or the "Academy of Science for the Prophet and Savior") is located in Vaticine City and arguably houses the finest minds and research libraries in the world. Alvara Arciniega presented his early radical theories within its hallowed halls, and many of his students have gone on to become professors there as well. Fellows at La Ciencia are the bureaucrats of the scientific community, dictating the course of research in colleges across the nation.

This system has been erected as a direct result of the Inquisition and their stifling influence across the nation. Without the fellows' support, the learning institutions across Castille (and the rest of Théah) would begin to dry up, along with their precious discoveries.

As it is, however, the valiant efforts of La Ciencia have allowed Théah's learning curve to continue – along with Castille's well-oiled public education system. Under the guise of "controlled learning", students are taught the basic philosophies, sciences, and arts by men and women of the Vaticine cloth. They are also trained in the importance of "diplomatic secrecy" and "intellectual freedom" along the way.



Medical Innovations

Castillians enjoy the highest degree of sanitation in Théah. Church scholars have trained people to wash their hands and take other simple precautions to prevent disease and infection. Sanitary conditions have also improved, with aqueducts and irrigation systems in place all across Castille. Diagnosis, treatment, and surgery have taken drastic leaps forward, as the Church continues to study the means and methods of the human body. Nearly all churches are now equipped with rudimentary medical supplies, which the clergy use in case of emergencies, and families learn how to help each other in monthly presentations.

Church Embargoes

The Church has always maintained international embargoes upon “sinful” items and “infidels.” Before the Inquisition’s rise to power, these embargoes took the form of a group of bishops and *alcalde* assigned to every major seaport and inland city. These groups would search suspect cargoes and interrogate potential infidels, taking violators into custody and destroying heretical texts and possessions. The system worked, albeit with some significant shortcomings, since it relied upon the judgment of the bishops and *alcalde*.

Today, the Inquisition has fortified the Church’s borders, supplementing the existing guard stations with units of Castillian soldiers, and arming them with the best weapons available. Additional stations have been erected all along sensitive borders – between the major seaports on southern Théah and on the shores of the Vodacce keys. Their objective is the complete isolation of the Crescent Empire, ensuring that the “heathen” culture does not spread to the rest of Théah. These stations are manned only by devout Vaticines (and in many cases, fanatic members of the Inquisition).

Many Castillian nobles disregard these embargoes out of patriotism (honoring age-old trade agreements), greed, or belief that the actions of the Inquisition are wrong. Other holes spring up as well: canny smugglers have found alternate routes to the Crescent Empire and Crescent goods regularly appear on the Théan black market.

Syrneth artifacts, too, are difficult to stop. The Church has far less influence on the western seas, and with Montaigne and Avalon supporting the Explorer’s Society, a blockade is next to impossible. Still, the word of the Prophets is not easily discarded, and both Castille and Vodacce have helped the Vaticines enforce the blockade. The Crescent Empire remains largely isolated to this day, and Syrneth artifacts are difficult to find within Castillian borders.

Embargo Items

The list of items considered heretical by the Inquisition is long and often counter-intuitive. The following items are restricted in Vaticine nations, although they can still be found, in defiance of the Inquisition’s edicts. The list is by no means complete. The High Inquisitors define new heresies every day, and the list will continue to grow until Verdugo and his followers are dealt with.

Crescents (the people)

Syrneth artifacts (of all kinds and under all circumstances)

Objectionist and other heretical propaganda.

Scholarly works (outside the hands of authorized Church researchers)

Religious texts (unless on the person of authorized clergy)

Anti-Vaticine sentiments (verbal or written)

Sorcerous items of any kind (including blooded objects, runes and rune-scribed items, and Glamour objects).





A detailed, hand-drawn map of a coastline, possibly a bay or inlet, with a compass rose and various navigational markings. The map is rendered in a light, sketchy style with fine lines and shading. The word "Hero" is written in a large, elegant, black serif font across the center of the map. The map features a compass rose in the upper right and lower left, with lines radiating from the center to the edges, indicating directions. There are also various symbols, including a star-like shape in the upper right and a circular emblem in the lower left. The overall appearance is that of an old, weathered map or a nautical chart.

Hero

Into the Abyss, Part Two

The bell-towers throughout Rancho Ochoa tolled the deaths of countless Castillian soldiers and the nobles they had vowed to protect. Each thunderous strike resounded through the narrow streets, fueling the fury of the Montaigne invaders – and their prey.

Standing on his balcony high above the sparring combatants, Don Marcos Ontiveros de Ochoa cupped his face to force back the shame brewing in his belly. His home – the palace and ancestral home of the Ochoa family – was nearly untouched by the rapidly spreading flames. Its walls were hardly scathed, its windows unbroken, and its exterior doors were stoutly secured against the chaos ripping through every other part of the town. Only a few doors inside the palace were shattered – torn down by the Musketeers whom Marco had let in. Montegue's teams had been mercifully precise in their capture of the palace; the prince could take some small solace in that. But the bloodshed his people now suffered... How had it all come to this? The Empereur promised that the attack would be orchestrated with the utmost care, and every precaution would be taken to ensure minimum casualties. All Marco had to do was provide them with a location for their *Porté* gateway. But now...

"Don Marco!" The voice rasped with the sharp edge of a practiced cynic. General François Étalon du Toille, commander of the Montaigne field troops, stepped forward out of the shadows of the palace's inner hall.

"General." Marco's return was cold and rigid, filled with contempt and self-loathing begging for a target.

"Settling in to your new role already, I see," du Toille mocked. "How is the life of a ruler?"

"I rule nothing," Ochoa responded, with as much dignity as he could muster.

"Temper, temper," the general purred. Then, turning back to his attaché, he continued, "Perhaps the legends of Castillian irascibility were not altogether untrue."

The attaché – a morbid little troll named Garnier – smiled widely at his master's wit, grating ever further upon Marco's fragile composure.

"You are scavengers, du Toille, not worthy of my anger."

"Self-loathing does not suit nobility," du Toille jabbed. An excellent maneuver in other circumstances – enough to awaken the worst answer from the best of men.

Thoughtlessly, Don Marco Ochoa tore the end of the palace's heavy curtains around his left arm while his right hand shot out for his blade. In a moment, Garnier was buried beneath eighty pounds of imported fabric and du Toille was staring down the edge of a thin rapier point. But Ochoa had no intention of engaging du Toille's obviously superior swordsmanship. He had one chance to send a message back with the general, and he wanted to make it count.

Marco felt the hilt of his rapier jar into du Toille's brow, and a split-second later, the Montaigne's howls filled the throne room. The general recoiled, his skull and face a shattered mockery to match his slurs.

Don Marco whirled to receive the attack he knew was coming, but was thrust into darkness as the heavy tapestry wrapped around him. He lost his footing and fell into Garnier's dagger thrusts, one after another into his side. The Castillian felt himself lifted for a moment, followed by a long and terrible descent. Several agonizing moments later, he joined the futile defense of the town below.

Nobility

title and constantly rewrites his edicts, Good King Sandoval is hardly the puppet they think. He's discovered reservoirs of strength that have allowed him to hold his country together against all odds. Detractors talk about the burgeoning bureaucracy and a Church out of control, but the Montaigne advance has ground to a halt, the people stay fed, and the Vaticines are still too weak to abolish his rule. Sandoval's leadership is responsible for all of it.

Unfortunately, his duties have kept him so busy that he can't appreciate any of his accomplishments. All he sees are his shortcomings. All he hears are his failures. He remains

Good King Sandoval

Salvador Bejarano de Sandoval never wanted to be king. He never thought he'd have to shoulder the awesome responsibility of governing his nation. That was for his brother: wise and canny, intelligent and decisive, Javier had every quality a good king needed. As the youngest son, Salvador could indulge in the courtier's life, serving as an advisor or diplomat while Javier made the important decisions. The prospect suited him.

Then it all went awry. First, their father fell ill, lapsing into a lengthy coma and leaving Javier to serve as regent. Then Javier himself disappeared one night, which placed Salvador – at the tender age of thirteen – as the nominal ruler. The king died just a few weeks later, sealing Salvador's doom. He was now the king of Castille.

Since then, he has had to weather one crisis after another. The Montaigne invasion was raging and his generals awaited orders. The Church had lost the Hierophant and was desperately trying to reaffirm its authority. Courtiers and diplomats all sought to bend him to their will. He found himself hamstrung by the very people who were supposed to help him, and there have been three attempts on his life that he knows about. He doesn't like to dwell on the possibility of more.

The amazing thing is how well he has survived all of these trials. Although the Church refuses to grant him his rightful



Good King Sandoval

unsure of himself, even after almost three years, and his lack of confidence may doom his nation yet.

It was never supposed to be like this.

Sandoval is a handsome young Castillian of sixteen years with wavy brown hair and warm eyes. When he is at ease, his natural intelligence and charisma shine through. He can talk about any subject at length and is a dynamic conversationalist. He's rarely at ease these days, however; the pressures of ruling are slowly getting to him. When under duress, he becomes very quiet and listens to others with a pained expression on his face. He chew his lip when



Andrés Bejarano del Aldana

thinking, a habit which compounds his reputation as an unfit child.

Andrés Bejarano del Aldana

In contrast to the quiet fanaticism of Cardinal Verdugo (q.v.), Andrés Aldana is friendly and open-minded. Aldana's father was a prominent judge who believed that the letter of the law must never override its intent. He taught his son that those in power should remember the subjects beneath them, and act with compassion in all things. Young Andrés learned well, and his kind-eyed empathy eventually landed him a position as Castille's chief diplomat. Many a foreign dignitary had their fears assuaged by his honest face, and while he could lie like a Crescent spice dealer if he had to, he rarely did. People tended to trust him enough to do the right thing.

He was recalled from Montaigne at the beginning of the war to serve as Prince Javier's advisor. When the elder regent vanished, he became young Sandoval's confidant, and eventual senior advisor. With the exception of Verdugo, there is no one the young monarch relies upon more. While Verdugo speaks of the nation, Aldana speaks of her people and the government's need to ease their suffering. His smooth tongue and honest smile are a sharp foil for Verdugo's icy logic; the two provide a strong balance for Good King Sandoval to work with. Aldana realizes that Verdugo is sometimes right, but considers the Cardinal too dangerous to give any ground at all. He argues vehemently against Verdugo at all times, on principle if for no other reason.

He regularly journeys across the countryside, speaking to the common people and listening to their concerns. He's found it helps to put a human face on large-scale problems and he enjoys the contact with ordinary Castillians. Every time he leaves, however, King Sandoval must rely solely on Verdugo for advice. Aldana has often had to cut his trips short to prevent the Cardinal from producing some oppressive edict in the king's name.

While he is loyal to King Sandoval, he secretly harbors a condescending pity towards his liege. The poor boy is

clearly too young to rule effectively, and needs his help until he has the experience to govern on his own. He's wise enough to keep his feelings hidden, however; Sandoval needs all the confidence he can get.

Aldana is a tall, modestly handsome man with a well-built frame. His largish nose is offset by a wide smile and warm gray eyes that others find charming. His gentle voice is instantly calming, and he rarely raises it, even when angry. He moves slowly and deliberately, but can act with amazing speed when it suits him; his swordsmanship is quite accomplished. Like most nobles, he plays close attention to his appearance, and always dresses in the height of fashion. He's not particularly vain, but recognizes the need to make a good impression.

Don Javier Rios del Guzman

Years ago, Javier was an important scholar and professor in Vaticine City. With a position of importance and influence, Javier turned out some of Castille's brightest minds. For almost ten years he diligently worked in the fields of philosophy and literature, helping to promote a better understanding of human nature. Protests, rallies, and forums were all his purview: to attend and sometimes orchestrate.

Then, in 1652, Javier was involved in an assembly that would forever alter his standing with the Castillian nobility. Although the details are sketchy – few witnessed the act – Javier and a few students apparently broke into a library and burned several hundred books in the North Wing of La Ciencia. A few weeks later, Javier resigned and took his knowledge to Avalon.

Javier found himself at the University of Kirkwall, a quiet school far away from Castille's political turmoil. He continued instructing those who would listen, although he had lost his verve for teaching and intellect. All around him, the land was merry and jocular, not the place for a brooding, introspective philosopher.

But even malaise created by Glamour can be overcome, and Javier eventually grew excited by his trade again.



Don Javier Rios del Guzman

Intelligent students were easy to find, and within two years, Javier recaptured his love of education. Students were drifting to his classes with the same exhilaration they had in Castille.

One of his prize students was Willem Karls, an Eisen boy paying for his own education with his familial inheritance. The two were inseparable during Javier's tenure, and Karls even taught Javier's classes when the Castillian was away. Eventually, Karls moved on, but the two maintain steady contact to this day.

In 1666, after the war broke out with Montaigne, Javier returned to Castille to manage Rancho Aldana for his brother-in-law, Enrique Yanez del Aldana. Now a Captain in the military, Enrique left the rancho to Javier. It did not take long for the teacher to master the work, and he quickly developed a rapport with the farmers and others on his farm.

Today, Javier is attempting to rebuild his reputation and build a new future for Castille, despite war and history. Rumor has it that he maintains a haven for refugees on his

estate, and that Vodacce smugglers are helping him move contraband through Rancho Aldana.

Javier is a small, rotund man with heavy-lidded eyes. He wears his beard in a goatee, unlike most of his countrymen, and his clothes are somewhat dated. Javier speaks with soft authority and can enrapture an entire room with his voice. He is among the most erudite Dons in Castille, and can out argue almost anyone.

Cardinal Esteban Verdugo

Verdugo's first epiphany came when he was five years old. His mother took him to the church in the small town where they lived, to pray for the soul of his dead father. As he knelt by the altar, he saw the sunlight streaming through the beautiful stained glass windows in front of him. He saw a winged angel descend from the clouds and appear in front of him. The angel claimed to be the voice of Theus, and told young Esteban that he was destined for great things — things that no one else in the world was capable of. Then the angel gave him a brief glimpse of heaven's glory.

When he came to, his mother told him that he had had a seizure. He knew she had not seen the vision, but it was all right. He would see for her. As soon as he was old enough, he enrolled in the local Vaticine school with the intention of becoming a priest.

He moved steadily up the Church's ranks, using a combination of zeal and intellect to impress his superiors. Initially, his peers were disturbed by his intense fervor, so he learned to hide them behind a facade. The Hierophant saw through the mask, however, and appointed Verdugo to a position where his zeal would do the most good: the Inquisition. Here, the young priest saw a chance to save countless souls, more perhaps than at any time since the First Prophet. He worked tirelessly to eliminate heresy in all its forms. Sometimes, he was asked to conduct gruesome torture or destroy a priceless work of art. He did it all without questioning. The beauty he marred brought no tears to his eyes, nor did the terrible pain he inflicted. All that mattered were the souls he was saving; their agony



Cardinal Esteban Verdugo

would buy than salvation. After ten years, he was promoted to the rank of Grand High Inquisitor.

When the Hierophant vanished, he was visited by another vision. In it, he saw the armies of Legion march across Théah to do battle with the righteous souls risen from their graves. He watched them clash and wheel, burying all of civilization beneath their feet. Then, when the carnage had reached its crescendo, he saw all of them – sinner and savior alike – consumed by the overpowering light of Theus himself. He awoke screaming, bathed in sweat, but knew immediately what he must do. He issued a public declaration that the coming of the Fourth Prophet was at hand, and ordered the Inquisition to begin its current campaign of terror.

His actions since then have been well-documented: the Inquisition has become the dominant power in the Church, fighting to prepare as many souls as possible for the End. Between torturing heretics into confessions and destroying “wasteful” pieces of learning, Verdugo has kept busy. Some whisper that his actions hide political ambitions – that he desires nothing less than the Castillian throne. Prince Javier’s mysterious disappearance and the Church’s refusal to acknowledge King Sandoval have lent credence to these rumors, despite his repeated denials.

Esteban is a tall man with a gentle face and a short black beard. He dresses in red cardinal’s robes and carries a large leather-bound copy of the Book of the Prophets. Verdugo’s advice emphasizes the good of the whole over individual suffering, and he keeps the king focused on cold, hard reality whenever possible. He speaks with quiet smugness, and uses logical arguments to justify horrifying acts of brutality. Few people have ever seen him lose his temper, and his manners are impeccable at all times. He seems to believe he’s doing the right thing and in all fairness, his advice has probably kept the country from losing the war. Verdugo conducts himself with absolute confidence. He knows that he has saved more people from Legion’s flames than anyone else in history. Theus will remember his noble deeds, just as He promised in that boyhood vision so long ago.

A decorative banner with a central scroll containing the title "The Military". The banner is flanked by ornate, symmetrical designs that resemble stylized anchors or knots. The background of the page features a faint, large-scale map or compass rose pattern.

The Military

El Malvado (“The Wicked”)

The Castillians have a saying: “The greatest scoundrel is seen in the mirror.” Youngsters learn that the path to corruption and debauchery is wide and enticing, and always near, while the path of righteousness is both narrow and difficult to traverse. “If you are not careful in your actions, you sins will infiltrate your spirit. You will become *malvado*, the wicked.”

This saying has taken on a particular resonance with the recent emergence of a man who has assumed its title. El Malvado is believed to be Don Lorenzo Zepeda del Acedo, a charismatic soldier who broke countless hearts in his home city of San Juan. He seduced and abandoned countless maidens in his day, leaving each one a scarlet kerchief on her pillow. The kerchiefs were all stitched with the Zepeda family seal and each included a brief poem of unmatched passion and devotion.

Lorenzo’s reputation spread after he enlisted with the Castillian military. Securing an artillery command allowed Lorenzo to pursue women across the western peninsula as he traveled from port to port. Soon, he was infuriating husbands and fathers throughout the Torres and Zepeda

ranchos, and acquired the nickname El Malvado by virtue of his many conquests.

When the Montaigne invaded, El Malvado's life was changed forever. The enemy overran his homeland, and his family was captured inside San Juan by the Montaigne general, François Étalon du Toille (see page 72). Lorenzo was among the soldiers left behind by Don Montoya just before San Juan was put to flame, and he saw the curls of foul smoke rising from the square where his family had been. When he realized what the vicious Montaigne



El Malvado (“The Wicked”)

general had done, he ordered his troops into the flaming wreckage, hoping to rescue the captured civilians.

None of Lorenzo's soldiers survived the ordeal. They perished in a futile effort to stop the massacre and their bodies were burned along with the other citizens of San Juan. The ruins of the city were abandoned by the Montaigne army, leaving only a small garrison to stand guard over the ruins.

Then, several weeks ago, a message was delivered to General du Toille – on a scarlet kerchief. Stitched into the cloth was a simple quote from the Book of the Prophets: “The deeds of the wicked will return upon them a thousandfold.” The general paid the missive no mind, and continued his assault upon La Muralla al Ultimo. Several days later, a soldier went missing. A search turned him up in a nearby copse of trees – his body burned black by fire. Soon, other soldiers went missing or turned up dead; every one of them had been at the massacre at San Juan.

General du Toille and his men have since doubled their patrols, hoping to stop the attacks, but have so far been unable to thwart the assassin. The attacks do not follow any pattern, save focus on veterans of San Juan. Even the few men recalled to Montaigne were killed, flames consuming the wagons that carried them.

The few eye-witness accounts of the attacker match those of the famed El Vago, but General du Toille has dismissed such reports out of hand. “El Vago, for all that he opposes us, is not a killer,” du Toille asserts, and many Castillians agree. Others have begun to wonder if perhaps El Malvado was El Vago all along, and has gone over the edge since the loss of his family.

Don Lorenzo was a dark, devastatingly handsome man with silky black hair and bright hazel eyes. He dressed impeccably and moved with the sinewy grace of a dancer. He often wore a rose or other flower in his lapel, and had a voice like a choir of angels. No one has seen El Malvado's face since the Battle of San Juan, but rumors maintain that he was scarred horribly by the flames and now wears a hooded cloak to hide his shame. No one has been able to verify it, however, and his victims aren't talking.

Admiral Enrique Orduño

The Orduños have long been associated with the Castillian Navy, but they suffered an immense loss of prestige during the disastrous assault on Avalon in 1659. The king appointed their family patriarch to lead the attack; Hernando Orduño had spent his career advising the royal court, but had no practical experience on the water. History has noted his folly and he did not live to return to port.

Among the ships under his command was a small vessel captained by his nephew Enrique. The younger Orduño piloted his ship well, but one ship alone could not undo what destiny had foretold. He took command of the shattered armada, led the survivors back to Castille, and reported his uncle's death to the king. He then begged for the opportunity to make amends, but King Salvador would not hear of it. Crown Prince Javier became the new High Admiral of the Navy and the Orduños were relegated to other commands. Enrique burned with the humiliation his family had suffered.

When Prince Javier disappeared, he again asked to be placed in charge of the Castillian Navy. Good King Sandoval reluctantly agreed, despite the vocal protests of those who remembered 1659. Enrique swore to erase the shame his uncle had left, and restore the Castillian navy to its former place of glory.

The war with Montaigne made things easier. With the country on a military footing, he quickly procured the funds he needed, and set about building new ships in every port that could support them. For two years, he watched the armada grow, stuck behind a planner's desk and impatient to get back to sea. Even meeting his wife Margaretta could not dim his passion for proving himself.

Now, at last, his plans have come to fruition. A new Castillian navy has been refurbished and awaits his command to set sail. His priorities have shifted slightly: with the Montaigne blockading the occupied half of his country, he cannot seek retribution against the Avalons. Still, *l'Empereur's* navy makes a fine target. He plans to make an example of them that all the world will remember. Orduño has heard the doubts that still ring through the royal palace

— those who continue to believe that he will lead them to ruin — and cast them aside. The Montaigne fleet awaits him; they will be the final arbiter of his quest, not the king's court.

Enrique is a small, swarthy Castillian in his mid-forties with a sharp beard and dark eyes creased from squinting at the horizon. He could sail a ship almost before he could walk and has spent more of his life on the open sea than dry land. He wears dark naval clothes at all times, eschewing the formal uniform for pragmatic, day-to-day wear. A consummate military man, he obeys his superiors to the



Admiral Enrique Orduño

letter and expects nothing less from those beneath him. He rarely displays emotion, but a quiet fervor burns in his eyes. He is a devout Vaticine, though he rarely speaks of it, and his dry wit often hints at the deep feelings below the surface. Time will tell if the combination of calm detachment and passionate emotion makes him the commander his country so desperately needs.

Margaretta Orduño

Enrique's wife, the feisty Margaretta, is the perfect match to his clinical distance. Her first love was music, and she learned to play the guitar before she could read. When the music began to lose its flair, she found dancing. The commoners' baile enthralled her, and her father, Don Roberto Vasquez del Soldano, brought nomads to his *ranchero* to teach her the passionate style. By the time she was fourteen, she had mastered several difficult techniques, including flamenco and sarabande. Then at last, when dancing had run its course, she discovered swordsmanship: a lethal twist on the fiery steps that she had learned so well. The Aldana school never had a more enthusiastic pupil.

Between these projects, she helped her father on his diplomatic missions. At first, she simply entertained his guests; later, as her swordsmanship improved, she became a *de facto* bodyguard and traveled throughout the kingdom at his side. It was on one of these visits that she first met her future husband. The admiral was busy in Tarago building a new armada, and Roberto had come to gauge his progress. She found herself fascinated by the grim, methodical sailor who kept his passions so tightly bottled, and the two began courting almost immediately. Her father disapproved of the pairing, for the Orduños' political star was in decline, but he had never said no to his daughter before and wasn't about to start now. The pair were wed on the day the Admiral's ship, the *Corazón del Castilla*, launched to sea.

Now she serves on board *El Corazón* as her husband's first mate and bodyguard, using her natural swordsman's skills to make up for her lack of seamanship. The crew respects her skills, and she never chides them as long as they do their duty. She continues to train hard while keeping a close

eye on any threats to her husband. Enrique and Margaretta are very good for each other. She's helped him express his hidden emotions, while he has helped control her wilder side. Both have become more complete through the marriage.

Margaretta is a tall, beautiful woman with long black hair. Countless hours of practice have left her in excellent physical shape, and while her swordsmanship is still developing, her natural abilities more than make up for it. She usually dresses in a modified dancer's outfit that permits freedom of movement without losing a noble's style.



Margaretta Orduño

She smiles easily and her rich throaty laugh rises at the slightest amusement. Her smile turns sharper when she's threatened or bullied. Margaretta is considerably intelligent and has a natural curiosity that almost overpowers her sometimes: she devours knowledge like a starving man devours food.

The People of Castille

Alvara Arciniega

The rogue swordsman and theorist known as Alvara Arciniega (see the Knowledge section of the Player chapter in the *7th Sea Players' Guide*), is among the foremost pioneers of the scientific revolution. His work in the fields of mathematics and the natural sciences has helped to forge modern philosophy, he was part of the Castilian nobility who supported the construction of the famed Arciniega University in Altamira (see page 42), and his strong political stance has aided countless others in the pursuit of knowledge.

But as of the summer of 1666, Alvara Arciniega is a hunted man, one of the most widely sought targets of the Inquisition. His open criticism of the new Church doctrine (particularly their self-imposed administration of scientific development) ensured him a place as one of the first "enemies of the Church." Shortly after his discovery of an entire spectrum of colors within a single ray of white light (which was later released to the public through members of

the Invisible College), three Inquisition enforcers arrived at his mountain villa to arrest him for "crimes against the Vaticine Church and the people of Théah." A fight ensued, in which the unsuspecting enforcers were introduced to Alvara's formidable skill with the sword, and one of Théah's finest minds became a fugitive.

Over the last two years, Arciniega has continued his research despite the Inquisition's obsessive pursuit, and helped others escape the oppression of the new Vaticine Church. He has gone underground, relying upon the resources of his extended family, along with the network he has established all across Théah, to continue this work. He moves constantly, always one step ahead of the Inquisition, and filters all his discoveries (and many new recruits) through the ranks of the Invisible College.

Arciniega's most recent (and public) invention is the reflecting telescope, which he proposed in Castille only a few months ago. The ramifications of this discovery (and the fact that it has occurred beneath the noses of the Inquisition) have contributed to Cardinal Verdugo's announcement that all forms of experimentation are heretical, and punishable by death. Many astronomers are using the telescope to test that edict, arguing that the invention has moved past theory and into practice. Rumors persist that numerous telescopes have already been built, and that two have been shut down by the Church, their sponsors jailed... or worse.

The Inquisition's declaration against experimentation has been a doubled-edge sword for Arciniega. On the one hand, he is among Théah's most wanted criminals, a marked enemy of the largest organization in the world. But his celebrity as a "world-class villain" has also given him several advantages he could never have as a reclusive scholar. Nobles of several nations secretly fund his efforts, foreign printing houses publish his theories, and the scientific community is more ready than ever to accept his work.

Arciniega's network of supporters grows by the day. He has friends in every nation on Théah, and has branched out into the economic forum as well; his new-found contacts

within the Vodacce and Vendel merchant leagues have offered him tremendous wealth with which to continue his crusade, as well as access to new resources available only outside his homeland of Castille. He's even acquired several rare Crescent items, transported illegally across international waters in the cargo holds of pirate corsairs.

Alvara is tall, over six feet, with long, dextrous fingers and a sallow complexion. He shaves his hair short to hide the gray creeping in and wears a long, flowing wig when not experimenting. His dark eyes smolder behind his pince-nez and he speaks with deliberate care. Since his run-in with the



Alvara Arciniega

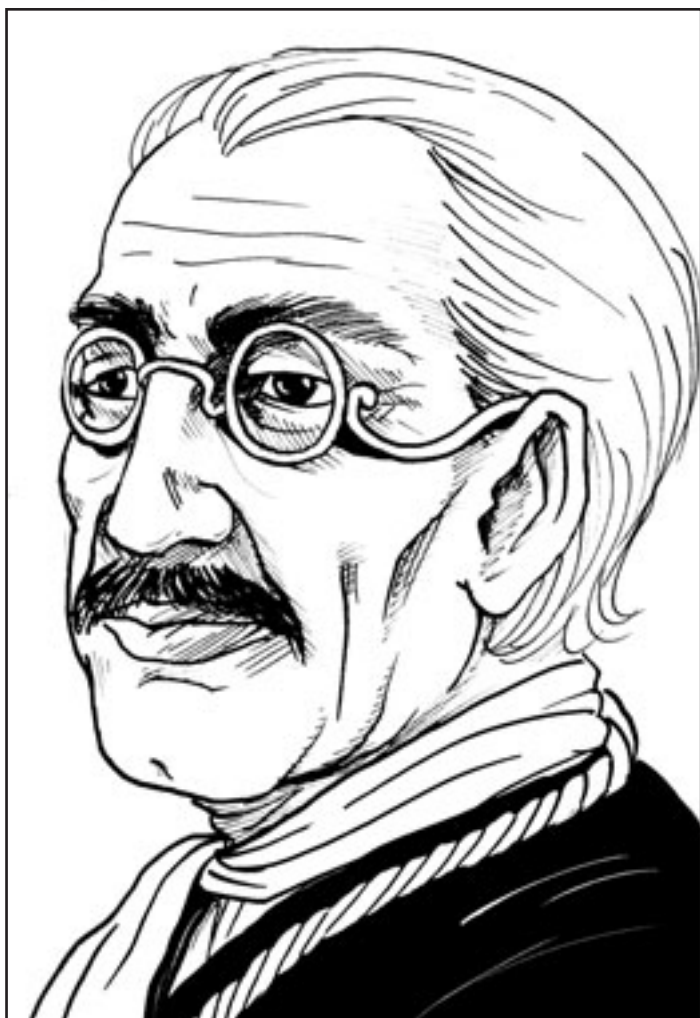
Inquisition, he's carried a dueling sword with him at all times. During his few public appearances, he complements it with a brace of loaded pistols.

Salvador Garcia

The revered headmaster of La Ciencia university spent the first fifty years of his life as any good Castillian would: he loved his family, attended church devoutly, and tried his best to make the world a better place. The Vaticines offered him an unparalleled chance to study the world's mysteries, both as a teacher and a priest. He took his vows on his eighteenth birthday, taught his first class on his twenty-third, and penned his first book on his thirtieth. He reveled in the scientific glories around him while simultaneously preaching the power of Theus to an ever-increasing flock. The Church saw him as one of its brightest stars and raised him quickly through its ranks; even as a bishop, he took time out from his busy schedule to teach classes at La Ciencia.

But as the years went by, secret doubts began to steal into his soul. He saw the Church abuse its authority and the Inquisition destroy lives in the name of Theus. When the Hierophant died, the institution he had devoted his entire life to exploded into political infighting. It was more than he could take. With one of his two loves rapidly collapsing, he turned to the other for solace. He used his considerable clout to remove himself from the Vaticine mess, and took a job as Headmaster of La Ciencia.

Since then, Garcia has pushed strongly for the continuation of scientific research and conducted as many experiments as the current political climate will allow. As his academic duties have engulfed him, he has grown increasingly disillusioned with the Church. While his belief in Theus has never wavered, he has come to see the Vaticine Church — and to some extent, organized religion in general — as an obscene monster corrupting all that it touches. He has even penned a treatise on the matter, "A Need For Doubt", which declares that atheism is necessary for religion to be truly just. The paper could get him burned as a heretic, but also has the potential to start a revolution in secular thinking. He



Salvador Garcia

hasn't published it yet (he's waiting for the proper time), but he plans to do so soon.

Garcia is a small, elderly man with thinning gray hair and an academic's wardrobe. A lifetime of care has worn its way into his face, and deep worry lines spread out from his eyes. His well-made clothes emphasize durability and usually smell of laboratory chemicals. He speaks quietly and carefully, but rarely backs down from his convictions. Garcia looks back on a life well-led and has few regrets. He doesn't fear dying, nor is he worried about his last

remaining years. There's little left in this world that can truly harm him.

Alicia Zaneta de Lazaro

Alicia is a rising star in Castille, the first prominent matadora in the nation's proud tradition of bull fighting. Her family raised her to be a nobleman's wife, but her spirit constantly chafed against such a limiting role. As she grew older, Alicia disguised herself and journeyed into the field with the hired help. They always discovered her and she was constantly scolded for her presumption, but she kept it up.

Distressed at her behavior, Alicia's parents made sure she was tutored in the finer points of etiquette and social behavior. She acquired charm, grace, and poise with ease, but nothing could extinguish the passion in her heart. Even her flamenco dancing was more spirited than proper.

It was a crisp autumn morning when Alicia once again donned a workman's poncho and stole away with her father and his men. Months had passed since her last "outburst," and everyone assumed that she was finished with such silly distractions. Fortunately, they were wrong. While tending to her father's herd, the men came across an enraged and injured bull. Flecked with blood and foam, the beast charged the men, goring Don Lazaro's horse and knocking him to the ground, unconscious. As the enormous creature prepared to trample her father, Alicia leapt in front of it, whipping her jacket in its face. The bull charged straight for her, allowing her brothers to pull their father out of harm's way. At the last possible moment, Alicia danced to the left of the raging animal, its horns missing her chest by a hair's breadth. Again and again she distracted the beast, until the other workers were able to bring it down with ropes.

Word of the event quickly reached Don Javier Rios de Guzman (see page 75), and a peculiar idea formed in his head. With her parents' permission, the Don paid for Alicia's training and began sponsoring her at amateur bullfighting contests. Crowds approved of the svelte matadora as she fiercely danced with the bulls, and went

wild with enthusiasm when she removed her hat, revealing sparkling brown eyes and a head of long, dark hair.

For the past year, Alicia has toured Castille, her fame growing with each performance. Streets are crowded as she enters each town. Naturally, she is rather unpopular with more traditional matadors; some have even publicly denounced her as a dilution of their art. Mysterious events have plagued her last few contests, from faulty equipment to bulls drugged to feel no pain. To Alicia, it doesn't matter. She has found her life's calling, and her talents outshine



Alicia Zaneta de Lazaro

even the fiercest rival. How can mere sabotage overcome what Theus has decreed?

Alicia is tall and spry, with well developed physical skills and amazing dexterity. She wears her hair in a bun when bullfighting, but normally it streams down past her shoulders. Her silky brown eyes shine with joy and she speaks with the satisfaction of someone who loves what she's doing. She has received countless offers of marriage, but has yet to answer any of them. That was her parents' plan; why should she adhere to it?

Luis Rafael Dominguez de San Angelo

Luis Rafael was an orphan, and lived the early years of his life hand-to-mouth on the streets of San Angelo. But at the age of six, his wit and vivacity caught the attention of the local Don, Alejandro Dominguez, who was without children of his own. He and his wife, Floriana, took Luis on as a ward, and loved him as their own son. On his seventh birthday, he was legally adopted into Castille's nobility.

The remainder of Luis' childhood was spent in bliss, pursuing such hobbies as boating and horseback riding, and learning to play the guitar with his mother. He learned from Castille's best private instructors and attended the Aldana school when he was of age. A natural with the blade, Luis mastered the basic techniques of dueling, and improvised with equal flourish.

It was no surprise when the gifted youth was accepted to La Universidad de San Angelo. Accepting only meager financial aid from his family, he moved into a loft above a tavern and studied with the intention of joining the priesthood.

But it was not to be. One fateful night, Luis was disturbed from his lessons by screams. Without pause, he grabbed his sword and ran into the street, confronting a gang of seven rowdy sailors who had surrounded a pretty young woman. Luis was a blur of motion, killing three and dispatching the others with little trouble. Between sobs, the girl said that one of the fleeing ruffians had stolen her bracelet, a family



Luis Rafael Dominguez de San Angelo

heirloom; less than six hours later, Luis returned the ornament.

The young woman was Sybil Morgan, the daughter of an Avalon diplomat. Grateful for the Castillian's aid, Sir Morgan petitioned Luis to the Knightly Order of the Rose and Cross. After his entrance, Luis was shocked to discover that his adopted father belonged to the order as well (retired in good standing). Proud that his son had achieved the same honor with little or no help, Alejandro Dominguez presented Luis with the family's sword, a beautiful masterpiece that had been passed down for generations.

Being a Knight of the Rose and Cross turned out to be Luis' true calling. He quickly gained honor and fame within the order, performing feats of heroism with unparalleled zeal. He was well respected and seemingly destined to become a legend in his own time.

But then the Montaigne invaded, and the course of Luis' life changed again. Montaigne troops ambushed him and two other Knights on the road to Rancho Dominguez. After evading the enemy, they made their way on foot to the edge of his father's land. As they drew closer, they saw smoke rising from the family's home; the estate had been completely gutted. His mother lay dead in the soot and embers, while his father still had a sword clutched in his dead hands. The Montaigne had shot him from a distance while he tried to defend his home.

Luis took his family's death as a bitter personal defeat; he had failed those who meant the most to him. Spiritually devastated, he buried his parents side-by-side under a giant shade tree on the edge of their property. He buried his sword between them, along with his Knightly pendant and tabard. He no longer felt worthy to bear the seal of the Rose and Cross.

Ever Since, Luis has wandered Théah as a mercenary. He claims allegiance to none, but – despite his current opinion of himself – is not much of a scoundrel. His spirit is still noble, his conscience still strong, and his word is still his bond. Luis remains a defender of the weak and a righter of wrongs, but doesn't flaunt these traits or go out of his way to advertise them.

Luis bears little resemblance to the proud Knight of the Rose and Cross he once was. His hair is unkempt and his beard badly shaven, while his haunted eyes still bear the burden of his lost family. Yet despite his spiritual malaise, he still carries himself with dignity. He keeps his clothes neat and his wits about him. He refuses to drink or indulge in other temptations. Luis's voice is flat and hard, and while he still practices honorable compassion, you couldn't tell by listening to him. Only those who get to know him understand what a brave and noble soul he is. To strangers, he's just another sword for hire.





Drama



*Into the Abyss,
Part Three*

The High King of Castille slouched a little deeper into his throne as his advisors argued. Over an hour the dispute had raged, over whether the Ochoa patriarch should be allowed to present his family's case. According to the Don, his son – and his son alone – betrayed Castille to the Montaigne. He sought asylum and a chance to redeem his disgraced bloodline, but Cardinal Verdugo was firm on the matter.

"The Ochoa are lost to us, your Highness. They are without name, or blood, and do not deserve our hospitality. We are not obliged to hear their patriarch's pleas – here or anywhere else. The Church recognizes only their betrayal."

Andrés Bejarano del Aldana shared the Cardinal's passion, but not his claim. "Have we forgotten our pledge to the people of Castille, to honor brotherhood over bias? We are without solid proof. We know only the meager facts that our scouts and commanders return from the front. Shouldn't we hear from Don Efron before we condemn an entire family?"

The King remained silent and still. It was rarely wise to rush into any decision, let alone accept anything at face value. He would hear all the arguments before rendering a decision, lest a voice be lost in the maelstrom. The prospect of passing judgment upon the Ochoa family was a particularly heavy burden for Sandoval, whose own family had shared many long winters in their northern retreats. Don Efron himself had once been a personal friend to the Crown, and his wife had helped raise young Sandoval after his mother had died.

Many long moments passed before the silence in the room revived him from his memories. Verdugo and Aldana had stopped talking, apparently content with their arguments.

"We shall see him," Sandoval commanded. No further explanation was required. The King observed Verdugo, but could glean no reaction to his decree. Moments later, Don Ochoa knelt before the court, his head bent low in shame.

"King Sandoval," Efron began, "I humbly request that you consider my words before judging my family. Though it pains me to admit it, my own son was responsible for the ease of the Montaigne invasion; the rest were uninvolved. Condemn me as well if you must, but I beg that you relieve my wife and brothers from this horrible sentence."

Verdugo awaited the King's gesture to proceed, then approached the captive with delicate grace. He let his prophet's cross fall before the Ochoa's eyes, and waited for the image to register before speaking. "Don Ochoa's request is equitable," he said finally, his voice firm and clear. "The Church accepts his proposal."

Sandoval's eyes widened in surprise at the Cardinal's acquiescence. He turned to the guards and nodded, sealing the agreement. Don Ochoa was led off by Church officials, words of gratitude trailing behind him.



Cardinal Verdugo and an aide observed Ochoa through the bars of his cell deep beneath the palace at San Cristobal. The Cardinal had considered his words carefully, choosing each one for its own individual merits. "The Church has forgiven you, Efron..."

Don Ochoa made to speak, but Verdugo silenced him, raising a single finger to his lips for emphasis. "The Church has forgiven you, and believes you should not have to bear this burden alone." Welling fear settled into Efron's stomach as Verdugo turned to the Bishop with him and commanded, "Find all of Efron's blood, and ensure that they join him in Paradise."

The Destiny Spread

Fate Witches have a particular form of reading they use to give their querent a general idea of what his destiny is like. They use a 5-card spread from the Sorte deck in a cross formation to accomplish this.

The first card is the querent's Strength. This embodies his most noble quality.

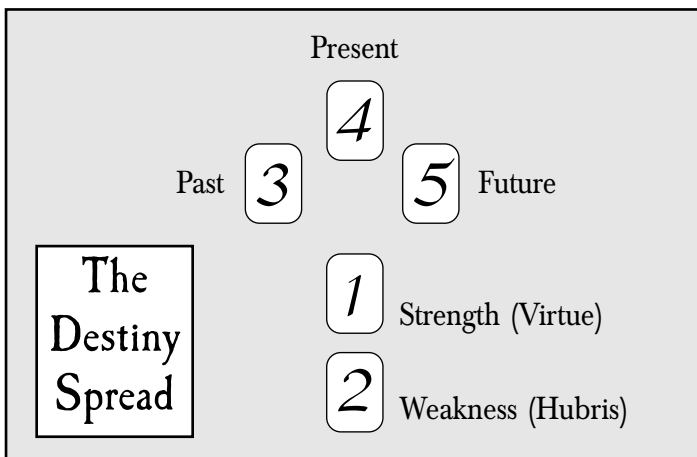
The second card is the querent's Weakness. This shows his greatest flaw.

The third card is the querent's Past. This shows an important event that helped make him who he is.

The fourth card is the querent's Present. This shows his current situation.

The fifth card is the querent's Future. This shows him an important event that is fast approaching in his life that he should be prepared for.

Normally, the first and second cards are selected from the Greater Arcana, while the other three cards are selected from the two suits from the Minor Arcana that are the most significant to the querent. Fate Witches traditionally leave the Court Cards out of these readings, since they signify events that cannot be controlled.



The Destiny Spread in Hero Creation

To use this system properly, you need a Tarot deck. Perform this reading right after assigning Traits and Nationality to your Hero, but before assigning anything else. Separate out the Major Arcana, shuffle them, and put them in one pile. Next, pull out the two suits that are most significant to your character – here, Cups and Swords – leaving out the Page, Knight, Queen, and King cards. Castille have a strong affinity for the suits of Cups and Swords: Cups because of their emotional and spiritual nature, and Swords because of their boldness.

Shuffle the two suits together into a pile. Next, lay out the Destiny Spread as described above. You must choose to focus on either your Strength or your Weakness. If you choose your Strength, your Hero gains the Virtue corresponding to that card, and you pay 10 HP for performing the Destiny Spread. If you choose your Weakness, your Hero gains the Hubris corresponding to that card, and you gain 10 extra HP to build your Hero with. Finally, consult the Past, Present, and Future charts to see what your Hero gained (or lost) from those draws.

If you don't have a Tarot deck, it's hard to determine your Strength or Weakness at random, so have your GM select one. Then roll once each on the Past, Present, and Future charts (odd – Cups/even – Swords, then a die for the card number).

Past

These are the events that have shaped your Hero and made him who he is. Some of them may still hang over his head.

Ace of Cups: You come from a deeply religious family, and have been raised to follow that path in life. You gain the Faith Advantage for free.

Two of Cups: You grew up side-by-side with a good friend. You played together, got into trouble together, and matured together. Even now, he would do anything for you, and you would do the same for him. You gain an Ally Connection Advantage for free.

Three of Cups: You discovered the taste of alcohol earlier than most. Your body has built up quite a tolerance to it. You gain the Able Drinker Advantage for free.

Four of Cups: You come from a deeply religious family, but have lost your way. You gain a 2-point Crisis of Faith Background for free.

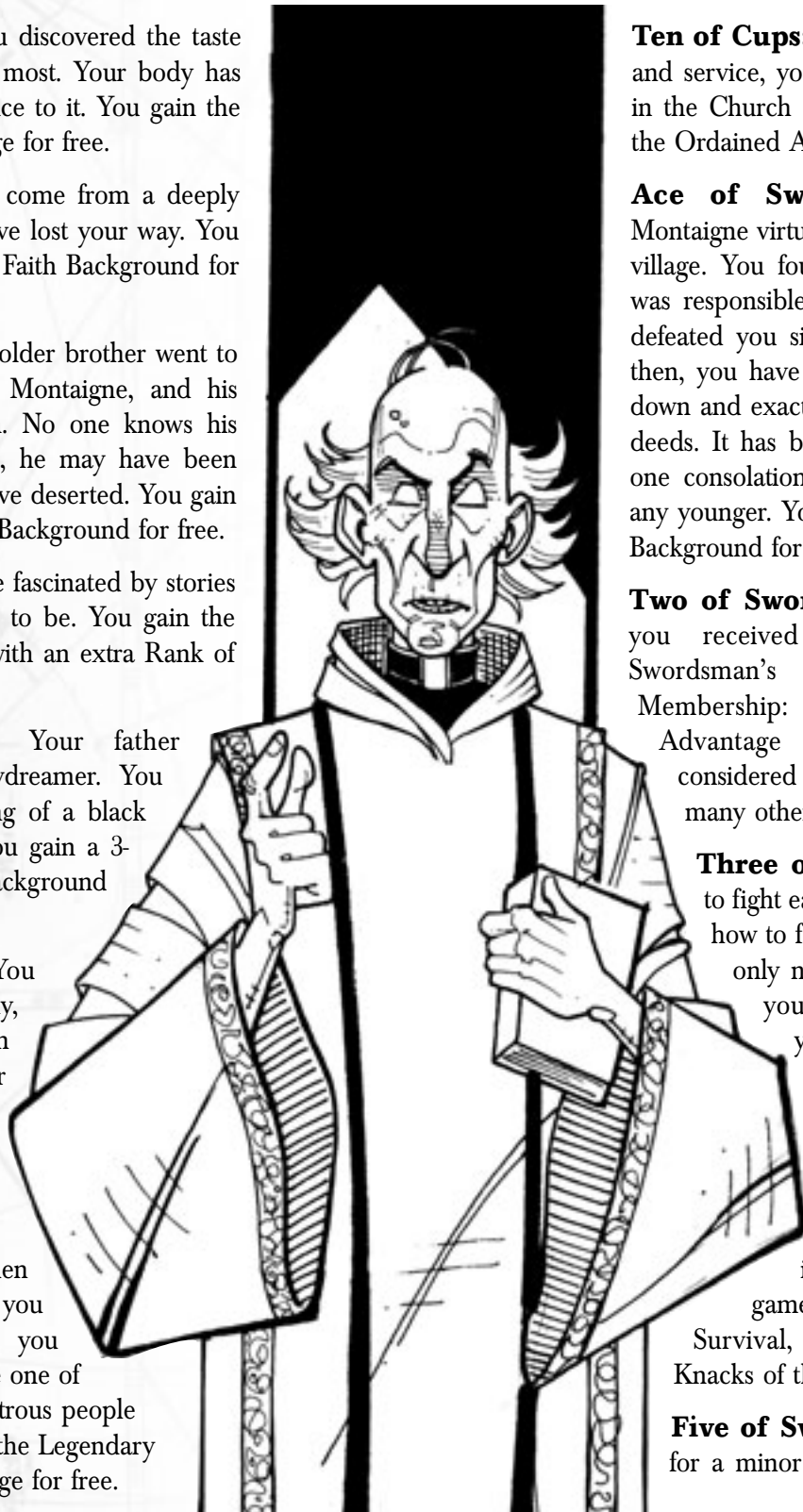
Five of Cups: Your older brother went to fight in the war with Montaigne, and his position was overtaken. No one knows his fate. He may be dead, he may have been captured, or he may have deserted. You gain a 3-point Lost Relative Background for free.

Six of Cups: You are fascinated by stories of the way things used to be. You gain the Scholar Skill for free, with an extra Rank of the History Knack.

Seven of Cups: Your father considered you a daydreamer. You have become something of a black sheep in the family. You gain a 3-point Dispossessed Background for free.

Eight of Cups: You have traveled extensively, wandering from nation to nation, looking for adventure. You gain the Montaigne and Vodacce Languages for free.

Nine of Cups: When you learned to walk, you never stumbled. Now you have the potential to be one of the most agile and dextrous people in the world. You gain the Legendary Trait (Finesse) Advantage for free.



Ten of Cups: After years of dedication and service, you have secured a position in the Church of the Prophets. You gain the Ordained Advantage for free.

Ace of Swords: The War with Montaigne virtually wiped out your whole village. You found the commander who was responsible for the carnage, and he defeated you single-handedly. Ever since then, you have been trying to track him down and exact revenge for his villainous deeds. It has been some time, and your one consolation is that he is not getting any younger. You gain a 3-point Defeated Background for free.

Two of Swords: As a political favor, you received membership in the Swordsman's Guild. You gain the Membership: Swordsman's Guild Advantage for free, but you are considered less than a full member by many other members.

Three of Swords: You learned to fight early; your uncle taught you how to fire a pistol when you were only nine years old. Since then, you have had to defend yourself often. You gain the Firearms Skill for free.

Four of Swords: You spent a year as a hermit, trying to make some sense of the world's injustice. You begin the game with one free Rank in the Survival, Fishing, and Stealth Knacks of the Hunter Skill.

Five of Swords: You were framed for a minor scandal a few years ago,



and still bear the stain of dishonor. You lose 5 points of Reputation and gain a 2-point Hunting Background for free.

Six of Swords: Three years ago, you journeyed to Avalon, and learned the language. You gain the Avalon Language for free, and speak it without a trace of accent.

Seven of Swords: When you were a child, your aunt had you keep an eye on her rival. You gain the Spy Skill for free.

Eight of Swords: A few years ago, you were falsely arrested for stealing the ring of a nobleman. You escaped from prison after only a week, but have not been forgotten by the authorities. You start play with a 2-point Wanted Background.

Nine of Swords: When you were an infant, you were seized by a horrible illness, which left its mark on you. Your growth was stunted. You gain the Small Advantage for free.

Ten of Swords: You got into some debt, but have paid it off. Roll an exploding die. You begin the game with that many fewer Guilders than you otherwise would.

Present

These events represent situations that your Hero could find himself currently entangled in. They will have to be dealt with soon, whether he likes it or not.

Ace of Cups: You have just had an old debt repaid to you. Roll 2k2. You begin the game with that many extra Guilders.

Two of Cups: You have just discovered the location of someone you loved, but whom you thought had died. Gain a 2-point Lost Love Background for free.

Three of Cups: You have just been awarded a medal for an act of courage. You gain the Citation Advantage for free.

Four of Cups: You have recently earned a position within the Church of the Prophets. You gain the Ordained Advantage for free.

Five of Cups: You have had a misunderstanding, and have lost contact with your family. You gain a 2-point Dispossessed Background for free.

Six of Cups: You have just returned from your cousin's wedding, which many members of your family attended. You may either gain a 5-point discount on the Extended Family Advantage or gain an Ally Connection who owes you some form of obligation.

Seven of Cups: You have a special sword. You gain 2 points worth of the Castillian Blade Advantage for free.

Eight of Cups: You have been studying religion. You gain the Priest Skill for free.

Nine of Cups: You have just gained the financial support of an influential noble. You gain a Patron Advantage with 2 points of Wealth and 2 points of Generosity for free.

Ten of Cups: You have a friend in whom you may confide. You gain a Confidant Connection for free.

Ace of Swords: Your frame can support much more muscle mass than it does; you have the potential to be one of the strongest men in Théah. You have the Legendary Trait (Brawn) Advantage.

Two of Swords: You have just been promoted. You begin the game with 4 extra points of the Commission Advantage for free.

Three of Swords: You are a naturally daunting person. You have a peculiar way of fixing your eyes upon someone and getting them to shift away from your gaze. You receive two Free Raises whenever you are attempting an Intimidation Action using the Repartee system.

Four of Swords: You have been relatively inactive of late, and have had a lot of time to catch up on your reading. You are literate in Castillian for free.

Five of Swords: You have had a string of bad luck recently, and have had to put forth an extra effort to make up for it. You start the game with one fewer Drama Die than normal.



Six of Swords: You have just returned from a journey along the river, where you stopped in Eisen. Gain the Language: Eisen Advantage for free.

Seven of Swords: You are a shady character, with a reputation that is less than sterling. The local authorities have their eyes on you, but no one can prove anything. You gain the Scoundrel Advantage for free.

Eight of Swords: After a period of two years, you have just been released from prison. You were arrested for being involved in an illegal duel, which you won. You receive the Fencing Skill for free.

Nine of Swords: You have just recovered from a serious illness, and are still weakened from it. All of your Brawn rolls have a penalty of -5 for the duration of the first Story.

Ten of Swords: Your best friend was slain yesterday by a famous swordsman. You have sworn to avenge him. Gain a 3-point Hunting Background for free.

Future

These are events that loom in your Hero's future. They may have been caused by choices he made in his past, or choices he has yet to make. These predictions are all purposefully vague. Your GM will work out the specifics of how they come into play.

Ace of Cups: You will experience something miraculous. (Moment of Awe 2)

Two of Cups: You will fall madly in love. (Romance 2)

Three of Cups: Be careful what promises you make, and to whom. (Vow 2)

Four of Cups: Your life will undergo a transformation. (True Identity 2)

Five of Cups: Better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. (Lost Love 2)

Six of Cups: Time will bring forgetfulness. (Amnesia 2)

Seven of Cups: There will be a time of great confusion in your future. (Mistaken Identity 2)

Eight of Cups: There will be trouble with your family. (Dispossessed 2)

Nine of Cups: Be careful when choosing your confidants. (Rival 2)

Ten of Cups: Beware of a woman in a gray cloak. (Nemesis 2)

Ace of Swords: You will meet your enemy in single combat, and only one of you will walk away. (Nemesis 2)

Two of Swords: You will fall in love with a warrior. (Romance 2)

Three of Swords: Avoid entanglements with the children of vengeful nobles. (Hunted 2)

Four of Swords: Miracles do happen, as you shall see. (Moment of Awe 2)

Five of Swords: Losing a duel does not mean that life has to end. (Defeated 2)

Six of Swords: You shall have an undesired journey over water. (Pressed Into Service 2)

Seven of Swords: Even the best plans can be foiled. (Defeated 2)

Eight of Swords: You will come to owe a debt of honor to an important woman. (Obligation 2)

Nine of Swords: You will become separated from your romantic partner. (Lost Love 2)

Ten of Swords: Money will evade you. (Debt 2)



New Backgrounds

Acolyte Vows

You are seeking a position in the Vaticine Church, or another religious order. This may be an honor you have waited your entire life to undertake, or a curse forced upon you by a familial or social obligation. Regardless, you are held to all the key tenets, values, and disciplines of the faith, and are observed by your superiors, who will judge your progress. The number of points you put into this Background determines the complexity and severity of the vows you have taken (the Vaticine faith is a 2-point Background), as well as the power and influence of the person or persons observing you.

Dispossessed

Someone has taken away your home and your lands. Perhaps the Montaigne are occupying it. Perhaps Eisen soldiers are squatting on it. Whatever the case, you want it back. The number of points you put into this Background determines how dangerous the thieves are, and how impressive your holdings are. Until you recover your holdings, room and board are no longer free, and you must pay $\frac{1}{2}$ of your monthly income towards rent and food.

Traitor

You had a moment of weakness. It could happen to anyone, right? The money was just too tempting. Of course, now they've got their hooks in you, and if anyone ever finds out about your betrayal, you're a dead man. The number of points you put into this Background determines the power of the people you betrayed, as well as how likely you are to be blackmailed by the people you helped. On the bright side, each point in this Background grants you an extra starting 500G. Hopefully you'll get a chance to spend it.

New Skills

Engineer (Civil)

Engineers are often hired by royalty to make their dreams a reality. Military fortifications, artillery, and civil architecture are all planned by engineers of various sorts. A person with the Engineer Skill receives Architecture as a Basic Knack (it is normally considered Advanced).

Basic Knacks

Architecture: You understand the structure of buildings, from the barest mud huts to the grandest Vaticine cathedrals. You know how to construct a building to specifications, and how to direct other men in the task.

Drafting: Without a plan, you'll get nowhere with your designs. Drafting is the art of translating the ideas in your head onto the page in a manner that others can understand.

Mathematics: "Numbers define the world," they say, and you are sure that they are right. Measurements, navigation, troop placement, and even trade negotiations require calculation. Isn't it fortunate that you paid attention in class?

Advanced Knacks

Accounting: Use of this Knack allows you to track the income and expenditures of a large household or business with accuracy. It can be used to detect fraud, or "cook the books."

Cannonsmithing: You know how to build cannons and other forms of artillery, if provided with a team of laborers and plenty of metal. This Knack is particularly in demand in Castille and Montaigne, where artillery is desperately needed to wage the war.

Natural Philosophy: Natural philosophy is the study of both chemistry and physics. You have an understanding of the (mostly) immutable laws that govern the physical world such as gravity and inertia, and you may be able to make

things such as weak acid or steel if you can remember the formulas.

Priest (Civil)

Priests are the foundation of a strong religion, in one form or another. They provide comfort to grieving practitioners and answers to those who seek enlightenment. Someone with the Priest Skill isn't necessarily ordained (and vice versa), but he or she has a strong grasp of what it takes to become one. You must still purchase the Ordained Advantage in order to be a priest.

Basic Knacks

Oratory: Sweet words of praise flow as easily from your lips as whispered words of poison. Oratory allows you to convince your listeners more easily of the truth of any argument.

Philosophy: Beyond facts there are ideas, and those ideas can change the world. Theoretical debates are a hobby of yours, and with this Knack you might well win them.

Writing: Your quill flies across the page with the gift of prose, setting down words that can entertain the reader, outrage the nobility, or call the people to arms. Your words can turn beggars into kings or topple the most entrenched tyrants. This Knack encompasses poetry, plays, and other written works.

Advanced Knacks

Diplomacy: The art of diplomacy is the art of peace; words have prevented more wars than guns ever caused. Your soothing reassurances can calm all but the most enraged duelist, and keep your blood where it belongs – in your veins.

Mooch: With a combination of entertaining conversation, hollow promises, and sheer audacity, you can convince others to provide for your needs. Care must be taken not to do this in one place too long, however, as even the most flattering guest must eventually wear out his welcome.

Theology: Divine will is a difficult subject – everyone feels that he's right. You, however, have studied all the faiths dispassionately, looking for correlations and unseen



connections, regardless of your own beliefs. You know who they all pray to, how they worship, and how their daily lives have changed because of it.

Cloak (Martial)

In the hands of a trainer fighter, the cloak can be more than simply a decorative garment. It can serve nearly as a shield, and can entangle an opponent. Its primary drawback is that — unlike many other off-hand weapons — it cannot be used to attack.

Basic Knacks

Parry (Cloak): Parrying is the act of putting your cloak between yourself and your enemies' strikes. This Knack can be used as Defense Knack while you have a cloak wrapped around your off-hand.

Advanced Knacks

Entangle: Similar to an Eye-gouge, this attack is designed to blind and confuse your opponent temporarily. In order to use it, you must be wielding a cloak in your off-hand. You declare that you are using Entangle, and then roll using this Knack to attack. If the attack is successful, it inflicts no damage, but forces your target to increase his next Action die by 2, plus 1 for every Raise you made. If this increases that Action die higher than 10, the Action die is discarded.

Whip (Martial)

While not often used in combat, a whip can still make an effective weapon. It has a long reach, and its speed can give it a slight edge over other weapons.

Basic Knacks

Attack (Whip): Attack is simply the ability to hit your enemy. See the Whip description in the New Equipment section for other benefits.

Advanced Knacks

None. (See the Zepeda school, pages 97–98 for more information.)

New Swordsman Schools

Castille is known as the home of the greatest Swordsmen in Théah. Although they are not as proficient at warfare as the Eisen, in one-on-one combat, they are without peer.

Gallegos

Country of Origin: Castille

Description: Also known as the “Three Circle” style, Gallegos teaches its students that leaping around is unnecessary in a fight. They train in progressively smaller circles, and in each instance, while they are forced to remain in the circle, their opponent can move around at will. Overall, the student learns to fight in three circles before he can become a Master.

The primary strength of the Gallegos style is the seemingly superhuman ability to slide neatly out of the way of an oncoming thrust simply by twisting a bit to the side, or sweeping out with a lightning fast parry. The students learn to hold their ground and wait for the enemy to come to them, then turn attacks back at their originator with as little effort as possible.

However, students of Gallegos become so used to fighting in this fashion that they have a tendency to forget that they can move at all. Thus, a hulking Leegstra student or a well-aimed bullet can often spell doom for them.

Basic Curriculum: Athlete, Fencing

Swordsman Knacks: Feint (Fencing), Riposte (Fencing), Tagging, Exploit Weakness (Gallegos)

Apprentice: Apprentices of the Gallegos school have mastered the First Circle. They learn to play the waiting game and watch for attacks from their opponents. You receive one Free Raise when Parrying with a Fencing Weapon. In addition, when you Hold an Action, increase the Phase showing on that Action die by 1 at the end of the Phase. Thus, if you roll a 5 for Initiative and Hold that

Action in Phase 5, the die is increased to a 6 at the end of Phase 5. This makes you more likely to go first in the later Phases, allowing you to take charge when your opponent is low on Actions.

Journeyman: Once he has mastered the Second Circle, the Journeyman can fight comfortably while only occasionally shifting a step to the left or right. He waits for an attack, then turns it around against the attacker with a flick of his wrist. You are extraordinarily skilled at riposting and receive one Free Rank in the Riposte Knack upon becoming a Journeyman. This may increase your Rank to a 6. If it does not, you can later increase your Riposte Knack up to a 6 by paying 25 XP for the increase from a 5 to a 6.

Master: After learning the Third Circle, the Master no longer needs to move his feet during a fight. His flashing blade and graceful movements make him incredibly difficult to hit. Add +10 to your TN to be hit.

Soldano

Country of Origin: Castille

Description: This style of fighting borrows from both the Montaigne and the Crescents, although the Castillians have clearly infused it with their own personality. The student learns to fight with a rapier in each hand, whirling and leaping among his enemies like a tornado, and leaving ruin behind him.

Soldano students fight with flair and color, dispatching whatever hordes of unskilled fighters they may be faced with, then infuriating their enemy before driving their twin blades home in a deadly thrust.

However, Soldano fighters often become too exuberant. In their excitement, they leave small openings in their defenses that a skilled opponent can take advantage of.

Basic Curriculum: Athlete, Fencing

Swordsman Knacks: Double Parry (Fencing/Fencing), Tagging (Fencing), Whirl (Fencing/Fencing), Exploit Weakness (Soldano)

New Swordsman Knack

Whirl: An old Crescent trick taught to the Soldano family many years ago, Whirl is a spinning attack designed to take out multiple unskilled enemies at once. For each Rank you have in this Knack, you may add 2 to your Attack Roll when attacking Brutes. Thus, a Hero with a Rank 3 in Whirl would increase a roll of 19 to a 25 when attacking Brutes.

Apprentice: Apprentices in the Soldano school are trained to deal with large numbers of poorly trained opponents – and to do so with style. Your off-hand penalty is negated when using a Fencing Weapon in each hand. In addition, at the start of each Battle, you receive a number of Drama dice equal to your Mastery Level (Apprentice = 1, Journeyman = 2, Master = 3). These Drama dice, if unspent at the end of the Battle, go away.

Journeyman: Journeymen of the Soldano school have learned to marshal their strength for a single, devastating attack. After you have inflicted damage on an opponent, but before they've made their Wound Check, you may spend a Drama die (including those generated by your Apprentice ability, Double-Parry, or Tagging) to lower by 5 the number required for them to take an extra Dramatic Wound. You may do this multiple times, reducing this "Wound Threshold" as low as 5. For example, normally an opponent must fail his Wound Check by 20 in order to take an extra Dramatic Wound. By using this ability and spending 2 Drama dice you can lower that number to 10 (5 times 2 Drama Dice).

Master: Masters of the Soldano school have learned to thoroughly enrage and outwit their most dangerous opponents. One per Round, at the start of a Round in which you are engaged in combat with a Villain, you may use an Intimidation action against the Villain without spending an Action. Add 1 to the roll for each Brute you've personally killed this fight and 5 for each Henchman. If you win, instead of the normal Intimidation effects, you steal one Drama die from the GM, plus an additional die for every 5 you won the roll by.

Torres

Country of Origin: Castille

Description: Originally developed for bullfighting, the Torres style makes use of a rapier in one hand and a cloak in the other. The student uses subtle movements to draw his opponent's attention to the cloak, and then blindside him with the rapier.

The Torres school is an extremely effective defensive style, as the cloak and sword combine to form a wall of cloth and steel between the student and his opponent's blade. Masters of the school are some of the most quick-witted and agile men in the world.

However, the Torres style of fighting has very little power when it comes to taking the offensive. While its students are fast and nimble, they lack the penetrating force of an Eisenfaust or Leegstra student.

Unlike other "Swordsman" Schools, Torres students do not receive a free membership in the Swordsman Guild. Instead, they receive a free Rank in one of their Swordsman Knacks.

Basic Curriculum: Cloak, Fencing

Swordsman Knacks: Double-Parry (Cloak/Fencing), Tagging (Fencing), Side-step, Exploit Weakness (Torres)

New Swordsman Knack

Side-step: Whenever you use an Active Defense successfully, you may lower your next upcoming Action die by your Rank in this Knack. You may not make the Action die lower than the current Phase. This Knack is the same as the Side-step Knack found in the Athlete Skill in the Player's Guide, but it is considered a Basic Knack for students of the Torres school.

Apprentice: Apprentices in the Torres school have learned the art of using their cloak to draw attention away from their true movements. The off-hand penalty is negated when you are using a cloak. In addition, your Side-step Knack may affect one additional Action die for each of your Mastery Levels (Apprentice = 1, Journeyman = 2, Master = 3) each time it's used. For instance, an Apprentice with a

Rank 3 Side-step who rolled a 7, 7, and 8 for Initiative could affect two Action dice with a successful Active Defense, changing his Initiative to 4, 4, and 8.

Journeyman: Journeymen of the Torres school are very fast on their feet. When performing an Active Defense, lower your Action dice a number of Phases equal to twice your Mastery Level.

Master: Masters of Torres are some of the most agile and quick-witted fighters in the world. When you reach this Rank, you gain a +1 bonus to your Wits for free. This also raises the maximum Rank your Wits can be raised to by 1. Thus, a Master of Torres can raise his Wits to 6 (or even 7, with the Legendary Trait Advantage).

Zepeda

Country of Origin: Castille

Description: Students of the Zepeda style learn to fight with a whip in hand. Although seldom as deadly as a rapier or a knife, the whip is a great tool for intimidation and defense; even skilled Swordsmen will often flinch away from its cracking sting.

The Zepeda school teaches the student more than simply cracking a whip. He also learns a variety of tricks to perform with the whip, not to mention how to cow opponents with the promise of a rawhide thrashing.

However, an opponent who can withstand the pain of the whip for a strike or two can often get in close where the whip is useless next to the deadly steel of even a small knife.

Unlike other "Swordsman" Schools, Zepeda students do not receive a free membership in the Swordsman Guild. Instead, they receive a free Rank in one of their Swordsman Knacks.

Basic Curriculum: Athlete, Whip

Swordsman Knacks: Bind (Whip), Disarm (Whip), Tagging (Whip), Exploit Weakness (Zepeda)

Apprentice: Apprentices of the Zepeda school learn to use the whip as a tool of intimidation and fear. By spending

one Action cracking your whip, you may increase your TN to be hit by your Mastery Level (Apprentice = 1, Journeyman = 2, Master = 3) for the rest of the Round. You may do this as many times as you like. This bonus is of no use against opponents who are immune to Fear, and ends immediately if your whip leaves your hand or becomes entangled (such as during a Bind). In addition, you receive a Free Raise to your Attack Roll when using a whip.

Journeyman: Journeymen of the Zepeda school have learned to use their whip in more versatile ways. You may substitute your Rank in the Attack (Whip) Knack for any of the following Knacks as long as your whip is in hand: Animal Training, Break Fall, Swinging, and Grapple. In addition, you may attempt to knock an opponent prone by yanking him off his feet, but this raises your TN to hit him by 10.

Master: Masters of the Zepeda school are greatly feared for their skill with the whip. You have learned to use your whip to teach others respect. For each successful hit that causes damage against an opponent, you are considered to have +1 to your Fear Rating against that opponent until the end of the Battle. Thus, if you have inflicted 3 hits that have caused at least 1 Flesh Wound to an opponent, you have a Fear Rating of 3 versus that opponent.

New Sorcery

El Fuego Adentro (Castille)

Knacks: Concentrate, Extinguish, Feed, Range, Stunt (Hurl, Flaming Blade, etc.)

Apprentice Degree: Heart of Flame

Adept Degree: Hand of Flame

Master Degree: Spirit of Flame

Before they were driven away, the royal family of Castille commanded the power of *El Fuego Adentro*, one of the most destructive sorceries known. Flames leapt and swelled at their command, they bathed in the fires of the mightiest volcanoes, and the greatest could even create creatures of flame. The sorcerers could be identified when using their magic by tiny flames burning within their eyes whenever they were controlling a fire.

Even though the royal family was chased out of their palace and many were killed, a few survived. Some of them seek to redeem their family's good name, while others sulk in hidden places, waiting for their opportunity to take the throne back from the Church and their "puppet king." Many are afraid to use their magic at all, however, since its use is a death sentence if the Inquisition gets wind of it.

Heroes who take *El Fuego Adentro* usually hail from Rancho Gallegos; it's the only place in Théah where they can develop their skills safely. In addition, they must be careful about when and where they use it, for public displays will bring the Inquisition down on them like a sledgehammer (as well as other parties, such as the Rilasciare and Rose and Cross). GMs may require *El Fuego Adentro* Heroes to take a 3-point Hunted Background to represent this.

Apprentice Degree: Heart of Flame

As an Apprentice sorcerer, you have taken the fire and made it a part of you. Fire- and heat-based damage cannot harm you, and any equipment kept in close contact with you (such as worn clothing) is protected from harm as well. You could, for instance, swim in the molten fires of a volcano and it would feel like a soothing hot bath. In addition, you can direct the movement of one fire within 10 feet. This fire will ignore winds, and move across water if you will it (although it will be extinguished if you don't use the Feed Knack). More fires can be controlled over greater distance with the Concentrate and Range Knacks.

Adept Degree: Hand of Flame

Adepts of El Fuego Adentro can grasp fire in their hands as though it were a solid object. They've been known to climb roaring flames like a ladder or scoop up handfuls of fire to



hurl at their enemies. They're even rumored to have the ability to cause flames to dance along their sword blade. (See the Stunt Knacks for further details.)

Master Degree: Spirit of Flame

Masters of El Fuego Adentro have gained the ability to give flame the semblance of life. Flickering birds of flame can be sent to land on thatch roofs during sieges, and serpents of flame can crawl down the backs of prisoners, more painful than any lash. (See the Stunt Knacks for further details.)

The Limits of El Fuego Adentro

Fire Movement

Although fire under the control of a sorcerer can defy wind and water, it cannot move very quickly. A fire being directed by a sorcerer can only move 1" on the Action map,

plus 1" more for each Mastery Level the sorcerer has earned (Apprentice = 1, Journeyman = 2, Master = 3). Sometimes it can be faster simply to let the wind direct the fire for you.

The Spark

Sorcerers of *El Fuego Adentro* cannot actually create fire, nor can they cause a fire to grow except by feeding it with tinder and combustible materials, just like anyone else. They must work with what already exists, and they must be careful to keep it burning. Any time the fire leaves contact with a fuel source, the Feed Knack must be used to prevent it from going out.

The Knacks

Concentrate

This Knack allows the sorcerer to control more than one flame at a time. For every Rank in this Knack, the Hero can control one additional fire beyond the first.

Extinguish

This Knack allows the sorcerer to put out flames with a thought. The sorcerer may, by spending one Action, reduce the damage of one fire by a number of dice equal to his Rank in this Knack. (See the *GM's Guide*, page 200, for fire rules.) If this brings the fire to 0 dice, it is completely extinguished. This can affect 100 square feet of fire per Rank in this Knack. The Feed Knack can be used by another sorcerer to combat this action.

Feed

By using this Knack (no Action is required), the sorcerer can keep a fire burning without any fuel to feed it. Without it, the moment he directs a fire away from its fuel source, it dies out. However, this Knack requires that he use his own life force to feed the fire. The Feed Knack prevents a fire from diminishing in size until the next Phase, but for each die of damage the fire would have lost (its full damage if it should've been put out, such as by being immersed in water), the sorcerer takes 2 Flesh Wounds of damage. The damage is reduced by 1 for each Rank in this Knack. He must test against this damage at the end of each Phase in which he suffers at least 1 new Flesh Wound of damage.

For example, a sorcerer with Rank 3 in this Knack uses it on a six-die fire to keep it burning. This inflicts 6 Flesh Wounds per Phase, but since he has a Rank 3 Feed Knack, he only takes 3 Flesh Wounds per Phase. However, if something happened that would extinguish the fire (the person on fire dives into the water), he would have to take 12 Flesh Wounds per Phase to keep it burning, which would be reduced to 9 by his Rank in this Knack.

Range

This Knack allows a sorcerer to extend the range at which he can use his abilities. Without this Knack, a sorcerer can only affect fires up to ten feet away, but with it, he can affect fires up to forty feet away per Rank in this Knack (to a maximum of 200 feet at Rank 5).

Stunts

Each Stunt Knack the sorcerer buys allows him to perform a specific trick, such as keeping a sword aflame during a fight. Each Stunt Knack must be purchased and increased in Rank separately, and a Hero cannot purchase a Stunt Knack unless his Mastery Level is at least as high as its Required Mastery Level.

Firestarting

Required Mastery Level: Apprentice

This Knack allows the sorcerer to suffer 1 Flesh Wound in order to light a fire under adverse conditions using normal firestarting techniques. (flint and steel, etc.) The severity of the conditions is limited by the sorcerer's Rank in this Knack, as shown below.

Rank 1: damp tinder, or strong wind.

Rank 2: wet tinder, or light rain.

Rank 3: waterlogged tinder, or medium rain.

Rank 4: non-combustible tinder, or heavy rain.

Rank 5: Any material or weather conditions.

Flaming Blade

Required Mastery Level: Apprentice

The sorcerer plunges his blade into a fire, using his magic to protect the metal from the heat, and to keep the flame burning. This allows the sword to add the sorcerer's Mastery Level times his Rank in this Knack to its Damage.

For instance, an Adept with Rank 4 in this Knack who rolled a 17 for his Damage Roll with a Flaming Sword would add 8 to his roll, increasing it to a 25. This Knack inflicts 6 Flesh Wounds to the sorcerer at the start of each Round, and may be cancelled at any time. The Feed Knack can be used to absorb some of this damage.

Hurl Fire

Required Mastery Level: Adept

The sorcerer spends one Action to reach into a roaring fire, pick up a handful of fire, and throw it at an opponent, hoping to set him on fire. The Range on this attack is 5 + (2 times Brawn) with no penalties to hit, and the Hero rolls Finesse + Hurl for his Attack. Should he successfully hit, the attack inflicts one die of damage, plus one more per Mastery Level of the sorcerer, and is immediately extinguished (the tossed fire cannot be kept burning with the Feed Knack). This Knack inflicts 2 Flesh Wounds to the sorcerer each time it is used, but the Feed Knack can be used to absorb this damage.

Fireflies

Required Mastery Level: Master

The sorcerer spends three Actions and suffers 1 Flesh Wound to create a 10' by 10' cloud of living "fireflies" from a fire at least one die big (reducing the fire in size by one die immediately; see page 200 of the *Game Masters' Guide* for details). The Flesh Wound suffered when creating the fireflies will not go away (even after suffering a Dramatic Wound) until they are killed by immersion in water, or dispelled by their creator, which can be done at will. These creatures can be controlled by their creator and resemble burning embers of flame floating on the wind, but don't need to be maintained with the Feed Knack. Any creature caught in the cloud suffers 1 Flesh Wound of damage every Phase unless wearing heavy clothing or some other sort of protection. The fireflies can move up to 3" or 1 Level on the Action Map per Phase. A sorcerer can have one cloud of fireflies in existence at a time for each Rank in this Knack.

Flame Serpent

Required Mastery Level: Master

The sorcerer spends five Actions and suffers 3 Flesh Wounds to create a serpent of fire from a two dice or bigger fire (reducing the fire in size by two dice immediately). The Flesh Wounds suffered when creating the serpent never go away (even after suffering a Dramatic Wound) until it is killed by immersion in water, or dispelled by its creator, which can be done at will. The creature can be controlled by its creator without a die roll. The serpent's Traits are considered Rank 3, but it cannot be harmed except by immersion in water. When it hits, its target suffers one die of damage for each Rank in this Knack its creator had at the time of its creation. This diminishes by one die after each hit until the serpent is reduced to zero dice, at which point it is a tiny wisp of flame that crawls away to recuperate (requiring an open flame, which will restore it at the rate of one die per Round of immersion in flame, up to its original maximum). A sorcerer can maintain one flame serpent in existence for each Rank in this Knack he has.

Firebird

Required Mastery Level: Master

The sorcerer spends ten Actions and suffers 5 Flesh Wounds to create an enormous and strangely beautiful bird made of flames from a four dice or bigger fire (reducing the fire in size by four dice immediately). The Flesh Wounds suffered when creating the firebird never go away (even after suffering a Dramatic Wound) until it is killed by immersion in water, or dispelled by its creator, which can be done at will. The firebird's wingspan is approximately 40 feet. It can be controlled by its creator without a die roll. The bird's Traits are considered Rank 3, but it cannot be harmed except by immersion in water. Historically, Castillian sorcerers used firebirds as steeds, carrying them up to 50 miles a day for each Rank in this Knack their creator possessed at the time of creation. One passenger can be carried for each Rank as well. The Firebird's touch does not burn, but it can explode in a huge ball of

fire (a Rank 4 Explosion made of fire) if its creator wishes. Doing so causes it to extinguish itself utterly.

New Advantages

Castillian Accent (0 Points, Castillian only)

An accent is an identifying characteristic in the way a person speaks that indicates he's from a particular area. Only a Hero fully proficient in a given language can identify accents; Language Acquaintance and Pidgins are no help, and non-Castillians may never have a Castillian accent. There are five primary accents in Castille: Aldana, Gallegos, Soldano, Torres, and Zepeda. Castillian Heroes with one of these accents pay slightly different costs to learn foreign languages. An explanation of each accent follows the language chart, below.

Aldana: Those with this accent are from Aldana. *This is the Castillian accent described in the Players' Guide.*

Gallegos: This accent is found among Castillians from Gallegos. It has a great deal of influence from the Crescent Empire, and as a result, its speakers pronounce **j** as **zh**.

	Aldana	Gallegos	Soldano	Torres	Zepeda
Avalon	2	3	3	1	2
Castille	0	0	0	0	0*
Crescent	2	1	1	3	3
High Eisen	3	3	4	4	4
Eisen	2	2	3	3	3
Montaigne	1	1	2	0	1
Théan	2	2	2	2	1
Teodoran	4	3	3	4	4
Ussura	3	2	2	3	3
Vendel	2	3	3	1	2
Vodacce	1	1	0	2	2

Speakers with this accent are considered a bit unusual by Castillian standards. *Eastern languages are easier for the people of Gallegos to learn, while northern languages are more difficult.*

Soldano: The speech of the people of Soldano is heavily influenced by Vodacce. Their pronunciation of **o** is much softer, as in **store**. This accent is often associated with great lovers. *The people of Soldano speak Vodacce as a second language, and many eastern languages are easier for them to learn. Far northern languages, such as Avalon and Vendel, on the other hand, are very difficult for them.*

Torres: The long association and recent subjugation of Torres by the Montaigne has lent it several aspects of the Montaigne language. The most noticeable of these is the tendency to pronounce **ch** as **sh**. Because of the war, Castillians with this accent are viewed with some suspicion. *Castillians from Torres learn northern languages easily, and speak Montaigne as a second language, but have a difficult time with eastern languages.*

Zepeda: One of the most isolated areas of Castille, Zepeda has slowly drifted away from the mother language, picking up some idiosyncrasies that confuse other Castillians. The strangest of these is the tendency to pronounce **j** as **h**. Those with this accent are considered pious. *The people of Zepeda spend much of their time in study, and are therefore literate in Castille for free. They are also able to learn the scholarly language of Théan more easily. However, their isolationist attitude makes it hard for them to learn languages which derive from other sources.*

Castillian Blade (Varies)

As every Castillian knows, the finest blades in the country come from his home province. Of course, it might be argued that the people of Soldano are the most “correct” in this belief, but there can be no doubt that Castille is the home of some truly fine bladesmiths. *A Hero may only buy one of the following Castillian Blades. Castillians receive a 1-point discount (min. cost 1) if they purchase a blade from their home province.*

Aldana Blade (3 Points)

The Aldana blades are light and flexible, excellent for quick strikes and rapid parries. When found in the hand of a skilled swordsman, an Aldana blade is almost as dangerous as a Soldano. *An Aldana Blade is a 2k2 Fencing Weapon and allows you to lower one of your Action dice by one at the start of each Round.*

Gallegos Blade (3 Points)

Gallegos blades are well-balanced and durable. They can be bent nearly double and will spring straight again. *A Gallegos Blade is a 2k2 Fencing Weapon and adds 2 to any Attack Rolls made with it. In addition, 5 is added to the TN of any attempt to break a Gallegos Blade.*

Soldano Blade (6 Points)

The fine Soldano steel is forged by the best Castillian blacksmiths into blades of truly exceptional worth. These swords hold an edge longer, are harder to break, and are better balanced than most others. *A Soldano Blade is a 2k2 Fencing Weapon that adds 2 to any rolls made with it. This includes Attack Rolls, Damage Rolls, Parry Active Defenses, and any Swordsman Knacks that involve Fencing. In addition, 5 is added to the TN of any attempt to break a Soldano Blade.*

Torres Blade (3 Points)

The Torres blade is known for its extraordinarily keen edge. This allows the blade to cut deeper and do more damage in general. *A Torres Blade is a 2k2 Fencing Weapon that adds 3 to any Damage Rolls made with it.*

Zepeda Blade (2 Points)

Zepeda blades are generally considered to be the least valuable of the Castillian blades. Although they are lighter and sharper than a typical sword, they pale in comparison to the magnificent Soldano blades. *A Zepeda Blade is a 2k2 Fencing Weapon that adds 1 to any Attack or Damage Rolls made with it.*

Castillian Squire (7 Points, 6 for Castillians)

Great heroes of Castillian legend are often remembered as much for their faithful squires as for their valiant deeds. Often, a deep friendship will form between master and servant, resulting in a much more beneficial relationship between the two. *A Castillian Squire is a Henchman with Rank 2 in all Traits, and 20 HP that the player may distribute, subject to the same limitations Heroes during creation. In addition, the player may choose three Civil Knacks that the Squire has at least one Rank in to be the Squire's "Knacks of Expertise." Whenever the Squire is assisting the Hero in an activity using one of his Knacks of Expertise, his master may add one Rank to his Knack for the roll. For instance, if Research is one of Ramon's Knacks of Expertise and he is helping his master, Rodriguez, search a library for a specific book, then Rodriguez gets to add one Rank to his Research Knack for this roll.*

Extended Family (5 Points, Castillian only)

You can always expect a hot meal and a place to stay from your family, not to mention the occasional bit of assistance. Moreover, they've spread to every corner of Théah, so that

Extended Family Chart

Nation	Frequency
Castille (Home Province)	10
Castille (Other Province)	9
Vodacce	8
Eisen (Vaticine Province)	7
Eisen (Objectionist Province)	6
Avalon	5
Vendel	4
Montaigne	3
Crescent Empire	2
Ussura	1
Other Lands	Never

even in the wilds of Ussura you're liable to come across someone who's married to your third cousin, twice removed. *When you want to use this Advantage, roll a die and consult the chart below. If you roll equal to or less than the Frequency number listed next to the nation you're currently in, you remember a family member who lives in the area. Otherwise, you must travel at least 100 miles away before rolling again. Since your family moves around, you won't always find a family member in the same place twice.*

Membership: Alcalde (4 Points, Castillian only)

You are a member of the alcalde, assigned to uphold the law in Castille. *Please see the alcalde descriptions on page 59 for more about alcalde.*

Miracle Worker (Varies)

There are those who believe that Theus works miracles through them. However, Theus works in subtle ways, and the benefactors of a miracle are never able to prove any intervention. *This Advantage costs 5 HP per Miracle die. You may buy up to three Miracle dice. See below for the effects.*

Miracle Dice

A Hero with the Miracle Worker Advantage gives his Miracle dice to the GM at the start of each Story. The GM controls when, and if, these dice are activated. Each die activated causes a miracle to occur. These miracles can be anything the GM desires, remembering that Theus leaves no physical evidence of intervention after a miracle. Several example miracles are described below. Finally, a Hero receives 2 XP for each unspent Miracle die at the end of a Story.

Healing Wind

The Hero feels a gentle wind blow through his body, and suddenly his wounds don't bother him as much anymore. *Two of the Hero's Dramatic Wounds are healed. They look just as bad as ever, but the bleeding slows to a stop and the Hero is no longer impeded by them.*

Righteous Fury

Just as the Hero is about to fail miserably, he feels a flush of heat that gives him a push that may help him succeed. *After the Hero has failed an important roll, this Miracle die turns into three Drama dice that are added to the roll.*

Shield of the Faithful

When looking death in the eye, a chill wind blows past the Hero and those around him. Then, a miraculous event occurs that may allow him to cheat death for a little while longer. *When a Villain attacks the Hero, this Miracle die causes the Villain to automatically miss. In addition, the Villain's remaining Action dice for the Round are discarded.*

Strength of Theus

When the Hero thinks he's exhausted his last reserves of strength, energy fills him and the power of his belief keeps him going. *After the Hero has spent the last of his Drama dice, this Miracle die turns into two Drama dice.*

Roving Don (6 Points, Castillian only)

This Advantage costs 3 points if you have already purchased Castillian Education.

Your Hero is a low-ranking Don. You have lost your lands to the Montaigne, but managed to salvage most of your savings. Unfortunately, until the Montaigne are beaten back, you have no other source of income, so you are forced to live off your savings. *Your starting income is 6,000G, but you have no monthly income, and you must spend 50G per week to maintain your high standards of living. Should the war be won, it is likely that you will regain your lands and become a full Noble once again.*

Reputation Action

The following Reputation Action is particularly appropriate for use in Castille, although it may be performed anywhere.

Winning a Public Duel

A Hero who engages in a duel of honor in front of at least three witnesses who aren't involved in the duel can expect his Reputation to go up accordingly. For a duel to first blood, the Hero receives 1 Reputation Point for every Reputation die his opponent has. His opponent then loses the same number of Reputation Points. In a duel to the death, the Hero receives 2 Reputation Points for every Reputation die his opponent had. His opponent is, of course, no longer worried about his Reputation, so he suffers no penalty (other than death).



New Equipment

Cloak

A Hero wearing a cloak in combat can remove it in order to use it as a sort of makeshift buckler, but this requires the Cloak Skill to do effectively. Cloaks never inflict damage in combat, but they can be used to entangle an opponent, unlike a buckler. A cloak costs anywhere from 1G to 10G, depending on how fancy it is.

Powder Magazine

A powder magazine is a pre-measured container of gunpowder designed to make reloading firearms and artillery both faster and easier. When a powder magazine is used during the reloading process, it takes 5 fewer Actions to reload a firearm and 10 fewer Actions to reload a piece of artillery. A powder magazine for a firearm costs 1G, while one for a piece of artillery costs 5G.

Whip

A whip is a long lash, often made of rawhide. A whip is a one-handed weapon that uses the Whip Skill for attacks, and inflicts 0k1 damage, but its wielder's Action dice are considered 1 lower when attacking, and 5 is always added to the wielder's Initiative Total. A whip costs 2G.

Building Fortifications

In order to build a permanent fortification, determine what Fortification Rating you want the structure to have, and consult the chart below. First round off the Rating to the next lowest whole number (such as 3) then consult the line below that to see how to arrive at your final total. For instance, Rodriguez is building a fortress with a Fortification Rating of 3.4, so he look at the chart to discover that a Rating 3 fortress takes 30 days, and 22,500G to build. For each 0.1 he wants to go above 3, he must expend an additional 4 days and 1,500G. So, for a 3.4 fortress, it will take him 46 days (30+16) and 28,500G (22,500+6,000).

This is the cost and time in a best case scenario with a truly skilled engineer. Naturally, things might not work out that way in practice. To simulate this, the lead engineer must roll a Wits + Architecture or Wits + Drafting check against the fortress' TN (in the case of Rodriguez' fortress, this would be 20 + 8, or 28). If he succeeds, then the current time and cost estimate is correct. If he fails, the time and cost increase; check the chart for the modifiers to cost and time in the first step (+4 days and 1,500G, in this case). The engineer rolls again, this time adding the total of his last roll to his new roll. This continues until you either quit, or the engineer succeeds at a roll.

So if Rodriguez's engineer rolls a 15 the first try, construction time and cost goes up to 50 days and 30,000G, respectively. The second roll is a 9. Added to the previous roll, the total is 24. Still not good enough, so time and cost are up to 54 days and 31,500G. Luckily, the third roll is a

Fortifications

Fortif. Rat.	Time	Cost	TN
1	0	0G	0
+1 up to 2	1 day	1,000G	+1
2	10 days	10,000G	10
+1 up to 3	2 days	1,250G	+1
3	30 days	22,500G	20
+1 up to 4	4 days	1,500G	+2
4	70 days	37,500G	40
+1 up to 5	8 days	1,750G	+3
5	150 days	55,000G	70
+1 up to 6	16 days	2,000G	+4
6	310 days	75,000G	110
+1 up to 7	32 days	2,500G	+5
7	630 days	100,000G	160
+1 up to 8	64 days	5,000G	+6
8	1,270 days	150,000G	220
+1 up to 9	128 days	10,000G	+7
9	2,550 days	250,000G	290
+1 up to 10	256 days	25,000G	+8
10	5,110 days	500,000G	370

12, which added to the 24, is 36, more than enough to succeed at the TN of 28 required. Rodriguez pays the 31,500G, and curses his inept engineer thoroughly.

If you quit early, the fortress' Fortification Rating is equal to the highest it could have successfully been with the final TN rolled. So, if Rodriguez had given up after rolling the 24, his fortress would have had a Rating of 3.2 (since its TN of 24 was the highest he could beat). Obviously, if you know you can meet the TN with one more roll, it's in your best interest to do so.

Temporary fortifications cannot exceed a Fortification Rating of 2, and take one-tenth the time and money to build, but are destroyed after a single battle and must be rebuilt.



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Brotherhood

Into the Abyss, Part Four



The Royal Palace, San Cristobal.

Andrés Aldana carefully twisted the thin ornamental column within his chambers and waited for the tell-tale “click” from behind the nearby bookshelf. Smiling to himself, he stepped out of sight and retrieved the small drawer which had slid out from the rear wall. Inside were several items of dubious nature and ownership, including a forged signet of the Castillian Crown.

Wrapping his missive tightly, Andrés sealed the scroll with a wedge of thick red tallow and the mark of the High King of Castille, and then called for a messenger. “Take this to Vivienne de Cordoba in the port city of Altamira with all haste. Use the most direct route; I’ve indicated directions on the map. This message is of the utmost importance, and must arrive by dawn tomorrow.”

The messenger vanished a second later, leaving Andrés to his thoughts. He hoped the message would reach its destination soon; something had to be done about Don Ochoa and his family. Cardinal Verdugo had duped Sandoval into a false agreement to execute the patriarch in exchange for the lives and honorable names of his family, all the while intending to track them down and kill them to the last. Aldana could not reveal what he had overheard in the dungeons without proof, and challenging the Cardinal would hinder his other plans.

Someone else had to intervene. Someone legendary...

The messenger’s steed galloped through La Selva de Fendes, along the fastest road to Altamira. He would approach from inside the forest, past the Hunting Lodge and directly into the lands of the de Cordoba family. Strange; he had never heard of such a family before.

Suddenly, the trees above the road erupted downward, and the messenger’s horse reared up and dumped him into the soft, damp earth. All around him, he could hear animals darting away; he wasn’t sure if they were startled or scared.

A figure loomed above him, perched upon the branches over the forest road. He wore a flowing outfit of purple and black beneath a wide and flat sombrero with expensive stitching. His cloak lay on the ground, where it had landed after spooking the horse. And his face... his face was a mask of pale white, decorated with a smile that leered like a madman, grinning from ear to ear. *El Vago*.

The messenger had heard stories about the legendary hero, but never expected to meet him in person. By the time he registered that he was witnessing El Vago, the spectre was already upon him, rapier’s point pressing at the man’s heart. A second hand gripped another blade, shorter but more durable than the first, which he held ready to strike.

The messenger held out the scroll, making sure the seal of the Crown was visible in the moonlight streaming between the thick canopy above. “For you, for Castille, for all...” he repeated the phrase as Aldana had instructed him.

Upon hearing the identifying phrase, El Vago lifted his rapier away and sheathed his second blade, taking the scroll from the shivering messenger. Then, retrieving his cloak from the middle of the road, the Vagabond stepped into the brush, vanishing as if he had never been there at all.

The messenger stood, brushed himself off, and started back to Altamira. If he was right, the city was only a few miles away, and he could be there by first light.

Perhaps he could even find a new horse.



Player

La Familia

A Castillian's defining passion is his family. They forged him into the person he is today – providing him with the values, faith, and tradition that he uses to measure everything he encounters today. They are his strength, supporting him in times of trial. And they are his closest friends, celebrating his challenges and victories as if they were their very own.

Castillian families are large, and every member is equally important. Third cousins twice removed are just as worthy of a Castillian's support as a full-blood brother, mother, or son. Everyone is included in family discussions and festivities, and – by the same token – everyone is expected to pull their share of the weight when things get tough. If the family has a farm, each member will have chores to complete, but each will also receive an equal slice of the profit when they're done.

The concept of extended family, the responsibilities that it conveys, and the benefits that it offers may be difficult to grasp in this modern age. With the advent of the nuclear family (mother, father, and 2.5 children), many players may find the premise of treating a distant cousin like a brother or parent unsettling. As a Castillian Hero (especially one who with the Extended Family Advantage), you should simply focus upon treating every member of your family –

no matter how removed – as you would a brother, mother, son, or loved one (whomever you hold the greatest passion for).

Which brings us to Castillian marriages. By virtue of intermarriage within the nation, Castillian families grow even more extended, and there is no distinction to a Castillian hero between his own mother and his wife's or her cousin's. They all demand just as much respect, counsel, and defense. This clannish adherence to *la familia* has kept Castillian culture intact through the centuries, and has become a vital part of her national identity.

Passion as a Way of Life

Castillians not only feel passion for life, they adhere to passion *as a way of life*. They relish every second as if it were their last, fully indulging in the simple pleasures that life offers. A Castillian undertakes every task with unequalled zeal, from defending the Crown to tilling the fields. There is something to be learned in each activity, no matter how mundane, and Castillians learn from birth to accept these little lessons wherever they are found.

When playing a Castillian Hero, remember to approach every challenge in the game with this level of intensity. You are not single-minded, nor are you willing to take life-threatening chances to satisfy your passion, but once you have decided to perform a task or undertake a challenge, you should do so with the most heartfelt dedication you can muster.

Balancing Isolationism with Brotherhood

Anyone who has read the history of Castille (see page 13) can understand why its people are wary of foreign cultures. Time and again, Castille has been betrayed by presumed friends, who steal her resources and subjugate her people as well. It is only natural for Castillians to suspect the ulterior motives of other nations, especially when one of them currently occupies their soil. Times of celebration

(usually Vaticine) are especially trying, as the influx of extranationals tends to grate upon the Castillian people.

But a distinction must be made between *national* trust and *personal* trust. Though Castillians are wary of foreigners in large numbers (such as an army), the same is not always true on a smaller scale. The average Castillian Hero respects those from other nations; to do otherwise would be cumbersome and contradict their other values (especially their passion for life).

When a single Castillian (or a small group of Castillians, such as an adventuring party) encounters foreigners, they extend the same degree of brotherhood they would wish to see extended to them. It is important to Castillians that they balance their ancestral biases with the understanding that some of their greatest personal allies are not of their own blood.

This should be especially helpful when designing a group of characters for a gaming group. Castillian Heroes can easily trust the other members of the party on their own merits, not judge them because of their native land or its history with Castille.

Game Master

Players should stop reading now. This section of the book contains material that is intended for the GM only. Ignoring this warning will spoil countless surprises for you during the game.

NPC Secrets

This section contains the secrets of the characters in the **Hero** chapter that we felt were too sensitive to give to the players.

Good King Sandoval: Hero



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 3
Wits: 4
Resolve: 2
Panache: 3
Reputation: 103
Background: Assassin (3)
Arcana: Propitious

Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Avalon (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Castillian Accent (Aldana), Castillian Education, Connections (El Vago), Noble, University
Courtier: Dancing 3, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 4, Fashion 3, Gaming 2, Oratory 3, Politics 4, Scheming 2, Sincerity 3
Merchant: Scribe 3
Scholar: Astronomy 2, History 4, Law 3, Mathematics 4, Natural Philosophy 3, Occult 2, Philosophy 3, Research 3, Theology 3
Commander: Leadership 2, Logistics 1, Strategy 1, Tactics 2
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 2, Parry (Fencing) 2
Rider: Mounting 3, Ride 4, Trick Riding 3

Rules for the “Assassin” Background can be found in the *Montaigne* sourcebook, page 79.

Sandoval still believes that his brother will return and become king, freeing him from his imprisonment. He’s really just marking time until then, doing only what he must to hold the country together. He considers himself a pretender to the throne and secretly agrees with the Church’s refusal to grant him the *Rex Castillium* title. While the war keeps him busy enough, he longs for the day when he can become a mere advisor like he’d always planned. Should he ever realize that Javier isn’t coming home, there’s no telling what he’d do. It could be the impetus he needs to

Brotherhood

step out of his brother's shadow and become his own ruler. It might also be the straw that finally breaks him.

Sandoval doesn't either of his advisors, but he recognizes the wisdom in their words and tries to use them as best he can. The longer he serves, the more adept he becomes at shaping their advice to suit him.

Don Andrea Bejarano del Aldana: Hero



Brawn: 3
Finesse: 5
Wits: 4
Resolve: 3
Panache: 5
Reputation: 79
Background: Rivalry (Verdugo)
Arcana: Altruistic

Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Castillian Accent (Aldana), Castillian Education, Connections (Commoners), Membership (Swordsman's Guild) (Los Vagos), Noble, University

Courtier: Dancing 3, Diplomacy 5, Etiquette 4, Fashion 5, Oratory 5, Politics 4, Scheming 3, Sincerity 5

Scholar: History 2, Law 3, Mathematics 2, Philosophy 2, Research 1, Theology 2

Spy: Conceal 3, Cryptography 3, Disguise 4, Shadowing 4, Stealth 4

Aldana (Master): Exploit Weakness (Aldana) 5, Feint (Fencing) 5, Riposte (Fencing) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 5

Athlete: Break Fall 2, Climbing 3, Footwork 5, Leaping 3, Side-step 3, Sprinting 3, Swinging 4, Throwing 2

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 5

Riding: Animal Training 1, Mount 4, Ride 5, Trick Riding 4

Even compassionate men can keep a secret, and Aldana has the biggest in Castille: he is a founding member of Los Vagos. The advisor keeps tabs on the royal court for El Vago and ferries important information to the vigilante when it comes up. He has also participated in numerous clandestine activities for the organization, topped by the dramatic rescue of a kidnapped university headmaster. For

a while, some whispered that he himself was El Vago until he fought side-by-side with the Vagabond during a foiled assassination attempt on the king. Regardless, his dedication to Los Vagos is absolute. While many suspect a connection between him and the Vagabond, he has always convinced them otherwise. His honest eyes and kindly tone have a way of doing that.

Don Javier Rios del Guzman: Hero



Brawn: 3
Finesse: 3
Wits: 5
Resolve: 4
Panache: 3
Reputation: 45
Background: Sect Adversary
Arcana: Insightful

Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Avalon (R/W), Théan (R/W), Castillian Accent (Aldana), Castillian Education, Connections (Many, Willem Karls), Inheritance (Rancho Aldana), Membership (Rilasciare: Freethought Society), Noble, Safehouse, University

Courtier: Diplomacy 4, Dancing 2, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Oratory 5, Politics 3, Scheming 4, Sincerity 4

Forger: Calligraphy 4, Conceal 5, Cryptography 4, Forgery 5, Paper Maker 3, Research 5

Scholar: Astronomy 2, History 5, Law 4, Mathematics 4, Natural Philosophy 2, Occult 2, Philosophy 5, Research 5

Servant: Accounting 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Menial Tasks 4, Seneschal 5, Unobtrusive 4

Aldana (Apprentice): Exploit Weakness (Aldana) 3, Feint (Fencing) 4, Riposte (Fencing) 4, Tagging (Fencing) 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 4, Parry (Fencing) 4

Javier is a member of the Rilasciare. The library fire in 1652 was actually an attempt by Javier and some students to stop a group of radical Guerrillas from burning the whole school to cinders. An argument erupted and a trigger-happy terrorist fired a pistol too close to some old books. When the smoke cleared, the terrorists had fled and Javier was left guarding a library full of charred volumes. As rumors

began to spread of his involvement, Javier resigned and fled to Avalon, where he hid amid the distant Freethought cell in Kirkwall (see the *Rilasciare* sourcebook for details on the Kirkwall cell).

Now that he has returned to Castille, Javier is doing his best to smuggle refugees, political prisoners, and important documentation through his rancho. With thousands of hiding places and hundreds of loyal farmers and servants, Javier has built a quiet little utopia to weave his plans for equality and freedom. (For more on Karls, see pages 58-59 of the *Rilasciare* sourcebook.)

Cardinal Ésteban Verdugo: Villain



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 2
Wits: 5
Resolve: 4
Panache: 4
Reputation: -88
Background: Moment of Awe
Arcana: Righteous

Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Castillian Accent (Aldana), Faith, Indomitable Will, Ordained, University

Courtier: Dancing 2, Etiquette 5, Fashion 2, Oratory 5, Politics 4, Scheming 5, Seduction 4, Sincerity 5

Merchant: Calligraphy 5, Scribe 4

Priest: Diplomacy 4, Mooch 4, Oratory 5, Philosophy 4, Theology 5, Writing 5

Scholar: History 5, Law 3, Mathematics 2, Occult 2, Philosophy 4, Research 4, Theology 5

Servant: Accounting 3, Etiquette 5, Fashion 2, Gossip 4, Menial Tasks 4, Seneschal 4, Unobtrusive 5

Spy: Bribery 3, Conceal 4, Cryptography 4, Forgery 4, Interrogation 5, Lip Reading 3, Shadowing 4, Stealth 4

Knife: Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 2

Verdugo has ambitions of ruling Castille, but not for the reasons anyone thinks. Temporal power to him is simply a means to an end. He's interested in saving souls, ensuring

that as many people as possible reach Theus's arms safely. He truly believes in the justness of his actions, and the more power he has, the more easily he can continue his good work. At the moment, the only things between him and absolute control of Castille are Good King Sandoval and the execrable Andrés Aldana.

He lacks the ability to move against the royal family openly, but hasn't let that stop him. He had Prince Javier removed because the heir apparent demonstrated some dangerously open-minded ideals. He had hoped to do the same with Sandoval, but El Vago has repeatedly thwarted his efforts. Worse, Sandoval has proven more difficult to control than he anticipated. With Aldana whispering soft lies into the king's ear, Sandoval cannot always be counted on to do the right thing. Verdugo tries not to let it bother him. Sooner or later, El Vago will falter or the king will see reason. Either way, the Inquisition wins.

There is nothing supernatural about Verdugo's visions; he is not being manipulated by any sorcerer or Synchronicity entity. People see what they want to see, Verdugo more than anyone.

El Malvado ("The Wicked"): Villain



Brawn: 4
Finesse: 4
Wits: 3
Resolve: 3
Panache: 4
Reputation: -72
Background: Vendetta
Arcana: Lecherous

Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Castillian Accent (Zepeda), Castillian Education, Commission (Lieutenant), Dangerous Beauty, Membership (Swordsman's Guild) (Los Vagos), Noble, Scoundrel, Zepeda Blade

Courtier: Dancing 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Mooch 5, Oratory 2, Seduction 5

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Spy: Conceal 3, Disguise 4, Shadowing 4, Stealth 5
Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 4, Rolling 3, Sprinting 3, Swinging 2, Throwing 2
Commander: Ambush 5, Artillery 4, Leadership 3, Strategy 2, Tactics 3
El Fuego Adentro (Adept): Concentrate 4, Extinguish 4, Feed 4, Range 4, Stunt 4
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 4
Whip: Attack (Whip) 5
Zepeda (Journeyman): Bind (Whip) 4, Disarm (Whip) 5, Tagging (Whip) 4, Exploit Weakness (Zepeda) 4
Riding: Ride 4

El Malvado does indeed belong to Los Vagos, or rather, he did. Don Lorenzo de Zepeda was accepted into the secret company of heroes before he joined the Castillian military. He served loyally as a hero of the people for many years until the murder of his hometown unhinged his mind. His crusade against the Montaigne is personal and obsessive; Lorenzo will stop at nothing to destroy everyone responsible for the tragedy at San Juan.

Given his penchant for killing, Lorenzo is no longer recognized by Los Vagos. In fact, they are actively hunting him. But so far, they have been stymied by his formidable ability with El Fuego Adentro. His skill with fire magic is entirely unique. He had never trained, even though his Gallegos mother had the blood and knew how to use it. His latent abilities awakened when he entered the flaming courtyard at San Juan, and have grown exponentially ever since. Today, Lorenzo (or “El Malvado”, as he has taken to referring to himself) is a near-literal force of nature; he wields one element as his own, and is driven by a torrential force stronger even than the madness that consumes him... hate.

Lorenzo was not scarred by fire, as the tales insist. His new abilities ensured that no fire could ever harm him again.

Admiral Enrique Orduño: Hero



Brawn: 3
Finesse: 4
Wits: 4
Resolve: 3
Panache: 4
Reputation: 45
Background: Vow
Arcana: Loyal

Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Castillian Accent (Aldana), Castillian Education, Commission (Admiral), Eagle Eyes, Membership (Swordsman’s Guild), Noble, Small
Courtier: Dancing 2, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 2, Fashion 2, Oratory 3, Scheming 2, Sincerity 3
Sailor: Balance 5, Climbing 4, Knotwork 4, Navigation 5, Pilot 5, Rigging 3, Sea Lore 5, Swimming 3, Weather 4
Captain: Ambush 3, Cartography 4, Gunnery 3, Incitation 4, Leadership 5, Logistics 4, Strategy 4, Tactics 5
Scholar: Astronomy 4, History 3, Law 3, Mathematics 4, Philosophy 2, Research 2, Theology 2
Aldana (Journeyman): Exploit Weakness (Aldana) 4, Feint (Fencing) 5, Riposte (Fencing) 4, Tagging (Fencing) 4
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 5
Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload (Firearms) 2

Enrique’s Vow is to erase the shame of his uncle’s failure.

Admiral Orduño dislikes the Inquisition intensely and considers Cardinal Verdugo nothing more than an arrogant bully. He keeps his opinions to himself, however, like all of his other emotions. Still, if he had a chance to show up the Inquisition without hurting his position, he’d do it in an instant.



Margaretta Orduño: Hero



Brawn: 3
Finesse: 4
Wits: 4
Resolve: 3
Panache: 3
Reputation: 22
Background: Fear (Heights)
Arcana: Rash

Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Théan (R/W), Castillian Accent (Soldano), Castillian Education, Combat Reflexes, Membership (Swordsman's Guild), Noble

Artist: Musician (Guitar) 5

Courtier: Dancing 5, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 4, Fashion 3, Lip Reading 3, Oratory 2, Politics 3, Seduction 4

Scholar: Astronomy 2, History 2, Law 3, Mathematics 3, Philosophy 2, Research 2

Aldana (Journeyman): Exploit Weakness (Aldana) 4, Feint (Fencing) 4, Riposte (Fencing) 4, Tagging (Fencing) 4

Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 5, Leaping 3, Side-step 4, Sprinting 2, Swimming 2, Throwing 2

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 5

Margaretta is deathly afraid of heights, a condition resulting from a bad fall as a child. She refuses to climb the ship's rigging and couldn't scale a wall if her life depended on it. Her new position on the *Corazón del Castille* has allowed her to make some progress – falling into the sea isn't as painful as falling out of an orange tree – but it will be some time before she conquers her fear completely. Until then, she keeps quiet about it; only her father and Enrique know the truth.



Alvara Arciniega: Villain



Brawn: 4
Finesse: 5
Wits: 5
Resolve: 4
Panache: 4
Reputation: -43
Background: Hunted
Arcana: Overzealous

Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Théan (R/W), Vendel (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Castillian Accent (Soldano), Castillian Education, Connections (Many), Extended Family, Linguist, Membership (Invisible College, NOM), Noble, Toughness, University

Scholar: Astronomy 5, History 3, Mathematics 5, Natural Philosophy 5, Occult 4, Philosophy 4, Research 5, Theology 4

Servant: Accounting 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Hagglng 3, Menial Tasks 3, Unobtrusive 5

Spy: Bribery 3, Conceal 4, Disguise 3, Forgery 3, Poison 3, Shadowing 5, Sincerity 4, Stealth 4

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 5, Leaping 3, Side-step 5, Sprinting 4, Throwing 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 5

Soldano (Master): Double-parry (Fencing/Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Soldano) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Whirl (Fencing/Fencing) 5

Valroux (Journeyman): Double-parry (Fencing/Knife) 5, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 4, Feint (Fencing) 4, Tagging (Fencing) 5

Knife: Attack (Knife) 5, Parry (Knife) 5, Throw (Knife) 4

Alvara Arciniega is negotiating with the Vendel and Vodacce trade leagues for sorcerous objects and knowledge. He's particular interested in the blood of magic-wielding nobles, which he uses in alchemical research. Alvara firmly believes that alchemy changes those who practice it and seeks scientific proof of his beliefs. He hopes that the production of distilled "spell-like" effects will aid the underground scientific movement.

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Unknown to even his closest associates, Arciniega is a mastermind behind the secret society known as Novus Ordum Mundi. He inherited this mantle from his mentor and early scientific sponsor, Don Iselo Arciniega de Aldana, a Castillian royal whose family had controlled NOM for the last three hundred years. Alvara runs NOM through dozens of proxy commandants, each of whom is empowered to administrate a segment of the group's operations, and unaware of the others.

Salvador Garcia: Hero



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 2
Wits: 5
Resolve: 3
Panache: 3
Reputation: 56
Background: None
Arcana: Creative

Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Théan (R/W), Castillian Accent (Soldano), Castillian Education, Faith, Membership (Invisible College), Ordained, University

Merchant: Calligrapher 5, Cooking 3, Scribe 5

Priest: Diplomacy 3, Mooch 4, Oratory 5, Philosophy 4, Theology 5, Writing 5

Scholar: Astronomy 4, History 4, Mathematics 5, Natural Philosophy 5, Occult 5, Philosophy 4, Research 5, Theology 5

Spy: Conceal 3, Cryptography 4, Forgery 3, Shadowing 1, Sincerity 2, Stealth 2

Streetwise: Scrounging 4, Shopping 3, Socializing 3, Street Navigation 3, Underworld Lore 4

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 2

Garcia is an active member of the Invisible College, using his position to smuggle out vital experiments before the Inquisition gets ahold of them. He has published several highly touted scientific papers anonymously through the College, and plans to release "A Need For Doubt" the same way. Though he only knows two other members of the

organization, he has suspicions about almost a dozen more; if he wishes, he could cause the College considerable damage. His age and faith make those secrets all but impenetrable, however. There are some lessons the old teacher will never impart.

Alicia Zaneta de Lazaro: Hero



Brawn: 2
Finesse: 4
Wits: 3
Resolve: 4
Panache: 5
Reputation: 60
Background: Nemesis, Rivalry
Arcana: Courageous

Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Appearance (Stunning), Castillian Education, Combat Reflexes, Indomitable Will, Miracle Worker, Patron (Don Francisco Guzman del Aldana de Castillo)

Courtier: Dancing 5, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 4, Fashion 5, Gaming 3, Oratory 4

Performer: Acting 3, Animal Training 4, Singing 4

Spy: Conceal 3, Disguise 5, Shadowing 5, Stealth 5

Cloak: Entangle 4, Parry (Cloak) 5

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 2

Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 2, Throw 2

Rider: Mounting 4, Ride 4, Trick Riding 4

Whip: Attack (Whip) 5

Alicia has no secrets. She is exactly what she appears to be – a fierce matadora who is being threatened by her peers. The rivalry between bullfighters in Castille is incredible, and the first female to enter the sport makes an unprecedented target. The "accidents" surrounding Alicia's engagements are being caused by thugs and miscreants hired by the others, who hope to force Alicia out of the profession. Much to their dismay, she isn't easily intimidated.



Luis Rafael Dominguez de San Angelo: Hero

Brawn: 3
Finesse: 6
Wits: 4
Resolve: 4
Panache: 5
Reputation: 23
Background: Defeated
Arcana: Reckless

Advantages: Castillian (R/W), Théan (R/W), Avalon, Montaigne (R/W), Vodacce, Able Drinker, Castillian Education, Combat Reflexes, Dangerous Beauty, Indomitable Will, Member (Rose and Cross, Swordsman's Guild), The Secret (Rose & Cross), Rose and Cross Vow, University

Aldana (Master): Exploit Weakness (Aldana) 5, Feint (Fencing) 5, Riposte (Fencing) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 5

Artist: Musician (Guitar) 3

Courtier: Dancing 3, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Oratory 2, Seduction 2

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 5, Leaping 5, Side-step 5, Sprinting 4, Swinging 5, Throwing 4

Desaix (Journeyman): Double Parry (Fencing/Knife) 5, Exploit Weakness (Desaix) 3, Feint (Fencing) 5, Lunge (Fencing) 4

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 5, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 5, Parry (Improvised Weapon) 5, Throat Strike 5, Throw (Improvised Weapon) 4

Doctor: Diagnosis 3, First Aid 3, Quack 1, Surgery 3

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 5

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload (Firearms) 3

Knife: Attack (Knife) 4, Parry (Knife) 5, Throw (Knife) 4

Sailor: Balance 3, Climbing 3, Knotwork 2, Rigging 2, Swimming 4

Scholar: History 3, Mathematics 2, Philosophy 2, Research 2, Theology 1

Spy: Shadowing 4, Stealth 5

Streetwise: Socializing 3, Street Navigation 3

Though he is unaware of them, Wandering Knight Salvador (Luis' name among other Knights) has been under surveillance by the Invisibles since his early days with the Order (they were preparing for his secret training when the Montaigne army invaded).

Today, the Invisibles continue to track his progress, seeking a time when they can approach him about returning to the order. This can provide Gamemasters with any number of adventure hooks; perhaps the Rose and Cross secure the PCs' services to test Luis in some manner, or help him reinvigorate his sense of valor.

Lastly, the sword buried with Luis' adopted parents is an ancient Castillian artifact, born in the chamber of El Fuego Sagrado (page 17). If recovered, the weapon adds one Rank to any one of the wielder's El Fuego Adentro Knacks (the weapon only affects one of the five El Fuego Adentro Knacks at any given time; the wielder's other Knacks are unaffected).

New Monsters

Castille is a very civilized nation, and monsters aren't nearly as common as they are in, say, Eisen. However, there are creatures in the mountains that were left behind by the practitioners of El Fuego Adentro, and the Castillians have bred some truly ferocious bulls for their arenas.

Two types of creatures have been deliberately left vague: the mysterious members of Los Nublados and the sinister force haunts the Forest of Fiends. GMs are free to create whatever explanation they wish for these phenomenon, using them as springboards for adventure or leaving them as vague warnings not to venture too deeply into the wilderness. Some mysteries are never solved.

Fire Mountain

Villain

TN: 5

Brawn: 1

Finesse: 1

Resolve: 1 (see Special Abilities as well)

Wits: 1

Panache: 1

Attack Roll: 5k2

Damage: 10k5 Punch

Skills: None

Description: An ambitious fire mage once progressed far beyond the mastery of his peers, and delved into secret rituals long since forgotten. Gathering a series of rare materials (including a ruby the size of a hen's egg), he trekked up the side of an enormous mountain, and spent several days working his magic. When he was done, the ground shook, steam geysered out of the earth, and molten lava oozed from countless new-formed cracks. The sorcerer was nowhere to be found: he had transformed himself into a living volcano. However, the ritual was very taxing, and before he could test his new status, he fell into a gentle slumber lasting almost 300 years. He has only recently awakened to survey his surroundings.

The fire mage has become an incredibly powerful creature, but he is no longer really human. Those things he once strove to attain – power, immortality, and companionship – no longer hold any attraction for him. Instead, his sole purpose is to protect the flawless ruby that has now become the repository for his life force. It rests in a hidden cave in the mountain he inhabits, unseen by human eyes. He will pursue it to the ends of the earth if need be, for destroying the gem is the only way to kill him. Most of the time he sleeps within his mountain, but if aroused or angered he manifests himself as a forty foot tall man made of fire.

Special Abilities: The fire mountain's form is immune to all forms of damage, including immersion in water (it only boils away the water and makes him mad). In addition, anyone hit by his attack is set on fire with a 4-die flame (see the Traps rules in the *Gamemasters' Guide*, page 200).

For purposes of attack, it takes a TN of 5 to hit the gem. It has a Brawn of 1 and a Resolve of 1. If it is destroyed, the fire mage is killed. Intact, the gem is worth upwards of 10,000G to the right buyer. Smashed, the fragments might fetch up to 250G.

Bull

Villain

TN: 15

Brawn: 6

Finesse: 2

Resolve: 3

Wits: 1

Panache: 2

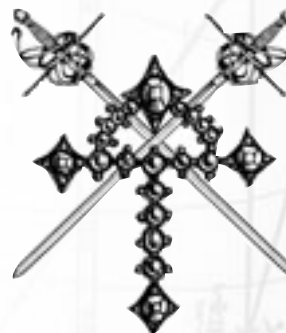
Attack Roll: 3k2

Damage: 8k2 Gore, or 8k4 Charge (See Special Abilities)

Skills: None

Description: Castillian bulls are specially bred for their toughness, strength, and foul temper. A matador who is even a little too slow in getting out of the way will never get up again. Of course, this makes the successful matadors that much more famous and respected.

Special Abilities: A bull can either spend one Action to perform a Gore for 8k2 damage, or it can spend two Actions (only one of which needs to be from the current Phase) to Charge. A Hero hit by a Charge who fails his Wound Check suffers one Dramatic Wound, plus one additional Dramatic Wound for every 5 points he failed his roll by.



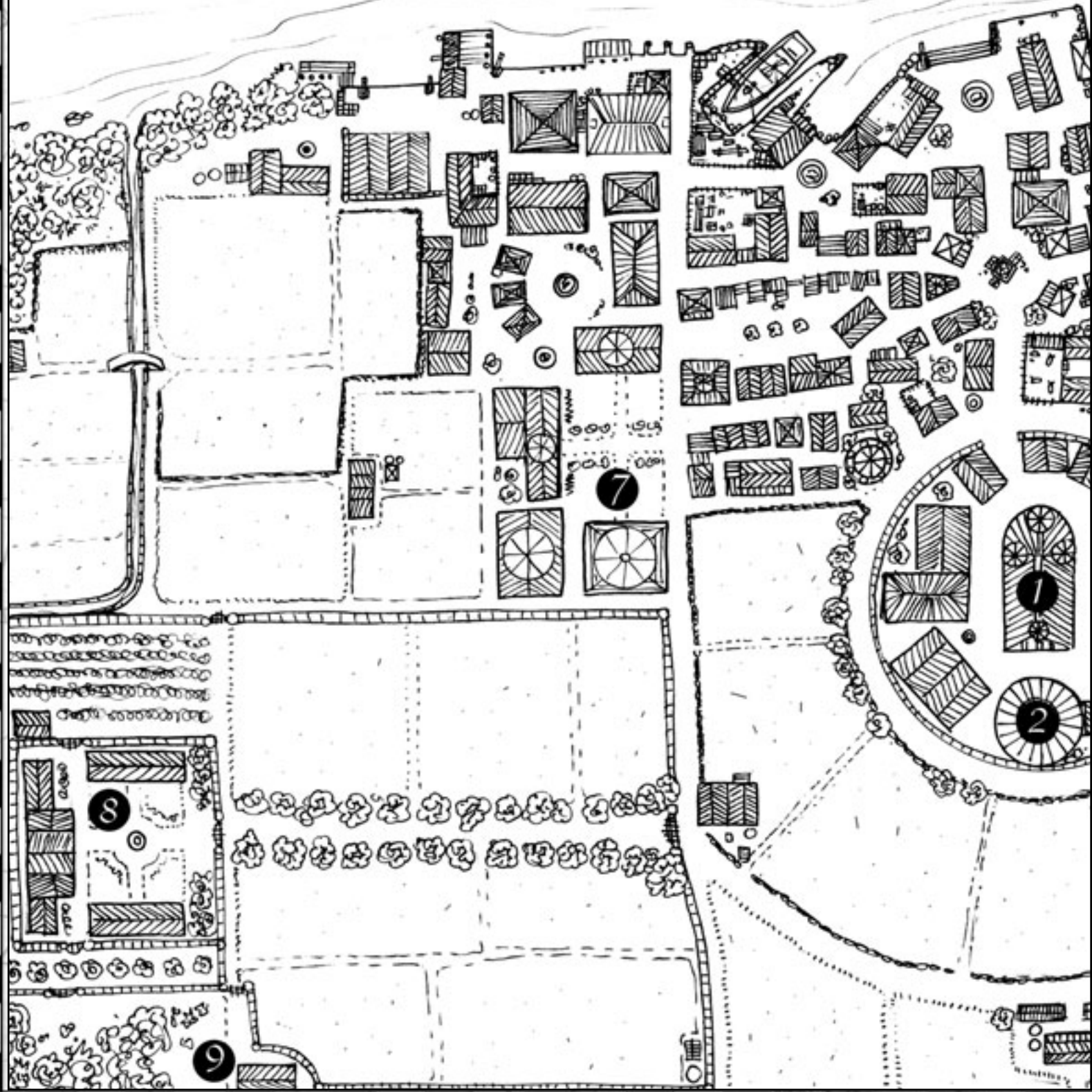
Eisen
Castille

THE GREAT RIVER

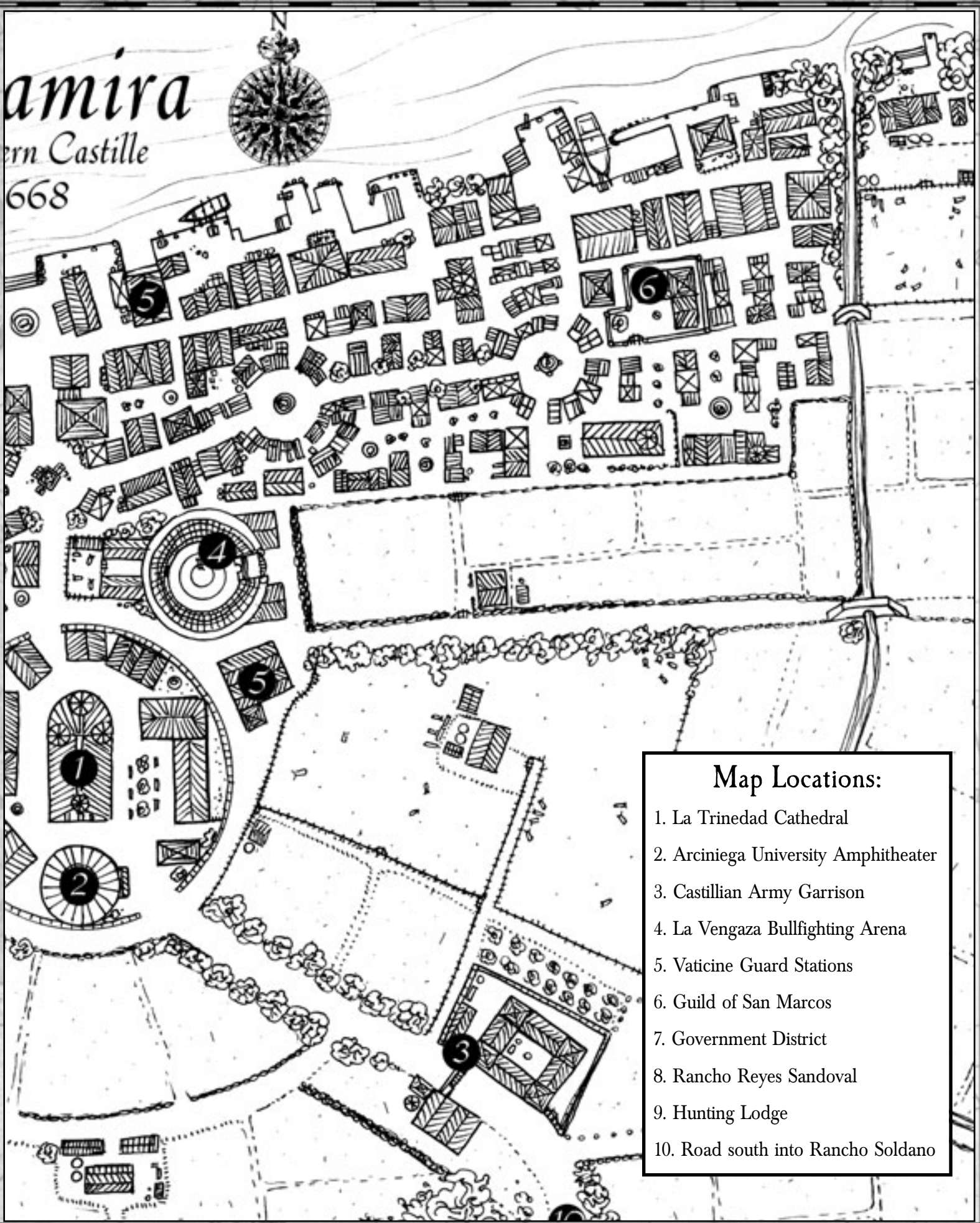
Altami

Northern Castil

1668



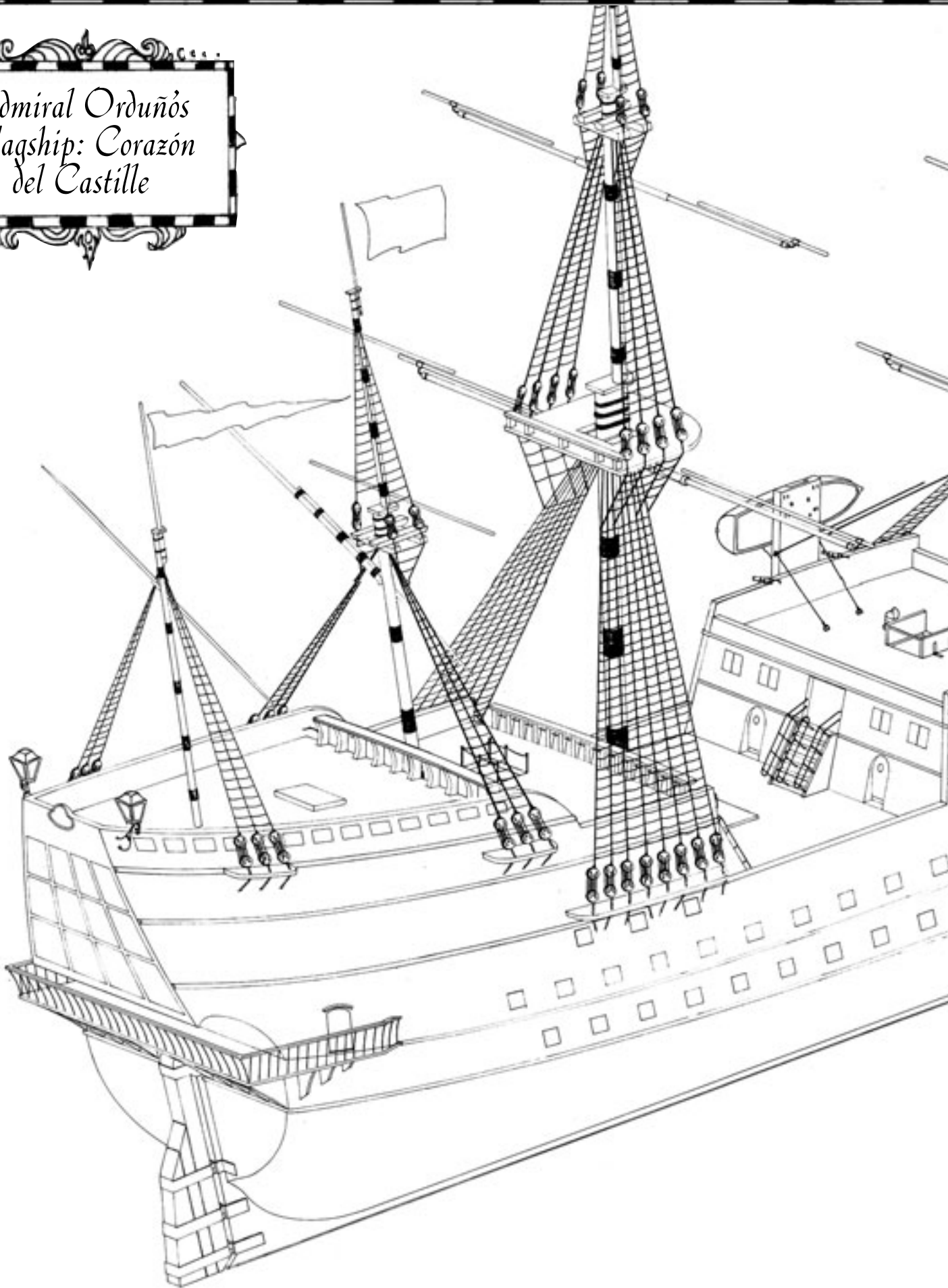
Amira
Northern Castille
1668

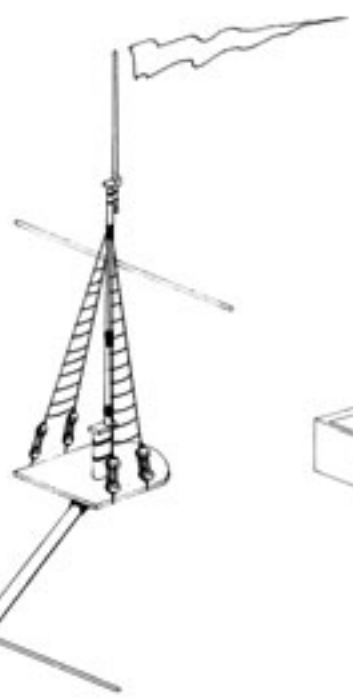
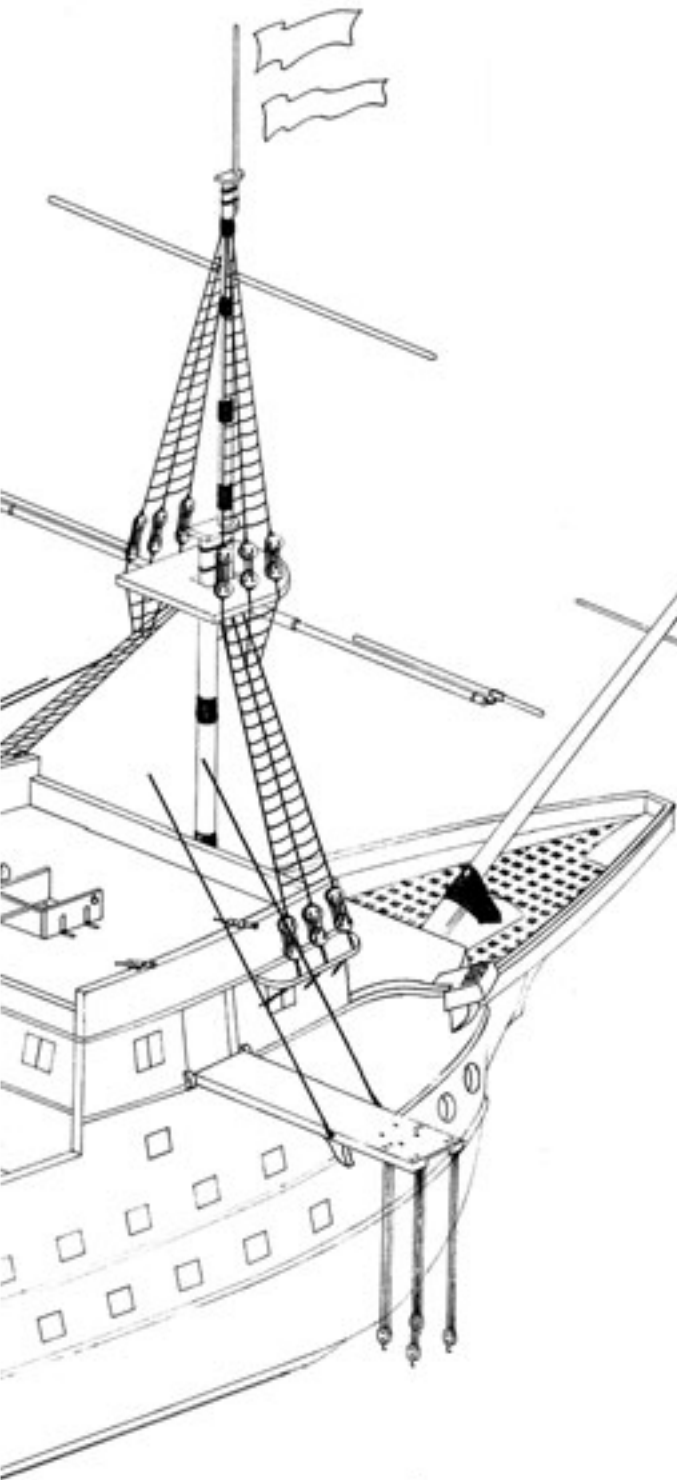


Map Locations:

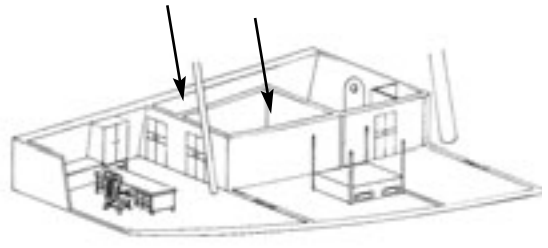
1. La Trinidad Cathedral
2. Arciniega University Amphitheater
3. Castillian Army Garrison
4. La Vengaza Bullfighting Arena
5. Vaticine Guard Stations
6. Guild of San Marcos
7. Government District
8. Rancho Reyes Sandoval
9. Hunting Lodge
10. Road south into Rancho Soldano

*Admiral Orduño's
Flagship: Corazón
del Castillo*

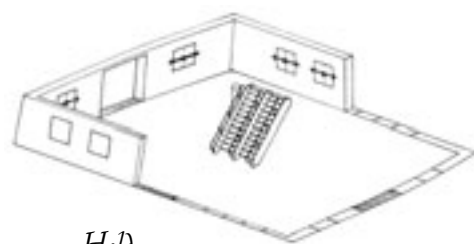




First Matè's and Bosun's Quarters



Captain's Cabin

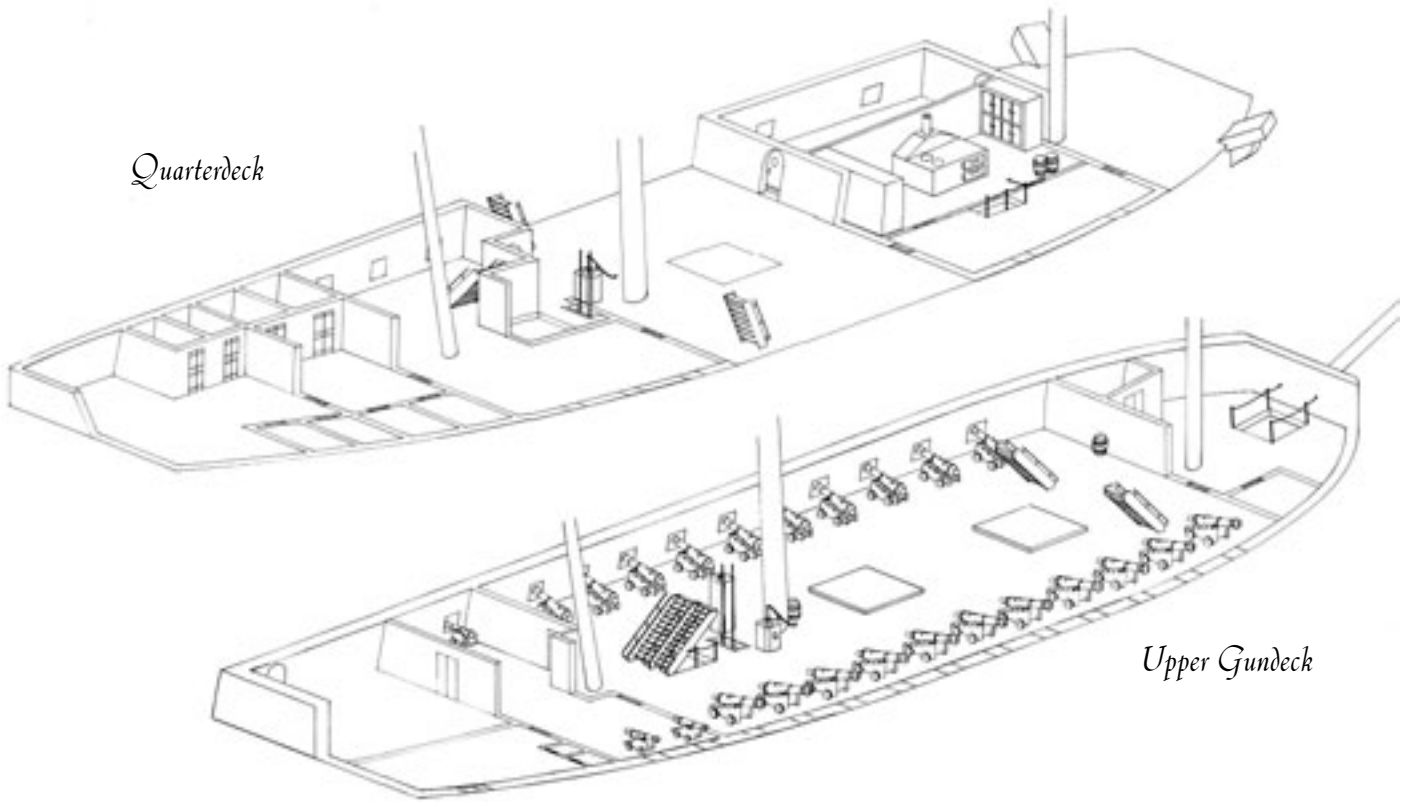


Hold



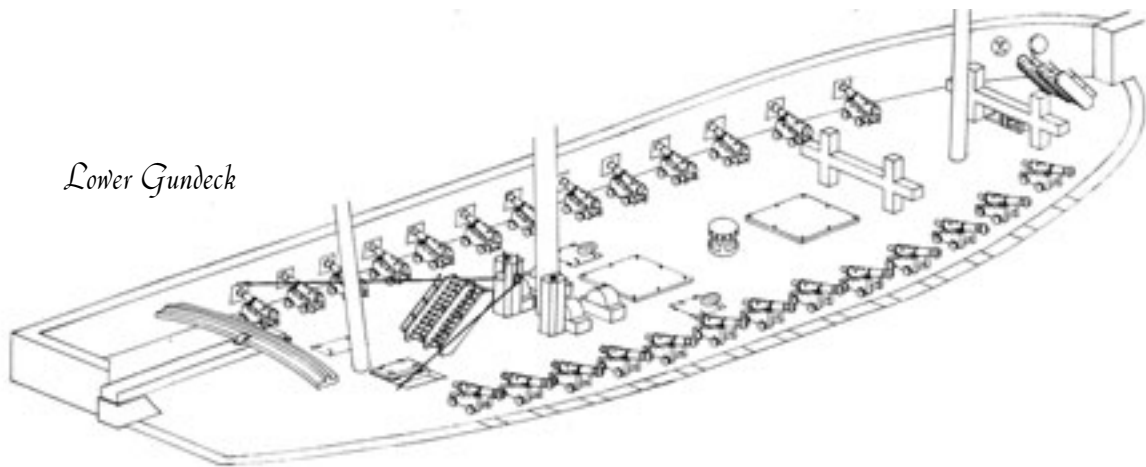
Cargo Hold and Sailor's Quarters

Quarterdeck

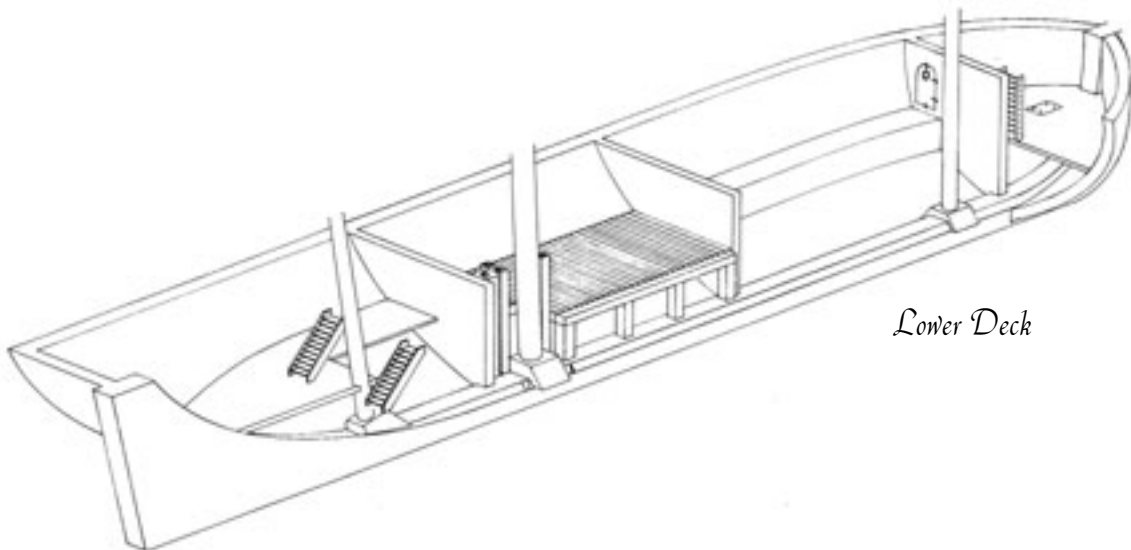


Upper Gundeck

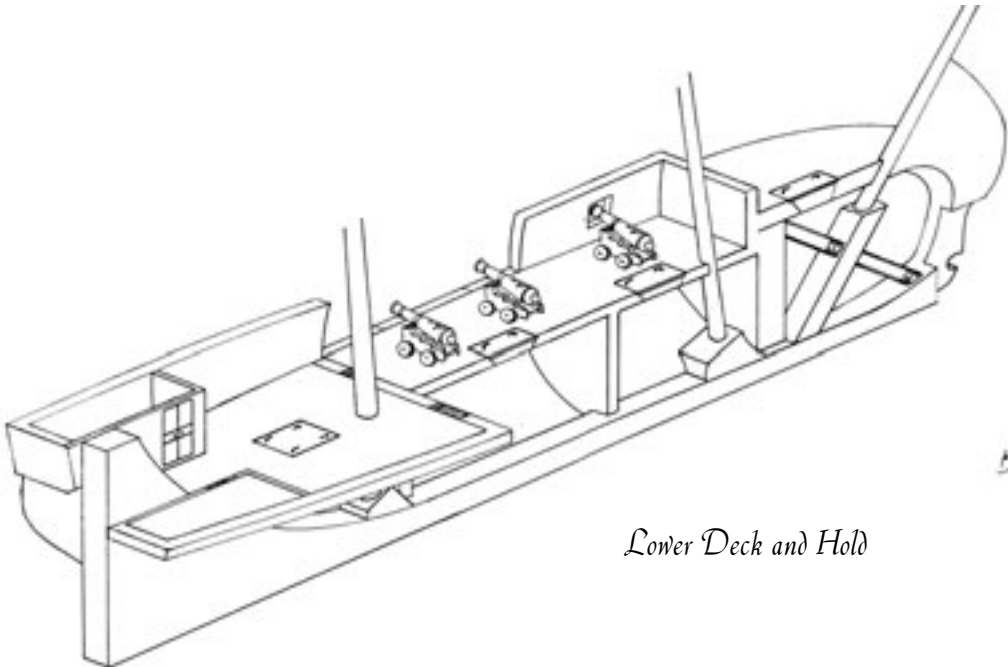
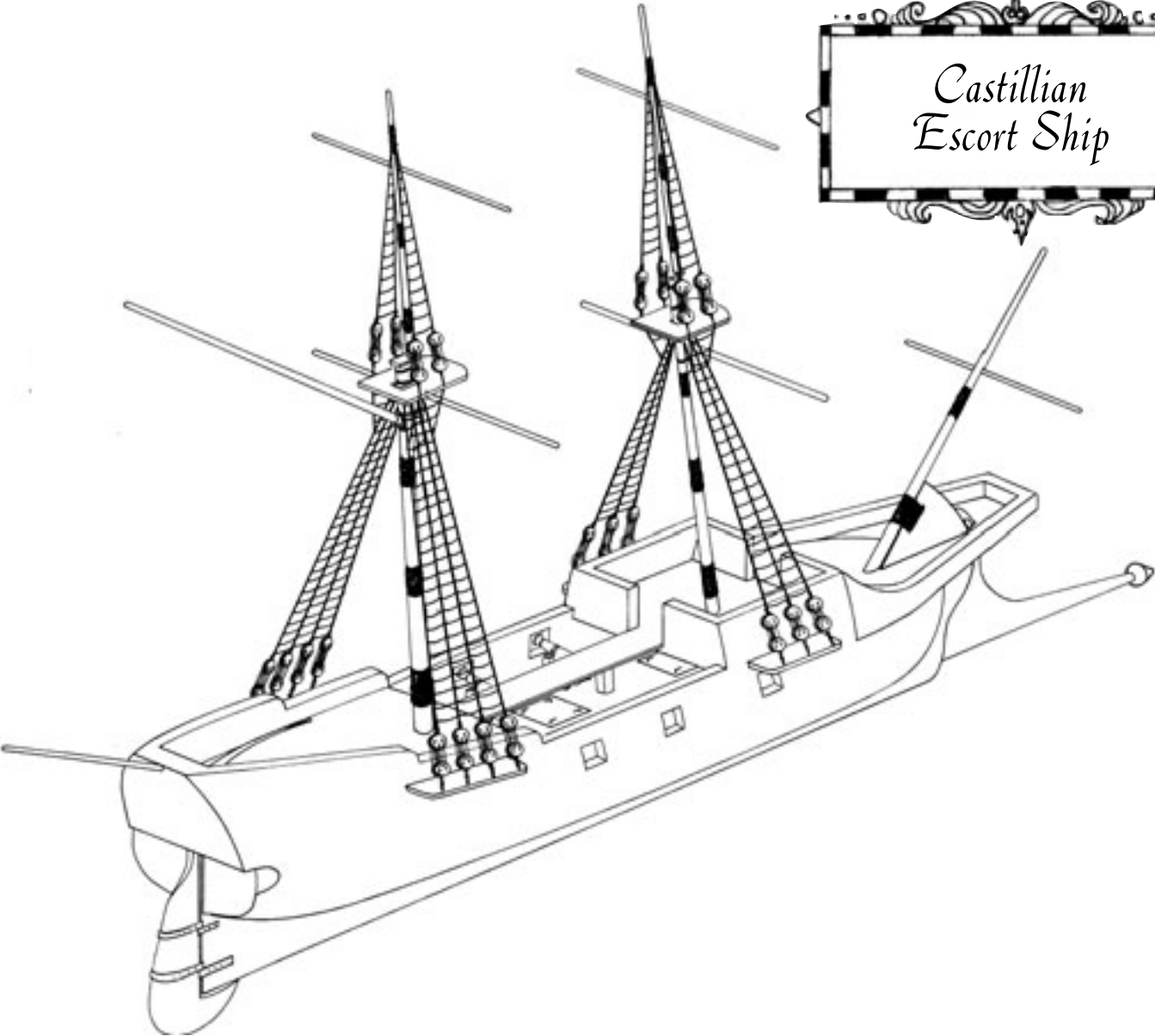
Lower Gundeck



Lower Deck

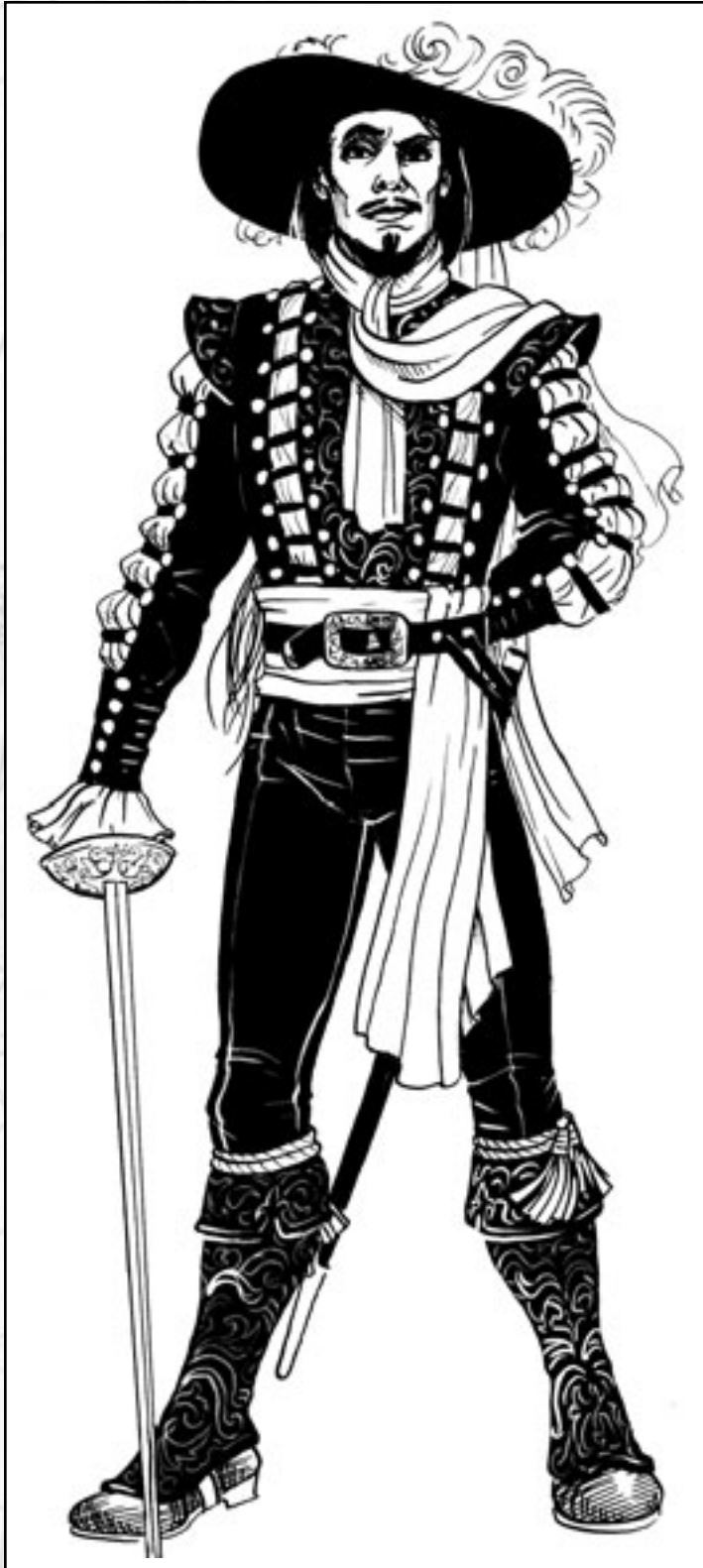


*Castillian
Escort Ship*



500

Lower Deck and Hold



Castilian Duelist

Traits

Brawn	2
Finesse	3
Wits	2
Resolve	2
Panache	2

Advantages

Gallegos School	(25)
Castilian Accent (Any)	(0)
Castilian (R/W)	(1)
Théan (R/W)	(0)
Castilian Education	(10)
Noble	(5)
Roving Don	(3)

Arcana: Arrogant

Civil Skills

Courtier

Dancing 1, Etiquette 1, Fashion 1, Gaming 2, Mooch 2, Oratory 1

Streetwise

Socializing 2, Street Navigation 1, Scrounging 3, Underworld Lore 1

Martial Skills

Athlete

Climbing 1, Footwork 3, Side-step 1, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1

Fencing

Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 3

Gallegos School

Feint (Fencing) 2

Income: 6000 G starting, 0 G/month, -50 G per week until your lands are reclaimed

Castillian Mountaineer

Traits

Brawn 2
 Finesse 2
 Wits 2
 Resolve 3
 Panache 2

Advantages

Castillian (R/W) (1)
 Castillian Accent: Gallegos (0)
 Keen Senses (2)
 Membership: Merchant Guild (4)

Arcana: Courageous

Background: Hunted (2)

Civil Skills

Hunter

Fishing 1, Skinning 3, Stealth 3, Survival 2, Tracking 2, Traps 3

Merchant

Cooking 1, Furrier 3

Martial Skills

Athlete

Climbing 1, Footwork 2, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1

Fencing

Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 1

Firearms

Attack (Firearms) 3

Knife

Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 2

Wrestling

Grapple 2, Head Butt 1

Income: 3k2 x 3 G starting/3k2 G per month





Castillian Scholar

Traits

Brawn	2
Finesse	2
Wits	3
Resolve	2
Panache	2

Advantages

Castillian (R/W)	(1)
Théan (R/W)	(0)
Castillian Accent: Any	(0)
Castillian Education	(10)
Faith	(5)
Ordained	(4)
Miracle Worker	(5)
University	(1)

Background: Obligation (1)

Civil Skills

Courtier

Dancing 1, Etiquette 2, Fashion 2, Oratory 2, Gaming 1

Merchant

Calligraphy 1, Scribe 2

Priest

Oratory 2, Philosophy 2, Writing 2, Diplomacy 1, Mooch 1, Theology 3

Scholar

History 2, Mathematics 3, Philosophy 2, Research 3, Astronomy 2, Law 2, Natural Philosophy 2, Occult 2

Servant

Etiquette 2, Fashion 2, Menial Tasks 1, Unobtrusive 1, Accounting 1, Gossip 1, Haggling 1

Martial Skills

Firearms

Attack (Firearms) 1, Reload (Firearms) 1

Income: 90 G starting/30 G per month

Castillian Soldier

Traits

Brawn 3
 Finesse 3
 Wits 2
 Resolve 2
 Panache 2

Advantages

Castillian (R/W) (1)
 Castillian Accent: Any (0)
 Academy (4)
 Commission: Corporal (2)
 Extended Family (5)

Arcana: Victorious

Civil Skills

Courtier

Dancing 1, Etiquette 1, Fashion 1, Oratory 1

Streetwise

Socializing 2, Street Navigation 1

Martial Skills

Athlete

Climbing 1, Footwork 2, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1

Commander

Strategy 1, Tactics 2

Dirty Fighting

Attack (Dirty Fighting) 2

Fencing

Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 3

Firearms

Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload (Firearms) 2

Knife

Attack (Knife) 2, Parry (Knife) 1

Polearm

Attack (Polearm) 2, Parry (Polearm) 2

Income: 2G starting / 0G per month



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