

7TH SEA

BASIC RULES SETTING

JOHN WICK PRESENTS A ROLEPLAYING GAME "7TH SEA" BASIC RULES VERSION 1.0

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The logo for 7TH SEA features the text "7TH SEA" in a stylized, blocky font. The "7" and "SEA" are in a dark blue color with a yellow outline, while "TH" is in yellow with a dark blue outline. A white compass rose with a blue center is positioned between "TH" and "SEA". The background of the entire page is a detailed, painterly map of a coastal region with various towns, forests, and a large sailing ship on the left.

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Welcome to 7th Sea

This is Théah in 1668 AV (Anno Veritas)! Get ready to enter a world of piracy, diplomacy, archæology and exploration. It's a world of musketeers, buccaneers and privateers, ancient sorcery and lost civilizations, secrets that hide in the shadows and monsters that hide in plain sight.

That's quite a mouthful, so let's take it one step at a time.

Swashbuckling and Sorcery

7TH SEA is a world where an order of musketeers guards the lives of the nobility, but also the virtues of honor, integrity and fraternity. It is a world of sharp blades and sharp wits, where a cutting retort can be just as deadly as a sword's point.

It is also a world where the nobility control the most powerful force of all—sorcery. Powerful magic pulses in the hearts of the noble class, power that was given to them long ago.

The hard edge of steel coupled with the shadowy substance of sorcery: that is the world of 7TH SEA.

Piracy and Adventure

The pirates of 7TH SEA are united by a common cause: freedom. Pirates sail where they want, take what they please and live a life of freedom unknown by any other in the world of 7TH SEA.

With the decline of the Church, things have become even better for pirates. Théah's nobility hire daredevils to explore the unknown and bring back the booty they discover. Of course, if those adventurers lower their guard for even a moment, they'll find themselves facing the threat of pirates, looking for easy prey.

Diplomacy and Intrigue

In the world of 7TH SEA, kingdoms are on the verge of becoming countries. In the courts of kings and queens, diplomats try to resolve the disputes of Nations. A swelling tide of nationalism is growing and a new kind of conflict—covert warfare—is finding its way into the world.

Agents trained in the arts of deception live perilous lives of illusion as they pillage enemy secrets with only their beauty, cunning and wits...and a willingness to do anything for crown and country.

Archæology and Exploration

Beyond the kingdoms of Théah lie the ruins of an ancient civilization, lost centuries ago: the vast cities of Lost Syrne. Who knows what ancient secrets and treasures remain, unseen by human eyes, untouched by human hands?

Men and women who call themselves "archæologists" unearth these treasures and bring them back to noble hands. They hope to discover the secrets of the Syrne in hopes that they may uncover the key to humanity's own origins, and possibly the secrets of the universe itself.

Romance and Revenge

Poets say those who fall in love become lovesick. You can't eat, you can't think, you can't do anything. And the only cure for your illness is the cause of your illness: the one you love. Revenge causes the same kind of illness. The only cure for your illness is the cause of your illness: the one who must pay for your pain. Revenge is a dangerous path, leading some Heroes straight into the warm embrace of villainy.

The Nations

Théah is made up of a number of Nations, each with its own character and personality. The concept of “nation” is new to Théah, only emerging in the last century or so. These profiles should be enough to get you started. For more detailed information on each Nation, see Chapter 2 of the Core Rulebook, starting on page 19.

Avalon

Also known as “the Glamour Isle,” Avalon is one of the Three Kingdoms. Queen Elaine holds the Graal, an ancient and powerful item that makes her the undisputed monarch. So long as she holds the Graal, Avalon and its sister isles remain united. Heroes of Avalon are also united in their cause: protecting the Queen from danger.

Avalon is a land where legends are more than just stories: they are the very embodiment of magical power. The greater a Hero’s story, the greater she becomes. This is the magic of Avalon, a magic called “Glamour.”

The island also has another race living among the Avalonians: the mysterious Sidhe. Whether it be a beautiful Sidhe knight or a puckish trickster spirit, the Sidhe come in many forms and demand great respect from the Avalonians.

Appearance

The typical Avalon has pale skin and light eyes. Hair varies between dark and light. The men and women are both stout. Men grow beards. Men and women grow their hair long with braids.

Clothing tends to be wool with many layers: Avalon can get cold. A recent trend among Avalon sailors is pockets: something that has begun to spread among other cultures as well. Wearing iron bracelets or necklaces is also popular, just in case you wander into an unfriendly Sidhe. Iron sometimes blocks Sidhe magic. Sometimes.

Typical Professions

Many Avalonians start as sailors and fishermen. When living on an island, the most abundant food source is the sea. Avalon also has its fair share of hunters and farmers, but more families make their living from the sea than any other profession.

Religion

As an Avalon Hero, you have a choice of four faiths: Druidic, Vaticine, Church of Avalon or Objectivist. The oldest religion, the Druidic faith, is kept by various priests and priestesses. The Druidic faith is not well organized, nor does it want to be. If you believe in the Old Gods of Avalon, you gather on holy days in the forest, then dance and sing and frolic until dawn.

If you are Vaticine, you believe you can understand the mind of God by studying His Creation.

If you are a follower of the Church of Avalon, you believe Elaine is the head of the Church, but otherwise follow the same tenets as the Vaticine faith.

More recently, Objectivists have come to Avalon. If you’re an Objectivist, you find ways to connect with Theus without relying on a Church.

Names

There is a great nostalgia in Avalon since Elaine’s ascendance to the throne and the one place it shows most is in the changing language. Men and women are changing their modern names back to their more traditional versions and children are being named after the great heroes of Avalon’s history.

Common Male Names: Aidan, Alan, Bran, Dwyer, Edward, Finn, Harold, Jerome, Keith, Liam, Luke, Malcolm, Michael, Morgan, Ossian, Quinn, Richard, Shawn, Thomas, Walter

Common Female Names: Aileen, Alison, Bridgit, Caroline, Denise, Elaine, Grace, Helen, Jane, Karen, Leila, Maeve, Mary, Pamela, Sabbina, Sybil, Teresa, Veronica

Attitudes

When playing an Avalon Hero, make sure everyone notices what you do. After all, Glamour demands it. Heroes remembered by Avalon bards live forever, and the only way to be remembered is by doing the impossible. Hospitality is a huge part of Avalon culture. On the island, the people you meet might be ordinary travelers or powerful Sidhe: you never know when or how a kind gesture or a cruel rebuke will come back to you. So, treat strangers with respect.



Inismore

Another of the Glamour Isles, the people of Inismore—the Inish—do not like being called “Avalonian.” Yes, their Nation is part of the Three Kingdoms and yes, they do acknowledge Elaine as the High Queen, but do not call them Avalon. Call an Inish sailor an Avalonian and you’ll likely spend the rest of the night looking for your teeth.

The two Nations may be at peace now, but old wounds are slow to heal. The Inish generally don’t trust Avalonian ambition and the Avalonians are suspicious of Inish revenge.

As for the rest of Théah, the Inish are happy to wander and add to their personal legends. The same magic that guides the hearts of the Avalonians—Glamour—makes the Inish some of the most courageous adventurers in Théah. Some say because they are drunken and foolhardy.

The Inish know better. It’s the key to Inish magic: transforming a mortal into an immortal. Into a story. Into a legend.

Appearance

The Inish tend to be a little shorter than the average Théan, but they also tend to be stronger and more robust. Inismore is an agrarian Nation with the vast majority of its people spending every day in manual labor. Even the noble class. Their hair is typically black or red with pale skin. Blue and green eyes are common, but most Inish have dark eyes.

Clothing is usually heavy to accommodate Inismore’s wet and cold climate. The Inish are also fond of braided hair for both men and women (and that includes braided beards).

Typical Professions

There are more Inish sailors than Avalon sailors in Avalon’s navy. And while Inismore has no formal army, most every farmer and fisher knows how to use a sword. Because Inismore has little official contact with other Nations, they must rely on themselves. No trade with Montaigne means making your own liquor. No trade with Castille means making your own swords. Craftsmanship is not a matter of pride for the Inish—it’s a matter of necessity.

Religion

Faith is a complicated matter for the Inish. They’ve adopted the Vaticine faith, but intermingled it with Inish paganism. Some say they adopted the Vaticine Church because the Avalon King rejected it, but for whatever reason, much of Inismore is Vaticine.

At the same time, they also recognize the Old Faith of Inismore, recognizing its ancient gods and goddesses, using the stories of its heroes to inspire future generations.

Names

Inish names have two parts: your given name and your surname, known in Inismore as your “clan name.” Due to occupation from Avalon and Montaigne, the highly complicated system of clan names has been abandoned and replaced with a simplified system. Most Inish clan names have the prefix “O” or “Mac,” such as O’Blaind or MacMáirín. The “O” signifies “grandson/daughter of” while the “Mac” indicates “son/daughter of.” Thus, a Hero could have the name Keelan O’Keelan, or “Keelan, the grandson of Keelan.”

Common Male Names: Abbán, Ádhamh, Aidan, Barrfind, Barrie, Brady, Carey, Ceallach, Donagh, Dónal, Dubhán, Enda, Ennis, Finn, Keelan, Lochlainn, Mannix, Riordan, Séaghdha, Teige, Torin, Uilleag

Common Female Names: Aideen, Aignéis, Bébhinn, Blaind, Brígh, Catlín, Clodagh, Dáirín, Deirdre, Éabha, Eavan, Ena, Fionnuala, Gobnait, Íde, Keelan, Léan, Maeve, Máirín, Mór, Neassa, Nóra, Órlaith, Siobhán

Attitudes

When playing an Inish Hero, remember your Nation has remained true to the Old Faith. Avalon and the Marches lost that path, turning to the Vaticine Church. The only reason Glamour returned to Avalon is because Queen Elaine is worthy of holding the Graal. Her devotion and faith have united the Avalon Isles...for now.

In the meantime, you have magic to make. You must make epic mistakes, fight with every ounce of strength in your body, and love with every ounce of passion in your heart. That’s the only way to become immortal...become a legend.



The Highland Marches

For centuries, your people lived under the rule of tyrants—villainous Avalonian Kings and Queens who saw your people as little more than brute savages, subjugating them into near slavery. Then Queen Elaine took the Graal, and now there is peace. The current King of the Marches, James MacDuff II, stands by her side and calls her “Queen.” But not all in the Marches are convinced.

Of all the Kingdoms of Avalon, the Marches has the least friendly attitudes toward the Sidhe. There is a reluctant respect for their power, but many consider them too frivolous and cruel. The Marches is a practical place that produces a strong people, not reliant on the “gifts” of the Sidhe. One cannot ignore the power of Glamour, but Marchers use it differently than the others. Their heroes are honest and forthright men and women who question the authority of kings and queens. People were born free and were meant to live free. Royalty has a duty to those they rule, and those who abuse that duty deserve the least respect of all.

The Marches are at peace for now. But only for the moment. They know that peace is only the pause between wars. No matter how wise and kind this Queen Elaine may be, war is on its way. And only the Highland Marches will be ready for it.

Appearance

Marchers tend to be tall with long limbs. Even their nobility work long days, meaning they are typically strong and resilient. Both the nobility and commoners often dress the same. Men and women wear long white *leine* (len-ya), which is a long white shirt that reaches down to the knees.

Typical Professions

The Highland Marches has no standing army, but every one of their sons and daughters are trained to be warriors from the day they can walk. They're taught to use everything as a weapon: even the land itself.

Farming is rough in the Highlands with most of the land covered in forests and hills. Farmlands are valuable and highly coveted by those with ambition. Most inland Highlanders feed their families through hunting and lake fishing.

Religion

The Marches is a hodgepodge of religious beliefs. Because of their untrusting relationship with the Sidhe, the Marches has embraced the Vaticine Church. Believers in the Old Faith still remain, although they are seen as outsiders. Outsiders, but not outcasts.

This is an important distinction.

The Objectionist Movement reached the Marches nearly a decade ago and has brought even more religious confusion. Currently, nearly one third of the people in the Marches are Objectionist, and while there is tension, there is no violence. If the Highland Marches has embraced only one thing from Queen Elaine's rule, it is religious tolerance.

Names

Highlanders have two names: their given name and patronymic or clan name. A clan name is usually derived from the founder of a clan—either male or female—and not a family member (which is why Highlander names are more consistent than Inish names, which are more personal). For men, the clan name has the prefix “Mac,” while for women, the prefix is “Nic.” For example, Angus MacBride and Beileag NicBride are from the same clan.

Common Male Names: Aonghas, Aodhagán, Beathan, Blair, Cailean, Cairbre, Carson, Colin, Dugald, Ealair, Eoghan, Ewen, Fearchar, Fingall, Goraidh, Grier, Hamish, Kerr, Seumas, Sláine, Tam

Common Female Names: Aileen, Ailsa, Beileag, Blair, Caoimhe, Deóiridh, Ealasaid, Eimhir, Eithne, Fionnuala, Gormlaith, Isla, Lachina, Liliás, Máiri, Oighrig, Seona, Sheona, Síleas, Teárlag, Úna

Attitudes

A king or queen must *earn* the trust of the people, and it is never earned easily. Authority breeds corruption in all—none are immune to this pure fact. A king must listen to his people, trust his people, and protect his people. Otherwise, he is lost in the sound of his own voice.

While this may make the Marchers sound like a dour people, they curb that suspicion with healthy revelry. Perhaps it is the overwhelming presence of doom in their culture that makes celebrations that much more joyous.



Castille

For a Castillian, three things head up your life: God, King and Family. In that order. Granted, sometimes circumstances may switch those three priorities, but they are always your top priorities.

Castillians are proud people, and they have a right to be. Castille is the most educated Nation in Théah. It is the home of the Vaticine Church and the central message of the Church is “To learn the mind of God, you must study His Creation.” Knowledge and study are virtues hammered into every Castillian child’s mind.

Castillians have very large families. Everyone related to you, no matter how distant, is a cousin. And cousins are family. You protect your family. To do otherwise would compromise your honor.

Courage is another virtue young Castillians learn. The Church teaches that courage is the ability for the human mind to recognize some things are more important than our own mortality. Couple this notion with the concept of family and you get Castillians throwing their lives between danger and family members.

And this brings us to the concept of Castillian honor. A person’s reputation depends entirely upon her honor. Does she maintain the dignity of her family? Does she serve the King? Does she pay proper reverence to God? These things determine a Castillian’s honor. Besmirch it at your own risk.

Appearance

Castillians typically have darker hair and skin than other Théans as a result of the invasions of the Crescent Empire centuries ago. The Crescent held Castille for over two hundred years, bringing their culture along with them. Castillian clothing and architecture still echo from this time. Billowy sleeves, curly hair, and thick beards for men, while women have olive skin, long black hair, and golden eyes.

Castillians who can afford it like the look and feel of leather and wear it often. Both men and women wear swords: the symbol of Castillian honor. It is such a predominant symbol, some villages have community swords shared by all for the purposes of defending the village from bandits.

Typical Professions

Most Castillians were raised in a village with a church providing education and enlightenment. Most also know how to use a sword. Those hailing from more modest families are typically farmers and fishers. Some are educators, enlisted by the Church for the purpose of keeping Castille’s reputation as the most enlightened Nation in Théah.

But the most common background for Castillians is soldier: Castille boasts one of Théah’s largest and most powerful armies. The people see serving in the army as a duty: a way to serve the King, and thus serve God, and thus, protect their family.

Religion

Since the seat of the Church of the Prophets was moved to Castille in 1257, the country has been the example for piety in modern Théah. It brings the Castillians a great amount of political influence, which garners Castille additional diplomatic posts in all the major cities of the world. Along with those benefits came a great responsibility—to uphold the blessed image of the Prophets, and act in accordance with the many edicts of their Church.

It has not been easy. Since the time of the Third Prophet, the Church’s stance on forgiveness and mercy has shifted. As the years passed, that stance shifted even more. Finally, within the last ten years, the gathering threat of the Inquisition has turned into a storm. Castille is held firmly within its grasp, a fact that High Inquisitor Verdugo does not want to change any time soon.

The Vaticine Church is the center of learning in Théah. At least, it used to be. But in recent years, the Inquisition has taken hold of the Church, transforming it from the hub of education into a hub of fear and violence. The Church actively seeks out heretics to convert or kill, and these days, questioning the Inquisition makes you a heretic.

That isn’t to say there are no good men and women in the Church. On the contrary, most of the faithful are good people, adhering to the virtues and values the Church once taught. It’s the officials who have corrupted the Church’s message. And as a good Castillian, one of your primary duties is restoring the Holy Mother Church back to her former glory.



Names

In addition to a given name, such as Rodrigo or Estrella, a Castillian also has one or more “bynames,” any of which can be used or dropped.

The first kind of byname is the patronymic: a name derived from your father, mother or another relative. For example, if your name is Selena and your father’s name is Gustavo, you could be known as Selena de Gustavo.

The second kind of byname is the locative: a name derived from where you were born. You could be Estrella del Río, or “Estrella of the River.” Or Rodrigo de Alamilla, or “Rodrigo from the town of Alamilla.”

Castillian names can become quite long, adding bynames as you go. Traditional Castillian names can have as many as three or four bynames. For example, a Castillian may have the name, “Estrella Carmela de Fernández del Río.”

Common Male Names: Alonso, Andrés, Baltasar, Benito, Carlos, Diego, Domingo, Esteban, Felipe, Gaspar, Héctor, Jaime, Juan, Lucas, Miguel, Rodrigo, Sancho, Sebastián, Tomás

Common Female Names: Andrea, Ángela, Beatriz, Catalina, Clara, Constantina, Cristina, Floriana, Francisca, Inés, Isabel, Juliana, Lucía, Luisa, María, Quiteria, Sancha, Susana, Úrsula, Yolanda

Attitudes

Castillians are extremely proud, and, of course, feel they have a right to be. The most civilized and educated culture in Théah, they are the greatest fighters, the greatest poets, the greatest lovers...it isn’t blind pride: a Castillian proves her worth every moment of every day. Honor demands it.

Castillians can also hold very long grudges. Their loss to the Avalon navy still stokes dark fires in the heart, but only because the Avalonians did not face their inevitable defeat with honor, and instead used underhanded tactics. An honest defeat is an opportunity to demonstrate honor. When bested by the sword, a Castillian does not give excuses, but admits his loss with dignity and grace. Likewise, after defeating an honorable opponent, mercy is the proper Castillian response.

But a villain without dignity or honor deserves nothing but contempt and a quick, cold death delivered by a skilled Castillian hand.

Diversity in Théah

The biggest difference between the people of Théah and the people of Europe is diversity. The Vaticine Church teaches that all men and women are equal in the eyes of the Creator, regardless of where they were born and what they look like. Because of this difference, cultural migration has occurred with far greater regularity in Théah than Europe. That means a wider degree of people born in one country living in another.

Nations still have a general identity, but exceptions are everywhere. Most importantly, the Théans do not see them as exceptions. Were you born and raised in Inismore? Then, you’re Inish. Were you born and raised in Ussura? Then, you’re Ussuran.

While Théah is far from a cultural melting pot, there are those who have lived in the Nations for generations who are descendants of people from faraway lands. You can find every skin tone in every Nation.

Eisen

"Our land may be mud, but it's our mud." That's the attitude of Eisen Heroes. All around them is ruined, but for the Eisen, that just means an opportunity to rebuild. The Eisen spirit cannot be ground to dust. It can only be pounded down into mud. And from that, they can rebuild. And rebuild.

The Eisen don't know the meaning of the word "capitulate." They will fight until there is nothing left to fight for. And mud is worth fighting for. It has their blood and their breath. And they will die fighting for it.

An entire Nation of veterans. War-weary and ready to lay down arms. But the war isn't over yet. Montaigne and Castille may have gone, but they left the war behind them. Except now, it's a war against a different enemy. An enemy of shadow and no true form.

Appearance

Eisen Heroes, both men and women, are typically larger than life—metaphorically and literally. They typically have blond hair and light eyes with pale skin. Muscular and thick frames are common.

Because the land is in such poverty, Eisen clothing is often very modest and practical. Most clothes are made to last: heavy leather, heavy cotton and thick buttons. Tall boots to navigate the treacherous terrain, and thick gloves for the cold winter nights. Heavy cloaks to keep the rain off your head. Also, an iron Prophet's Cross around the neck. That's essential in Eisen.

Typical Professions

Everyone in Eisen—soldier or otherwise—is a veteran of the War of the Cross. When an army marches across your cornfield, you learn how to defend yourself fast. Also, the transformation of the countryside into a living nightmare has encouraged the learning of Hexenwerk...for good and evil.

Religion

Eisen is decidedly Objectivist. The Movement began in Eisen after King Franz II protected its founder, and since then, the Nation has been glad to be free from the shackles of the Vaticine Church.

Names

Most Eisen have three names: a first name, a surname and an *ehrenname*, or "name of honor." The surname passes down from the child's father, as most family names do. Lastly, the *ehrenname* is given to the child to honor a friend or relative of the parents. Typically, it is the honored person's first name. For an Eisen to name his first-born child after a friend is the greatest compliment he can give. In rare cases, men have received a woman's name as their *ehrenname*, and vice versa. While this can be somewhat amusing, laughing at an Eisen's *ehrenname* is a deadly insult.

When an Eisen introduces himself, he states his first name, his *ehrenname*, and then his surname. For instance, if a man introduces himself as "Gregor Friedrich Damaske," he is saying that his first name is Gregor, his surname is Damaske, and his *ehrenname* is Friedrich.

Common Male Names: Adrian, Bernhard, Dirk, Erich, Gustav, Hans, Josef, Kurt, Lorenz, Max, Oliver, Philip, Reinhard, Rolf, Stefan, Volker, Wenzel, Willi, Xavier

Common Female Names: Anna, Cordula, Cornelia, Dora, Eva, Gabriele, Ingrid, Janina, Kirstin, Lena, Margrit, Mona, Nina, Ruth, Sigrid, Silvia, Tina, Ursula

Attitudes

Eisen are protective of their homeland. They see their heritage as a mark of pride. An Eisen never runs. Not even in the face of ultimate horror. Then again, an Eisen never starts a fight she doesn't think she can finish. That's because Eisen think and act in highly practical ways.

When your entire country is broken, you can't risk waste.

Hexenwerk is a problem. Some see it as a necessary evil while others see it as just plain evil, exacerbating the problem. Yes, there are good men and women using it, but how much longer can they do so without risking corruption? On the other hand, the use of Hexenwerk may be the most powerful tool the Eisen have for combating the horrors unleashed after the War of the Cross. There are no good answers.

Montaigne

Liberté. Égalité. Fraternité. These three words are key to understanding the Montaigne character. Freedom, equality and fraternity. But there's another word equally important to understanding the Montaigne: panache. It's a desire to stand out, to be unique, to have a voice in the world. That is the chief quality of the Montaigne people that makes them who they are.

Montaigne is a nation divided into two distinct peoples: the rich and the poor. Its King—who calls himself “*l'Empereur du Monde*”—sits in a palace of wealth and power, selfishly keeping it to himself while those around him suffer and starve. Most of the wealthy ignore the extreme poverty that surrounds the richest parts of Montaigne, but there are those in the noble class who seek to remediate the suffering of the poor, though the problem is an epidemic.

Appearance

The Montaigne Hero does not have a “typical look.” Montaigne is a diverse nation with different appearances based on regional stereotypes. Black hair, blonde hair, and brown hair are common depending on where you look. Most Montaigne have blue or green eyes. Because of the Ifri Migration in 1554, some have darker skin and thick, curly hair.

Nobles tend to wear wigs, face paint, and makeup, dress in extravagant clothing, and use a great deal of perfume—both men and women. The common folk dress far more modestly, but still try to maintain a prideful appearance. Clothes are more functional—made from thicker and sturdier materials—with a distinguished flair.

Typical Professions

In the wake of the War of the Cross, and because l'Empereur enjoys being surrounded by soldiers, many of Montaigne's young men and women have military training. Many of Montaigne's farmers and ranchers are retired military, informally training their sons and daughters in swordplay, hoping they may make a living in the big city as a member of l'Empereur's guards, the Musketeers. L'Empereur does not have much of a navy—he sees little direct profit in it and much risk—although there are some Montaigne sailors who have convinced him to give them a letter of marque.

Religion

On the surface, Montaigne is a Vaticine Nation. However, l'Empereur considers himself a philosopher and an atheist, a stance that allows him to “experiment with any morality I choose.” He considers those who believe in “the Vaticine superstition” to be childish and churlish. Thus, most of the court professes themselves to be “philosophers” as well, even if they are secretly faithful.

For the common folk, however, faith is as personal as style. Most Montaigne are faithful but express their faith in her own way. They attend mass and worship together, but the Montaigne believe everyone must find God in their own way.

Names

Like the rest of Montaigne society, naming revolves around one's social status. The proper names of nobility are preceded by a title, then the first name and surname, followed by the word “de” and the province they govern. The clergy are not bound to the naming process of the nobility; most, in fact, lose their birth name when they take their station. Members of the merchant class have a first and last name, while the peasants have very simple names.

Common Male Names: Ambroise, Blaise, Cédric, Daniel, Denis, Eugène, Félix, Gérard, Guy, Henri, Jacques, Jules, Luc, Marc, Martin, Pierre, Rémy, Sébastien, Victor, Zacharie

Common Female Names: Allette, Andrée, Arielle, Blanche, Camille, Cosette, Dominique, Estelle, Francine, Georgette, Henriette, Irène, Julie, Lydie, Nicole, Philippine, Roseline, Sylvie, Vivianne

Attitudes

The Montaigne strive to be the best at what they do. The best carpenter, the best vintner, the best duelist. If you don't try to be the best at what you do, you're not worthy of respect or honor. Unfortunately, the monarchy has fallen into decadence and frivolity, driving the rest of the country into mediocrity.

The people of Montaigne are not oblivious to this plight, but feel there is little they can do. Regicide? Out of the question. But if “l'Empereur” will not step aside for the good of his people, what kind of choice does that leave a Hero?

The Sarmatian Commonwealth

In a world where kings and queens decide the fates of Nations, the Commonwealth is the exception. In the Commonwealth, every citizen has a voice. Anyone can walk into the Sejm (the Sarmatian Senate) and speak or vote. That fact alone makes the Commonwealth different. But there's so much more.

Sarmatism—the nostalgic wave of chivalry that's flooded over the Commonwealth—is an understanding that the nobility have a *duty* to protect the common folk. This wave started in the noble class, but has moved down to the commoners, as well. A sense that we truly are all in this together and we have a responsibility to each other. The duties of a knight are what are expected from *every citizen*.

But on the fringes of civilization, the old ways still linger. Old voices making promises of power. Of course, the temptation to beat the devil always swims in your mind. Of course you can beat the devil at her own game. Can Sarmatism survive these ancient temptations? Your choices will answer that question.

Appearance

Your Sarmatian Hero is either from western Rzeczpospolita or eastern Curonia. Both peoples tend to be dark haired and pale, although there are many who have darker features because of their proximity to the Crescent Empire and Ifri. They have average height for Théans, although tend to be stockier: a little weight helps with the long winters.

Rzeplitan Heroes are more likely to adopt the chivalric dress of the Sarmatian craze: long coats (usually crimson), a distinguishing sash, and a saber. Curonians are keen to distinguish themselves from their western neighbors, choosing to wear more traditional clothing—practical trousers, thick boots, and a heavy shirt—for both working men and women.

Typical Professions

A resurgence in chivalry has led to a boom in the Sarmatian military—not to mention the fact the army can now show up at the Sejm and vote for or against military action. The elite force in the Sarmatian military is the winged hussars, a regiment of cavalry famous all across Théah. With literal wings strapped to the back of their armor, they are a terrifying sight and a terrifying force.

Religion

The Vaticine Church has gained some sway in the west part of the Commonwealth, but none at all in the east. The Rzeczpospolitans have embraced the message of the Prophets, but still understand some powers are older than the Church.

Meanwhile, in Curonia, the Vaticine priests can't get a single foothold. They have no official religion—only wise men and women who help guide villages through dark times and help celebrate the bright times.

Names

The two Nations of the Commonwealth have their own languages, and thus, their own distinct names.

Female Rzeczpospolita Names: Adelajda, Czesława, Dorota, Eligia, Gracja, Hanna, Ignacja, Janina, Józefa, Mirosława, Urszula, Zyta

Male Rzeczpospolita Names: Andrzej, Bartłomiej, Dawid, Gawęł, Ignacy, Jarosław, Lesław, Maciej, Przemysław, Roch, Zygmunt

Female Curonian Names: Agnè, Danutè, Emilija, Estera, Gabija, Jelena, Kamilè, Katrè, Laima, Lèja, Lilija, Svajonè, Ugnè, Viltautè

Male Curonian Names: Bronius, Darijus, Erikas, Herkus, Ignas, Jurgis, Kasparas, Mykolas, Nojus, Petras, Pilypas, Žydrūnas

Attitudes

There are really two Sarmatian Heroes: the Western Hero and the Eastern Hero. The Western Hero is wrapped up in the Golden Liberty and Sarmatian nostalgia. He believes his Nation is moving forward, and in some ways, is more progressive than any other. After all, in what other Nation can a farmer say “No” to a king? He believes in chivalry, justice and mercy.

The Eastern Hero sees the virtues in Sarmatism—and may even practice them in her own way—but she also understands the world isn't as bright as her Western friend believes it to be. She is more practical, relies on deception when necessary—after all, you have to *trick* the devil to beat him—but still has her mind on helping others whenever she can. She's just willing to use skills her Western counterpart may see as...less honorable.



Ussura

In Ussura, the people co-exist with the Leshiye, nature spirits who grant magical powers to those who serve Ussura's common folk. Those who have these gifts are known as *bogatyrs*, riding through Ussura's vast landscape, serving as errant knights, righting wrongs, and dealing with brigands, bandits and other threats.

However, Ussura's current troubles may be too great for even the *bogatyrs* to face. The Nation is under the reign of two rulers: Ilya Sladivgorod Nikolovich and Ketheryna Fischler Dimitritova. Both claim to be the true rulers of Ussura, the rightful Czar and Czarina, respectively.

As an Ussuran Hero, you will have to choose which monarch you follow. Ilya wants to bring change to Ussura, but a gradual one. Ketheryna's progress has been much more successful, but also much more ruthless. Will you kneel before Czar Ilya or will you kneel before Czarina Ketheryna?

Appearance

Ussura is a huge place, and other than the typical warm furs, the diversity of appearance can be startling. Ussuran nobility tends to look like the rest of eastern Théah: tall, blonde, pale-skinned with angular features. The rest of Ussura, on the other hand, does not. The people are dark-haired with tanned skin. The Khazari, a huge nomadic horse tribe inhabiting the northernmost parts of Ussura, show their non-Théan ancestry with almond-shaped eyes and straight, black hair. In short, other than the winter gear, there is no "standard Ussuran" appearance.

The Nation is simply too diverse for such simple caricatures.

Typical Professions

Ussuran Heroes are more varied than any other Nation. There are more farmers in Ussura than anywhere else, more carpenters, more blacksmiths, and just about any profession you can imagine. Yet there are not many sailors. Ussura has no warm water ports and its only access to the sea—the North—is also frozen for most of the year.

Religion

Although the Vaticine influence crossed Ussura's borders, like the Sarmatian Commonwealth and Avalon, Ussura's Old Faith still lingers. In fact, it is still very strong. That's probably because the entities the Ussurans worshipped in the old days are still around, still giving blessings to the worthy.

The Ussurans never officially joined the Vaticine Church, but instead, developed a Church of the Prophets on their own co-existing with the Vaticine. The Ussuran Orthodox Church combines teachings of the First Prophet with the native faith of Ussura.

Names

In Ussura, family names may be long, convoluted and peculiar. When a common muzhik's child is born, he or she receives a first (or "Prophet's") name, such as Pavel.

Each child's last name is a modification of the father's name (in this case, Ivan). The ending -ova (or -ovna) on a surname denotes a daughter, such as Ivanova (daughter of Ivan). In a similar fashion, the name ending -ov denotes a first son: Ivanov. The ending -vich denotes a second, or lesser, son.

Common Male Names: Aleksei, Alexandr, Boris, Dimitri, Danil, Erema, Fyodor, Georgi, Ignati, Ilya, Kiril, Mikhail, Nikita, Pyotyr, Sergei, Taras, Timofey, Vasily, Vladimir, Yevgeni

Common Female Names: Afafya, Anna, Avdotia, Darya, Ekaterina, Elizaveta, Galina, Irina, Ksenya, Larisa, Ludmila, Lyuba, Marya, Nina, Natalya, Natasha, Nastasya, Olga, Sofia, Tamara, Yelena, Yevpraskia, Zhanna

Attitudes

Many Théans view Ussurans as less sophisticated throwbacks to an earlier century. For the most part, they're right. The typical Ussuran can't read, nor sees any use in learning how. Ussurans know what they need to know to survive, and that's all they need to know. But many within the Nation see the need to catch up with progress. Théah is changing, and changing fast, and if Ussura doesn't keep up, all that technology and knowledge will put Ussura in the Stone Age.



Vestenmennavenjar

They were once the most feared pirates in the north seas: the Northmen, sailing south from their frozen lands, taking what they wanted, leaving what they didn't need, calling upon the arcane power of their ancient runes. But then, the people of Vestenmennavenjar (VES-ten-mahn-NAH-ven-yar) underwent a change. In fact, you might call it a transformation.

Over the centuries, the ruling noble class—the jarls—controlled Vestenmennavenjar, but during the 15th Century, the noble class found itself short of funds. At the same time, the merchant class—the carls—needed protection against pirates and bandits. The carls banded together to create an informal confederation to protect their shipments and investments.

Now, the entire world is bound together by this confederation of crafters and merchants, bound by a common currency: the Guilder. Used by every Nation—save Vodacce—the Guilder represents Vesten power. Vesten merchants still call upon the power of their ancestors and the runes, but now they may also call upon the power of a worldwide economy they hold in their hands.

Appearance

The Vesten are tall with wide shoulders, both men and women. Vesten women are taller than most Théan men. They have blonde or red hair and striking ice blue eyes. Their skin is pale, their features round. Men wear long, braided beards and women wear their hair in long braids. Their skin is often adorned with tattoos.

As for clothing, Vesten men and women are often seen in the best fashions. Silks from the Crescent Empire, leather corsets and jerkins, and tall boots. And a recent distinction, almost unique in Vesten: something called a “sugarloaf hat.”

Typical Professions

The Vestenmennavenjar are the most successful merchants in the world...unless you speak to someone from Vodacce. But before they were merchants, they were warriors: a part of their culture that has never faded into obscurity. Every Vesten merchant wears a sword and knows how to use it.

Religion

The Vestenmennavenjar put a kind face toward the Vaticine Church, even going so far as to allow the building of cathedrals and schools. Education is important in Vesten, but the teaching of the faith of the Prophets generally falls on polite but deaf ears.

Vestenmennavenjar know the truth: the Allfather spoke the runes to create the world. And while the Church of the Prophets has a presence in Vesten, even the priests know their pews are filled with quiet, polite heathens.

Names

A Vestenmennavenjar's true name is the one given to him at birth by his parents. Sons and daughters are commonly named after a beloved relative and not the father or mother. The child's surname is typically the father's name plus the patronymic or matronymic additions of –sen or –datter.

The Vesten trade name is for strangers, foreigners or those who have not yet earned their trust. A Vesten chooses his trade name when he comes of age (usually around 10 or 12). Vesten are known to change their trade names from time to time.

Common Male True Names: Alfgeir, Bragi, Brøn, Eldgrim, Gellir, Hägin, Hallbjörn, Hrafn, Jön, Ketil, Magnus, Olvöld, Reinn, Serk, Sigurd, Solmünd, Thørfinn, Thrاند, Ulf, Velëif

Common Female True Names: Asgerd, Asny, Bera, Dalla, Grøa, Gudrid, Hrafnhild, Ingibjörg, Jofrid, Kadlin, Ljüfa, Osk, Rannvëig, Sæun, Sigrid, Thørhild, Ulfeid, Vigdis, Yngvild, Yr

Attitudes

Part of Vestenmennavenjar sees the world as nothing more than victims—we call these people Villains. But others see the Vendel League as an opportunity to build something incredible. “A rising tide lifts all boats” may as well be a Vestenmennavenjar proverb; it was a sentiment before this transformation and it has only been encouraged by the success of the Vendel League.

They see investment in education, roads, clean water and law enforcement as improvement for *all*, and since “I” am included in “all,” I must benefit as well.



Vodacce

The Vodacce recognize one fundamental truth about the world: wealth is power and power is wealth. Ignore this fact at your own peril. And if you think a perfect stranger is going to play by the rules to make things easier for you, then you deserve everything you've got coming to you.

What does it mean to be a Vodacce Hero? It means that you must, to a certain extent, play by its rules. Can you change Vodacce? Perhaps. Its structure is much more fragile than anyone will admit. The scales are perfectly balanced. Tip them, even a little, and the whole thing may come toppling down.

Appearance

Due to their proximity to the Crescent Empire and the continent of Ifri, Vodacce appearance varies more than any other Théan Nation. Skin tone varies from pale to dark; hair can be straight blonde or curly black.

Fashion is always expensive, relying on exotic dyes to create purple, crimson and black. The Vodacce look for clothing that emphasizes masculine and feminine characteristics. Swords and sword belts are common among men and women, but mostly men.

Married women—especially Fate Witches—are expected to dress modestly, however. Black dresses with veils to hide their eyes. Looking into a married woman's eyes is not only considered bad luck, but can be seen as an insult to her husband, and thus, result in a duel. Vodacce's courtesans, on the other hand, dress in elaborate costumes, wearing many colors and decorative masks. They are walking, talking celebrations, advertising with every step they take.

Typical Professions

The men of Vodacce have only one ambition: power. Acquired through deception, manipulation, diplomacy, intrigue or the sword. Many men take the profession of merchant for that very reason. Merchants need bodyguards, and thus, the proliferation of swords on Vodacce's streets.

Women have little choice in their destiny, especially those who can manipulate fate. *Sorte Strega*—Fate Witches—often find themselves married to men they never met after spending their childhood learning how to alter his fortunes, although some find a way

to escape. Women without sorcerous gifts can make their own fortunes as courtesans, selling the illusion of love to the wealthy and powerful, thus earning wealth and power for themselves.

Religion

On the surface, it appears Vodacce is strictly devoted to the Vaticine faith. In reality, the Princes pay lip service to the faith while observing their own morality. Many of the peasant class are still truly Vaticine—the Church began in Vodacce, after all.

Names

Vodacce nobles still derive their names from two of the three Old Republic senators who founded their nation: Gallili, Lorenzo and Delaga, who became Vodacce's first king. Nobles today trace their line back to one or more of these senators, and their names reflect this, ending in the same vowel as the original senator's name.

Common Male Names: Alberto, Antonio, Carlo, Ernesto, Felice, Fortunato, Gianni, Giuseppe, Leon, Marco, Modesto, Pietro, Rinaldo, Rolando, Savino, Siro, Timeo, Toni, Umberto, Vito

Common Female Names: Alesio, Angelina, Clarissa, Crescenza, Elena, Fiora, Iolanda, Lea, Luisa, Miranda, Natalia, Paolao, Penelope, Rachele, Rebecca, Regina, Sandra, Valeria, Veronica, Viola

Attitudes

The Vodacce have a practical view of the world. They know how it works, why it works, and how the rules can be exploited. Some exploit them for the benefit of others; some exploit them for the benefit of themselves. That separates the Heroes from the Villains.

A Vodacce Hero knows how to think and act like a Villain. He knows the game is rigged, knows when to bend the rules, and knows when to break them. Almost every Vodacce Hero not living in Vodacce has either been exiled or got out when the fire got too hot. The fire of revenge—vendetta—burns in their blood and repressing those dark desires requires a nearly inhuman will.



Life in Théah

The Seven Seas

There are seven seas surrounding Théah. The first, the Trade Sea, is found around Avalon and Vesten. It is known for its shallow waters and the unnerving tendency of the tides to make reefs appear to move. Aside from this phenomenon, the Trade Sea is relatively safe.

The second sea is found near Avalon and Montaigne, and is called the Widow's Sea. A healthy population of sharks and sirens make the Widow's Sea more treacherous than the Trade Sea, not to mention the sudden fog banks and inexplicable appearances of a phenomenon known as "sea mirages." Often, ships are sighted, only to disappear as the viewer draws nearer, like a mirage in a desert.

The third sea is just off the coast of Castille, and is often referred to as "the Vaticine Gulf" or La Boca del Cielo. Its deep, cold waters make an ideal breeding ground for the whales that swim there, protected by the fearsome subspecies known as leviathans. This sea is also thick with pirates, notably the Brotherhood of the Coast.

The fourth sea is called the Numanari Approach, so named after the Numanari Islands to the south. It lies to the southeast of Vodacce, near the Crescent Empire. For centuries, Church-maintained garrisons on the Vodacce keys prevented access to this sea, but the newly independent Numa has declared the Approach to be open to all, reviving trade between Théah and the Empire...and attracting pirates aplenty.

The fifth sea sits between Vesten and Eisen, called "The Maw." It got its name from old Vestenmennavenjar traders who, when they saw the first accurate maps, believed their land looked like the head of a dragon. Hence, the name. It is one of the most highly guarded seas in Théah, thanks to the abundant coins of Vestenmennavenjar's Vendel League. The Vendel League hires mercenary ships to guard the waters—most of them ex-pirates paid off to hunt their former brethren.

The sixth sea is known as the Avalon Strait—or the Montaigne Strait, depending on which side you happen to be on. Traffic between Avalon and Montaigne is highly guarded by Elaine's Sea Dogs. The Avalon Strait is the fastest route from Southern Théah to its Northern waters, but it also requires "sailing taxes" enforced by Avalon ships. Sailing all the way around the Avalon Isles adds days to your trip... and frequently puts you in the direct line of "pirates" from both Avalon and Vestenmennavenjar. Best to just pay the tax and get on your way.

Lastly, many sailors speak of a place where the sun and moon shine in the same sky, where the stars go backward and the waters turn to silver. This "seventh sea" is the source of much discussion within Théah's scholarly community. Sailors tell stories of sailing the silvery waters for days with no sign of land in sight until finally, the sky and waters suddenly snap back and the ship is thousands of miles off course.

Théah's Courts

Across Théah, while the peasants toil in the fields and the merchants trade at the stands, as duelists assume their stances and soldiers advance at one another across open fields, a different kind of war rages within the resplendent forums of Théah's nobles. It is a ceaseless game of polite intrigue, where a slip of the tongue can forfeit a province and the wrong gesture can end a career. It is the world of Théan politics, and it is not a pretty place.

Nations employ courtiers and ambassadors for many reasons, primarily to prevent wars. With all the constant—and often unintentional—slights committed between Nations at this point, it becomes almost essential for courtiers to actively pursue peace at court to prevent the outbreak of open hostilities.

The other primary reasons for courts in Théah are power brokering, arranging marriages and gaining favor with other nobles. After all, a good party always leaves visitors in happy spirits—and less likely to cause turmoil.

The Duelist's Guild

Over the last fifty years, dueling became a source of great controversy. Some Nations were beginning to take steps toward outlawing it altogether. But in the winter of 1644, the Duelist's Guild was born.

The Duelist's Guild is just like any other of Théah's Guilds: you cannot become a blacksmith without joining the Blacksmith's Guild and you cannot be a duelist without joining the Duelist's Guild.

The laws regarding dueling in Théah are complicated, but can be summed up as: only a member of the Duelist's Guild can challenge someone to a duel.

Yet despite the law, many continue to duel illegally, meeting at dusk or dawn on the outskirts of a city to draw swords and reclaim their honor. The Duelist's Guild looks quite unfavorably on such events; after all, who will pay them to duel if any fool with a sword can claim the honor?

The Guild has representation all across Théah in the form of Guildhouses. Most duels occur within a Guildhouse—another way to evade the watchful eye of the law—in front of witnesses and seconds. Every Guildhouse would deny that they permit illegal duels, but for the right price arrangements can sometimes be made.

The Duel

There are two types of duels in Théah: those to first blood and those to the death. A duel to the first blood continues only until one of the Duelists has been hit and suffers a wound. Most duels are to first blood. Only a very serious offense justifies a duel to the death.

As noted already, only members of the Duelist's Guild are legally entitled to challenge others to a duel. Everyone else does so in violation of the law and can expect a visit from a representative of the Guild if word of the challenge gets out. However, most Duelists are more than happy to issue a challenge on behalf of a noble and then let the noble fight the duel personally. They collect the same fee with no personal risk, and the noble may fight his own duel.

Honor

Modern Théan concepts of honor descend from the classical ideals of chivalry immortalized in the old Avalon romances of knights and kings. These notions are dying; the sun is setting on chivalry for the last time. Those who still cling to these ideals are known as “gentles,” or, more cynically, “romantics.”

The average Théan looks out for himself first, his friends and family second, and everyone else not at all. This doesn't mean that Théah is constantly immersed in schemes and plots, only that most people have better things to worry about, such as getting enough food to eat and making sure their roof will keep out the rain. Chivalry is a pastime for those rich enough to afford it.

But all hope is not yet lost. Romantics are the last people in Théah to conduct business with a handshake and a spoken promise before a contract—that alone should win them the admiration of even the strongest cynics. There are those who still see them as shining knights on white steeds, and prefer to take all their business to the few who remain.

A Gentle's Word

A gentle does not break his word. The first time he breaks a promise, it brings into question any promise he makes in the future. On the other hand, only a lowborn dog would hold a gentle to any pledge made while he was in his cups, though a gentle would probably honor it regardless.

If a gentle breaks her word, the repercussions upon her business and lifestyle would be disastrous. Her friends would cease to associate with her, her business associates would abandon her or start demanding written contracts for everything and her income would dwindle to nothing as her reputation was dragged through the mud.

Reputation

A gentle's reputation is one of his most prized possessions. He will go to extreme lengths to prevent it from being sullied. Anyone who besmirches his good name can expect a challenge to the blood; anyone who publically disgraces him, a duel to the death. His word is tied to his reputation, and if one is harmed, the other suffers as well.

The Vaticine Church of the Prophets

“The Creator is all around you; his face is hidden in his works.”

— *The Book of the Prophets,*
Volume I, Verse Seven

The Reformed Vaticine Church (VAH-tih-seen; “vaticine” meaning “prophet,” therefore “the Prophets’ Church”) is one of the most powerful and influential organizations in Théah. Beginning with the first Prophet who spoke to the Old Republic so long ago, it has amassed its own army, developed a system of education, and instigated most of the world’s technological and philosophical advancements.

However, the Church has fallen under harsh criticism in recent times. Accusations of corruption and greed have caused many to doubt its authority, and even its veracity. The Objectionist Movement that began in Eisen over one hundred and fifty years ago has changed the Church forever; almost a third of its flock has turned to the Objectionists for guidance. It is a hard time for the Church, but many within its structure would argue that it has brought these troubles on itself, and that they could have even been avoided, if only the Cardinals had listened.

The Message and the Messenger

The message of the Vaticine Church is simple. The Creator made the world as a riddle for humanity to unravel. The closer to solving the riddle mankind comes, the closer he comes to understanding the mind of the Creator.

Credo (“What I believe”)

Shortly after the death of the First Prophet, Emperor Corantine adopted belief in the Prophets as his Empire’s official religion. He also demanded there be a “credo”—a unified expression of faith. In 325 AV, the Corantinian Convention put together this credo and presented it to the Emperor.

The credo consists of six Articles of Faith, tenets that all believers hold to be true. The faithful memorize the Articles and recite them during Mass and all other Church activities. In order to understand the Church, one must understand its credo.

The Credo

*We believe in one true God, the Creator
Almighty, Maker of Paradise and the World,
and of all things visible and invisible.*

We believe in one holy and prophetic Church.

*And in its Prophet, who spoke the Creator’s
message for man and his salvation; who fore-
told the coming of three further Prophets; who
delivered himself unto his enemies; and who was
martyred for us in the days of Augustin Lauren.*

*And in the Second Prophet, who bore a staff;
who spoke the Creator’s message, and deliv-
ered men from evil; and who was betrayed by
the unfaithful and was martyred for us.*

*And in the Third Prophet, who bore a sword of
pure flame; who spoke the Creator’s message;
divided the righteous from the unrighteous; and
made the way clear for him who shall follow.*

*And in the Fourth Prophet, who shall bear a
balanced hourglass; who shall be announced by
trumpets; and the dead shall awaken and he shall
reign in the visible and invisible world forevermore.*

The Hieros and the Church

Aside from a Prophet, the most powerful leader in the Vaticine Church is the Hierophant, and the whole of the Prophets’ Church is known as the Hieros. Until the time of the Third Prophet, the seat of the Vaticine Church resided in Vodacce, and a vast majority of the Hierophants hailed from there until it moved to Castille in the 13th Century. At present, there is no Hierophant. The last woman to hold that title was assassinated by an unknown assailant.

In any region of Théah that recognizes the Prophets, one can find a church. The local church is the center of community: a court for magistrates, a hall for town meetings and the center of a wide variety of festivals and holiday celebrations. It is a place of refuge for the needy, a hospital for the sick and a sanctuary for those who claim to have seen the error of their ways.

The Inquisition

The Inquisition is a secretive order within the Church, created by the Third Prophet following his rise to power, charged with seeking out and destroying sorcery. Inquisitors were answerable only to the Hierophant, and had vast authority over Church procedure. Vaticines were expected to assist them in any way they could. Thanks to their efforts, sorcery in civilized Théah remained underground for many centuries.

Luckily, they were always kept in check by the Hierophant. Each successive leader kept a close eye on the Inquisition, limiting its membership and ensuring that its power never grew beyond control. Overly ambitious Inquisitors would be quietly removed from their positions, which kept the order focused on its duties instead of seeking to control the Church.

Over the centuries, the Church has gradually grown more conservative, giving the Inquisition greater leeway in carrying out its duties. That rising tide crested when the current Hierophant was murdered. Now, the Inquisition is answerable to no one and cannot be stemmed until a new Hierophant is chosen.

Organization and Methods

The Inquisition is organized around a small group of “High Inquisitors”—priests and Bishops charged with fulfilling the Third Prophet’s edicts. They employ a bewildering array of assistants, lackeys and contacts, which they control through loyalty, fear or blackmail. Those willingly involved in the Inquisition’s affairs may hold the title of “Inquisitor” if they wish—a rank beneath the High Inquisitors who command them.

Because the order is ostensibly secret, Inquisitors and High Inquisitors all have normal positions within the Church, masquerading as ordinary priests or mundane agents of Vaticine authority. Their targets are heretics—scholars, sorcerers, Objectionists and anyone who questions the Church’s policies. When they have amassed enough evidence, they strike without warning, using surprise and terror to keep their target confused. Victims are hanged on sight, or burned if the Inquisitors have time; experiments, books and research notes are burned, as well. The Inquisitors then vanish without a trace, leaving cryptic warnings to accompany the bodies.

The Objectionist Reform

In Octavus of 1517, a twenty-eight-year-old monk walked up to the door of his Bishop and nailed a piece of paper upon it. The author was named Mattias Lieber, and within the span of five years, the whole world would know his name.

Lieber’s paper contained a list of inflammatory questions, challenging every notion of Church authority and calling for widespread reform and a fundamental shift in Vaticine philosophy. Lieber denounced his fellows in the presence of the Hierophant, demanding an explanation for “the Church’s inexcusable crimes and decadence.” The Hierophant excommunicated Lieber on the spot, demanding his death, but he was smuggled out of Castille by King Franz II and returned to Eisen.

In the safety of his homeland, Lieber used a new invention, the printing press, to spread his news. He also translated the *Book of the Prophets* into Low Eisen, and distributed them throughout the country. Through his efforts, a new religious movement called Objectionism slowly spread, first to Eisen and then to the entire world. Within a few years, it had reached every corner of civilized Théah.

Objectionist Philosophy

Objectionism embraces the same basic ideals as the Vaticines, but with key differences. Under it, the Church no longer acts as an arbitrator between Theus and humanity: no one can interpose or “filter” the teachings of the Creator. Theus is everywhere and therefore needs no human institution to interpret His will. Priests cannot absolve sins; only Theus can. The Church cannot create miracles; only Theus can. Therefore, humanity should appeal directly to Theus for absolution and guidance, not depend upon the Church to do it for them.

They can do this by reading the *Book of the Prophets* and acting on what they read. They can express their faith through charity, hard work and helping others in need of aid. “Theus,” Lieber wrote, “has granted every creature a measure of His grace, which we must use to further His good works.” While the Church can act as a facilitator in this scenario, it cannot claim any absolute authority or interpose itself between Theus and the individual.

Knowledge

With the help of the Vaticine Church, Théans are a little ahead of where our own technological progress was in the mid-17th Century. Unfortunately, with the Inquisition's rise to power, these advancements are in danger of being destroyed. The Inquisition claims that the time of knowledge is past, and that Théans should prepare for the end of the world rather than dabble in useless scientific curiosity.

Archæology

Currently, archæological technology is restricted to shovels, brushes, historical investigations and notepads. The Théans are perfectly capable of sketching the things they discover in the archæological digs across Théah, and they are slowly gaining understanding of these objects. But important artifacts often get destroyed accidentally, or stolen to hang on some private collector's wall.

Architecture and Construction

The Théans have built beautiful cities and enormous cathedrals that stretch up to 400 feet in the air. They possess the secret of making concrete, but they lack the mass production facilities necessary to use it on a large scale. Their roads are cobbled, their roofs are often covered with sheets of tin, and their windows, at least in the bigger cities, are usually made of glass.

Astronomy

The Théans understand that their world, Terra, is a sphere that orbits their sun (which is called Solas), and their moon orbits their world. In addition, they've discovered five other planets that orbit their sun in the same way. There may be more, but their telescopes are too primitive to see them.

Chemistry

An Avalon named Jeremy Cook wrote *The Rational Chemist* in 1661, which established a more rigorous discipline based on the scientific method. In 1662, Cook created the first air pump, an act that should have proven the existence of air. Unfortunately, by that time, the Inquisition was coming to power, and Cook was shot for his heretical research. His work survived only because of the efforts of the Invisible College.

Mathematics

Théan mathematicians have worked out the mysteries of algebra, trigonometry, geometry and the zero. They do not yet possess calculus, but it won't be long in coming. Probability is not yet a rigorous discipline, and, as Verdugo himself said, "Only gamblers would be interested in its results."

Medicine

The Théans understand that careful hygiene during operations leads to a higher survival rate, but they aren't sure why. To treat a gunshot wound, they know to remove the bullet and stitch the wound closed afterwards. They also know to change the bandages on a wound and to boil the bandages to make sure they're clean. They are aware that diseases are spread by sick people, so they keep them quarantined, but have not discovered viruses or bacteria.

The microscope has been around in Théah since 1608. Its inventor, an unknown Vesten, used it to view blood corpuscles, as well as insects and small plants. In addition to its aid in medicine, it has greatly enhanced the fields of biology, botany and entomology.

Natural Philosophy (Physics)

The field of physics has witnessed some startling breakthroughs in the past few years, despite the efforts of the Inquisition. Static electricity was harnessed in 1662 with a small device using a rotating globe of sulphur. María Alvarado, a Castillian scholar, invented the device as part of her university studies; it was the first practical demonstration of static electricity on a large scale.

Navigation

The Théans possess magnetic compasses and astro-labes, but do not yet possess a chronometer that is accurate enough and resistant enough to the moist sea air to allow them to measure longitude.

Weapons and Warfare

Currently, muskets are the weapon of choice in warfare, typically supported by a line of pikemen. The Théans do not yet have rifles, so the accuracy of these guns is less than it could be. In duels of honor, rapiers or other fencing weapons are commonly used, with the saber reserved for brave cavalrymen.

Pirates and Privateers

While hundreds of pirate crews navigate the Seven Seas, five well-known bands of pirates hold the most notoriety. In this guide, we'll discuss three of the five bands.

The Brotherhood of the Coast

Originally a band of desperate pirates and smugglers, the Brotherhood of the Coast formed in response to the ruthless pirate hunters known as the Black Spot Fleet: ruthless pirates, thugs and brigands who were paid to hunt down their own kin by the Castillian nobility.

The first members of Brotherhood, all victims of the Black Spots' relentless crusade, joined forces and signed a charter of mutual protection. Under their First King—the legendary Captain Roberts—the Brotherhood defeated their enemies and reclaimed the seas from the schemes of Castillian nobles. Each Brotherhood ship is now a state unto itself: the crews elect Captains as representatives of a free Republic of Pirates.

Yet all know that their Republic would have scattered to the winds if not for the Gentleman Pirate, Captain Gosse. Famous for his civility, Gosse was elected King of the Pirates after the Devil Jonah himself slew Captain Roberts. Gosse worked tirelessly to build an enduring foundation for the Brotherhood, then retired, making way for Captain Bonaventura to win the necessary votes to become Queen.

Captain Bonaventura—Queen of the Brotherhood of the Coast—has declared war on the world since winning her crown. If the governments of Théah refuse to recognize the Brotherhood, then the Brotherhood will continue to take their boats, their cargo and their lives.

The Buccaneers of La Bucca

A former prison island far off the coast of Castille, La Bucca has become a beacon of liberty for all. The prisoners of La Bucca—now called Buccaneers—stole back their freedom from their jailers when they faked an outbreak of the plague, allowing them to capture the island in the ensuing panic.

Rumors of raiders from the island eventually caused the Castillians, the Vodacce and the Vesten to each send a warship, leading to a four-way stalemate. The

three foreign captains discovered their fresh water supplies unexpectedly gone—some suggest it was sabotaged by sorcery or underhanded legerdemain—and when the leader of the Buccaneers offered the Vodacce, Castillians and Vesten the choice of a treaty or death from thirst, the foreign captains capitulated.

The Buccaneer leader is a man named Allende. Due to some rumored “unusual occurrences,” most believe him to be a sorcerer. For example, one prison guard tells the story of placing a pistol against Allende's chest and pulling the trigger. He saw Allende fall backwards, then get back to his feet, completely unharmed.

Allende and his Buccaneers now welcome all fleets with either friendship or the sword. Any who sight the island are welcome to dock in her safe harbors. They find fresh water, salted pork, unfettered trade in goods and secrets and a host of Buccaneers ready to sign Letters of Marque for any who will hire them. Beyond the horizon of La Bucca, and all over Théah and the New World, those same Buccaneers roam the waves, knives sharp and cannon ready, looking for any ships whose names do not appear on their numerous Letters of Marque.

The Sea Dogs

Operating along the northern and western coasts of Théah, the Sea Dogs focus their attacks on Montaigne and Castillian ships. These pirates sail in small, maneuverable sloops, and never harm Avalon ships. Some suggest there is some connection between these men and Queen Elaine, but she denies sponsorship of the Sea Dogs. The rulers of the other countries are not convinced of her sincerity.

There are several Sea Dogs seemingly acting independently of each other, but the most famous of them is Jeremiah Berek, captain of the Black Dawn. Captain Berek is a dashing, handsome man whose crew would follow him into the Abyss itself. Cynical comments made by other captains suggest that Berek uses Glamour to cultivate this loyalty among his men, but there is no hard evidence of this.

Captain Berek and the other Sea Dogs appeared at the battle with the Castillian Armada. Berek's ingenuity and leadership during the fight contributed immeasurably to the Avalon victory. This only strengthens the claims that he is working for Queen Elaine.

Secret Societies

Secret meetings in dark rooms are as important to Théah's history as the armies who march across her green fields. Her history is spotted with wars, but the most important conflicts are not fought with swords, guns or cannons, but in the shadows with knives and whispers. Those innocent of such activities are both blessed and cursed: blessed because they do not know how their lives are directed by these organizations, and cursed for the very same reason. There have always been clandestine organizations operating behind the scenes. These groups have hidden agendas; while you may never know of their existence, it is guaranteed that they know of yours.

Syrneth Ruins in Théah

Scattered throughout Théah lie the ruins of a society older than humanity, generally known as the Syrne. The ruined cities of this elder race are a treasure haven for men and women willing to risk their safety for the knowledge and riches of the unknown.

The Syrne apparently lived across most of Théah at one time, and partial artifacts appear everywhere from the most distant islands to recently plowed farmers' fields. Well preserved sites are more difficult to come by, but optimistic adventurers continue to search for them.

The Sites

The remains of the Syrne are obvious in some places. Buildings in Montaigne, inhabited for centuries by human beings, were clearly not built by them. They stand tall but impossibly slender, with no means of support. In other parts of Théah, more than a millennium of dust and weather has buried whole cities. Only through extensive excavation have explorers learned anything at all about them.

Along with the natural dangers of this kind of exploration—cave-ins, flooding, poisonous gas—elaborate traps lurk at some locations, ready to strike the unwary. Other areas are homes to unnatural animals not listed in any encyclopedia or travelogue, who attack any hapless adventurer unlucky enough to wander into their lairs.

Théah's Monsters

Legends of terrifying creatures abound on Théah, mostly in wild and uncivilized areas. Most are unintelligent, though some have the capacity for reason.

Ghosts

Ghosts seem to be the lingering spirits of the departed. Often wandering the places they died, ghosts usually look exactly as they did at the instant of death. Some ghosts are believed to interfere with certain types of sorcery in their vicinity. For instance, ghosts spotted in Montaigne will often prevent Porté from working near them.

Sirens

The sirens possess an upper torso similar to a woman's, and the lower body of a fish. They feed almost exclusively on meat, and have a preference for human flesh. Once a sailor is in the water, the sirens quickly swim up to him, emitting a soothing warbling noise. They use their shark-like teeth and sharp nails to tear the sailor apart, gobbling down large chunks of meat, which their necks stretch to accommodate. The keening noise that they make while feeding seems to be a sound of satisfaction or happiness, and has come to be known as the "siren's song." There are few noises a sailor fears more.

Wights

Wights are corpses that have not ceased to move. They disdain the use of weapons, preferring their own filthy talons. In spite of this primitive attitude, they show a fair degree of cleverness, and perhaps even actual reasoning, although they never speak. Wights are encountered near the seas more often than anywhere else.

Other Monsters

Other monsters of note include the drachen, the griffons and the night terrors. None of these beasts are encountered very often—no one has seen a drachen in living memory—and they are poorly understood. It is known that night terrors somehow invade a person's dreams to attack them, and that griffons attack in packs of fifteen to twenty members, but the details of their behavior are so sketchy as to be worthless to the average explorer.