

# DEGENESIS



CARTAGENA



# EDITORIAL

AUTHOR  
Steffen Brand

ILLUSTRATIONS & MAP  
Katharina Niko  
Steffen Brand

DESIGN ELEMENTS  
Steffen Brand  
Downloadable Degeneration Design Pack

PROOFREADING  
Angelica Shilling  
Katharina Niko

DEGENERATION BY  
Christian Günther & Marko Djurdjevic

COLOPHON  
April 11th, 2021; Version 1.06

## UNOFFICIAL DEGENERATION DLC

The following DLC: CARTAGENA is a supplementary product aimed to enhance the depth of the gaming world. Cartagena is set after the culminating events of Black Atlantic in 2598 AD, but can be used with only small changes before that. Nothing contained within this document is official material nor is it linked or overlooked by SIXMOREVODKA.

Consider this document a living document, as it might be slightly edited or expanded with time. Keep an eye on the Colophon above to reference which version you are currently reading.

Degeneration® is™ SIXMOREVODKA Studio GmbH. All rights reserved. The mentioning of or reference to companies and products on the following pages constitutes no copyright violation. All names, titles, characters, texts and illustrations in this book are © SIXMOREVODKA Studio GmbH.  
No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior express permission of the publishers. Character sheets may be copied for personal use only. Printed in the EU.

“

ES UN PALACIO DE  
ELEVADOS MUROS, CUYO TECHO  
SON LAS ESTRELLAS.

[HAZIM AL-QARTAYANNI]

”

# CONTENT

DEGENERATION **CARTAGENA**

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM	04 - 07
CLAN CIELOS	07 - 11
THE CITY	12 - 15
FALSE KINGS	16 - 21
PLOTHOOKS	22 - 23



# THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

Glistening waves rippled upon the shores. Their steady ebb and flow conducted a rhythmic dance of the reeds in the evening light. The air carried the smell of salt and lead from the Mediterranean Sea. Home. The late fishers rolled up their nets after another day of hard labor.

Then the rhythm broke. Large ships were spotted on the open waters. The noise of their outboard engines was unsettling. They were closing in fast. White masked warriors carelessly trampled down the braided weirs when they made landfall.

The Scourgers were as brutal as conquerors needed to be here, but the people they met did not falter. An unstoppable force met an immovable people. The collision caused the shores to run red with blood in the flaring light of the burning ships and dhows.

After one fateful day and night, their livelihood was but mere ashes. But Cartagena would not break.

The Scourgers dragged Ranai III, the city's beloved leader, from the Palacio into the streets, down to the harbors. A thousand citizens stood helpless; the Scourgers knew their craft. At the fishing port, the whip cracked. They told her she should give up the city, they had been conquered. No answer. The whip cracked again. Not a single word. Again.

When she dropped dead after uncounted lashes, Amarey, the commander of the Scourger forces, looked up into the faces of the citizens. With a shiver, he recalls the utter silence. This split second seemed to last eons. A thousand pairs of eyes stared into his. The more he looked, the more he saw only pairs of pale white lights reflected in those tearful

eyes. A mirror of the clear night sky.

No one commanded the masses to bow. When they did, he knew: The city was theirs, but this was no victory.



Cartagena, locals they say today, remains the only free city of Hybrispania despite being conquered. Africa would refuse this arrogant claim, but in some sense they are right. Far off the main routes, the first wave crashed brutally onto the shores of Murcia, even this far away from Al-Andalus. Those on the frontlines claim the Cartagenians still haven't seen the horrors: families torn apart, wailing children who can't grasp the situation, and the dead lining

the streetsides. They were wrong, of course. Everyone has seen a different face of the same fate.

Aloof from the rest of Hybrispanian society, Cartagena always had to stand for itself. Freedom demands intrepidity here. Being open to the world means that either you swarm out to deal with others, or someone else rushes in. When defending the city proved futile, they pulled back. The motto became "Bend or Break". Where the rest of Hybrispania scatters and chafes in skirmishes, the people of Cartagena endure the whip and circumnavigate their oppression as long as they must.

A high price.

But every inch that bows without breaking will snap back with even greater force at the right moment in time.





## LAMBECH'S CONCESSION

Eight weeks later, Tripol. The trading routes to the cities of Hybrispania weren't exactly what he would call a buyer's market. Lambech's concession was expensive, but in the end he outbid the smirking competition. Resentful moneybags, he thought to himself. Lambech opened his books and his finger shakily brushes over the little indentations his pen burrowed into the paper. His mind wandered off and he shut out all outside noises. A deep breath. This nearly cost him everything he had. A gamble, and his stake was his own ruin.

Lambech is in a bind: Tunis, the city where he resides, is shaken and neigh incessable due to a slave revolt. His last reserves at Tripol at least allow him a shot to turn Cartagena into something that can get him back his investment, get some money flowing, and generate the necessary funds and the opportunity to combine all his fighters where he needs them. When he first visited Cartagena in person, he found what he expected: burned shipyards, precious metals and the purple dye that became fashionable with some Consuls. Then he met the people and he understood, that his troubles had only begun. He resented them with the passion he usually reserves for red numbers. In this moment, they became one and the same to him.

He brought with him freightloads of materials and primarily restored the Long Mole. With the waves of the sea came the rest of the building materials he needed. Everything else was a simple equation: He wanted the city to recoup his sunken costs. For a city to be prosperous it better be peaceful. Quelling another uprising would just add to his cost. A truce with Ranai IV, the heiress to the throne of the city, could be achieved by accepting that a new ruler was chosen by the local Clan Cielos. To his surprise, she forfeited her right and chose an African to rule instead. Strange lands, strange people, but what did he care? He wasn't here to rule, but to start the flow of money to his residence in Tunis. There he had enough on his hands. And the sooner he could relocate the troops back home, the better. Amarey, his commander who originally conquered the city, was given authority to do what needs to be done within reason to allow Lambech to make profits. But bleeding the city dry hasn't worked. He was back at the negotiating tables.

He managed to lure House de Salinas with money and special treatment to his side, enough to maintain steady exports. It took him three years to make Cartagena, the latest city to fall into Africa's hands, profitable again. But he isn't so naïve to think it will hold forever. Nothing does. His doings only stave off the inevitable ending to this debacle. Lambech rarely visits the city. He doesn't want to be there or even hold the concession when this bubbling cauldron gets tipped over and drowns them all in poison.

## MACHINATIONS

The uproar Ranai IV caused when she gave up her rightful place to rule as the Soberano of the city sent shockwaves. She knew it would, but she didn't see another way. She granted the position to someone who isn't even linked to the Elder Houses, a Kifo that sought refuge in the city some months earlier. This figure in the background would later become known as "The Black Sovereign" to both those who knew who he was and those who did not.

The Guerreros fight along the demarcation lines, not near Cartagena. Help had to come from somewhere else. The Kifo could offer secrets and insights, a form of influence she could both learn from and utilize looking outwards. He would attract emissaries from Europe that would potentially allow them to rally new allies. She wants to unite the Houses under a puppet to appease those who brought new kings over a foreign land and threatened their ruin. For a while, her family resented her, but now most can understand the plan seeing the outcome: No more struggle between the Elder Houses. They all shine in the shade of the dark baldachin that is this mysterious figurehead.

Part of their treaty with Lambech was to keep the legendary Kifo safe. They have to, since they need time to gather enough strength to break free of their chains. What Ranai IV didn't know and couldn't prevent was that it also drew in another Scourger pack: Oyéwolo and his men, who have been hunting the Kifo down with fervor.

Right now, the powers of Cartagena can be traced along the lines of a triangle. The three Elder Houses represented by their respective leaders, the Estrella Guía. The Black Sovereign who rules as the de facto Soberano with very limited options to act directly. And lastly, the absent Neolibyan Lambech with all those in his employ.

## THE NEW NORMAL

The mood changed, but the people living here are nothing if not adaptable. The local Clan called Cielos manages to give purpose to the people in times of turmoil. It was welcomed. In competitive sports, they still goad each other, but they can vent. Brawls are still common, and clashes are inevitable, but afterwards, they sometimes even carry each other home. For a moment, one could get the feeling of being safe. A newly established normality, but the resentment is boiling below the shallow surface and the pain of loss and hardship can still be felt everywhere.

The rebuilding of the city advances quickly. Expert masons fill the cracks in the stonework, steelworkers and planksawers oversee the welding of new ships. With the work, the growing confidence mends the connections the people have with each other. It revives the spirits of the people, every brick newly laid a testament of their loyalty to their stake in the world.

The usage of the Dinar became mandatory throughout the whole city. African Scrappers now drink sweetened rooibos tea with the people of Murcia under their sunroofs and haggle along the Long Mole, while their children play together in the ruins of people they never knew. The Tauros began to accept that their "warrior caste" needs the approval of Scourgers to be seen and accepted as such. In exchange, the Scourgers honor the line of the Tauro as their first blessed ancestor going forward. The Scourgers were ordered to build ties, as much as they hate relating to them. It doesn't help that citizens know the worst troublemakers vanish overnight, some with free tickets to the plantations across the Mediterranean Sea.

Ages ago, remnant books and knowledge from a forgotten ruin called Valencia in the north were excavated and added to the library of Cartagena. The language used is decidedly not what could be considered current Hybrispanian; it is more than a mere dialect with differing pronunciation. Clan Cielos reintroduced a bastardization of the language to communicate whenever there is danger of being overheard. Some even brazenly use it right under the nose of the invaders. It is the language of their defiance, another uniting innovation added by necessity.

Two festivities stand out above all else and are upheld even in such tumultuous times. The first festival is the annual Dia del Mar in early March. The procession gives thanks to the sea for the riches it provides not only as food. Tens of thousands of rock snails gather near Cartagena each year and allow for the production

of the purple color, a main export good. People carry shells through the streets to the foreshore and back to the ocean, a symbolic gesture of giving back.

The other festivity is the masquerade. The line between the locals and foreigners blur during the event that marks the end of summer. People of all ages dress up and forget animosities for a few days, a respite from the everyday struggle. All year, people make elaborate masks that mimic animals and chimeras. They dance under colorful ribbons in the light of lamps for a week. Even a few Neolibyans intermingle with them and enjoy the whores and the favored Unity Burn that pops up thanks to the Apocalyptics that attend each year. Alcohol flows from caskets, presents are exchanged. New couples proclaim their everlasting love, just to wake up in the arms of another the next morning. Some flee the jealous spouses directly after the festivities and sail to other ports. Nine months later, the orphanage needs more helping hands or the Storks come back and steal the unwanted results. All-in-all, it is an unforgettable event that generates a year's worth of fodder for conversations and rumors after it concludes.

Cartagenians tend to dramatize. They personify the interplay of anger and remorse, of recklessness and prudence, and of staunch traditionalism and embracing the full plethora of new ideas to incorporate them immediately. They are a people of extremes. One moment they are laughing together, then the next comment is taken as an insult. But temperaments cool down as quickly as they boil over.

Conviviality is the one virtue a foreigner should embrace. To eat alone and shunning others is a shortcut to remaining an outsider forever. Cartagenians serve small plates with grilled fish and crab, aubergines and pepperoni in oil, olives and brined cheese. Sometimes there is even meat, if the Cormoráns' hunt in the hinterland was successful. Freshly baked bread with garlic and lemon juice round out the meal during the hot midday leisure. Everyone is welcome in the shade, as long as they contribute.

Religion plays a subtle yet important role in the whole region of Murcia. Yet it rarely comes up in conversation for it is personal. When it does, it most likely shows in behaviours linked to the faith. The Glass Dome is the most important religious communal point in the city. However, most afford a household shrine close to the entrance, to protect them from intruders or, should they die, that their spirit finds his way back home to the family.





# CIELOS

The scholars lean over the newborn. They inspect the girl and make sure she is healthy. Cold wind blows through the halls of the Glass Dome, where they determine the time and consult the star maps. They scribble notes: February, Eta-Leonis nearly aligns with the Wanderer, while the Perseus constellation is unusually bright. A few more points need to be determined for an extended horoscope, just to make sure. The screaming of the child nearly drowns out their voices. Relieved, they say that she will have a bright future, with a keen ear for the muse's whisper. Her fate is to be a hero, if she follows her path, someone who will then inspire a following in her own right. The young couple's gazes meet. Faint smiles grace their exhausted faces. More than they could ever hope for became true in this single moment.

If the people of the region of Murcia are but stars separated by a vast darkness, Clan Cielos is the connecting line between them. It forms social constellations that glow with meaning and guidance, the mortar that holds every brick in place when catastrophe would shake the very ground underfoot.

## ANARETA

Since the world fell apart, the people of Cartagena decided to look up to the night sky in search of their fate. When the comets burned their mark upon the firmament, they shrouded the laws of the living world in new layers nobody could even begin to understand. From that resignation to fate, a certain veneration was born. That humility and awe are well-represented in the symbolism and traditions of the Clan even to this day. Their long past empowers the Clan to overcome challenges larger than themselves and to endure.

## THE ELDER HOUSES

Traditionally, three old local families known as the Elder Houses rule over the city. Most Cielos are not affiliated with one of these Houses, but were introduced to the Clan structure by a more recent generation. In fact, a large number of Cielos are largely unaffected by the actions and intrigues of the Elder Houses vying for power over each other. But when the Lion struck his claws into the flesh of Cartagena, times changed for everyone. Most chose sides.

### ELDER HOUSE BATILIA

House Batilia managed to link the family name to the patriotic pride instilled in so many Hybrispanians. Daring leaders and naval strategists are what the family points to in their ancestry. Under generations of their rulership as Soberano, the city prospered. The current head of the family, Ranai IV, would have been the likely successor to rule the city. But circumstances pushed her to find alternatives. There are new factions within the family that threaten to divide the house and see the machinations of Ranai VI as a betrayal of their legacy. On the outside, House Batilia stands united, but the fissure widens and separatists are becoming increasingly unashamed of voicing their convictions.

### ELDER HOUSE MUÑOZ

People believe House Muñoz is working toward a master plan. What that plan entails is unknown, but subject to widespread speculation. A net of strategically intermarried members of the House support that theory. Rebecca leads the family towards leveraging the outstanding number of open favors to strengthen their position despite the

## POTENTIAL BEND THE REED

**PREREQUISITE:** Clan Cielos, PSY+Reaction 4D

The Cielos saw their city fall over and over again, for thousands of years. They learned to be resilient, to spring back with even greater force and rebuild with pride. Their walled towers will reach the stars upon a hard-earned fundament. Cielos with this Potential only need (2) Triggers (instead of (3) Triggers) to perform a counter attack with an Active Defense. In addition, whenever they lose a point in a background, they gain +1D in the next situation where they can earn this point back or gain another background point. This potential only has one rank.

## SKILL BONUSES

For the Cielos, during character creation, the following Skills count as favored (MAX +1):

(BOD) Stamina  
(AGI) Crafting  
(CHA) Conduct  
(PSY) Reaction  
(INS) Survival





foreign reign. In these daring times, they extend their network using the Nest of Eagles and Aero's Nest to relay correspondance. They are the fulcrum when it comes to supporting any contingency plans after an uprising with outside help, but there is no overarching plan that was concocted. They wish the rumors were true.

### ELDER HOUSE DE SALINAS

The Dinar is carried on the back of slaves. The de Salinas embraced the concept of slavery and got rich off their labor. But they only buy; their last shred of decency won't allow them to sell locals, not even convicts. Most hate the practice, but they won't hesitate to take the money that practically rebuild the city. Their only saving grace, they say. Silvio de Salinas is the figurehead of a large estate that acts more like a counting house than a family home. Their warehouses and depots line the ports and support the shipyards, their brutes oversee the saltpans and mines just west of the city. As the youngest of the three Elder Houses, House de Salinas not only disregards some of the traditions in favor of fiscal success, but also sustain the closest ties to Lambech. These ties grant them special rights at the Long Mole and allow them to muster the most Tauros.



#### 1 - FAMILIAR

**PREREQUISITE:** -

**RESULT:** A citizen of the region's old families or someone brought into the clan, instilled with a sense of local pride that is as of yet undeserved. Maybe someday something will become of him. His name and astrological constellation during birth are already recorded by an Erudito in the registry of the Glass Dome.

**EQUIPMENT:** Blackened fingertips (Clan tattoo, PSY+Faith/Willpower +1D)

#### 2 - CORMORÁN

**PREREQUISITE:** BOD+Stamina 4, AGI+Navigation 6, INS+Survival 6, one combat skill 6

**RESULT:** When fishing with cormorants became a necessity about 170 years ago when a fire in the harbor burned down the fishing port, those working at sea were forever linked with the now cherished bird. With brine for blood, they still work the sea and keep the shores clear of pirates. On land, they sometimes bolster the ranks of the civil guard.

They add +1D to each check to find or spot someone, somewhere, or something, including plants and game. Their skills are valued in every port.

**EQUIPMENT:** Hunting weapon of choice with Tech-Level III or less, boat or dhow, fishing net

#### 2 - ARTESANO

**PREREQUISITE:** AGI+Crafting 6 or CHA+Arts 6; Resources 1

**RESULT:** Artesano learned their craft and work hard, either with passion or a sense of duty. Whenever

they attempt to repair or improve upon something with their ideas, they gain +1D to the check. If it was important enough, their Resources increase: +1 (up to a maximum of 3).

**EQUIPMENT:** Working materials (level 1)

#### 3 - TAURO

**PREREQUISITE:** BOD+Toughness 6, PSY+Domination 6, two combat skills 6; nowadays the (nominal) approval of a Scourger

**RESULT:** A Tauro is never alone. The bonds they forge with each other endure with their respective families even after they are dead, connecting them. The people won't forget and the cheeks of the mourners won't dry for days when they leave this world. Scourgers are compelled to treat them as legitimized warriors. Allies +1 and Network +1.

When they charge into battle, their opponents freeze in fear of the impact that is about to happen. Whenever they start a fight, in the first round of combat, they may either choose to add (1) Trigger to PSY+Reaction to determine their Initiative or add (1) damage to any weapon that relies on Force.

**EQUIPMENT:** Carved ebony plate showing their name as the beginning of their ancestral line with the Respected (Scourgers, +1D) quality, rubber harness, axe, pistol with +1D of 9mm ammo each month

#### 3 - ERUDITO

**PREREQUISITE:** INT+Legends 8, INT+Science or INT+Engineering 6, CHA+Conduct 6; Secrets 2

**RESULT:** Society expects a Erudito to be learned, to read and write, someone who remembers the past,

## HIERARCHY AND RANKS - CIELOS



and a person who keeps specialized knowledge that workers and the public can rely on. Slowly, their actions seep into politics. As such, they are highly regarded not only locally: Authority +1 and Renown +1.

An Erudito preserves scientific achievements but projects folklore. He can link the deeds and even fates of those who believe in either him or in Murcian tradition to favorable stars. Doing this increases all beneficiary bonuses and gains that are based in faith, superstition, or motivation of those who are bestowed this way by (1), irregardless of what they are. The duration equals the time the linked constellation of stars remains valid.

**EQUIPMENT:** Pass to the private library

#### 4 - ESTRELLA GUÍA

**PREREQUISITE:** CHA+Leadership 7, PSY+Faith/Willpower 7 or the Potential "Bend the Reed"; Authority 5; Born to one of the three Elder Houses or married into one of them (each Elder House can only muster one member of this Rank)

**RESULT:** The lodestars set the course for their Houses and unwaveringly determine their fates. They add +2D to CHA+Expression towards members of the other Elder Houses and +2D to CHA+Negotiation towards all others.

Whenever the difficulty of a check is higher than (4), they add an amount of +1D equal to the difference to their roll. If they succeed, all those standing behind what they attempt to do regain an amount of Ego equal to this difference. Nothing seems impossible or out of reach when a lodestar strides towards a goal.

**EQUIPMENT:** A collection of highly prized presents and tributes, often including a few technical marvels from the people during inauguration

#### 5 - SOBERANO

**PREREQUISITE:** CHA+Leadership 10, CHA+Conduct 10; the Black Sovereign has to die

**RESULT:** The sovereign of the city. The Clan does not only look up to the stars for guidance, but also to those above them, their leaders. On his shoulders rests the will of the people to persevere. In the eyes of the citizens, the position is unshakeable. His Authority remains 6 for as long as he holds this position; there never is a loss. His word is law.

**EQUIPMENT:** The three signet rings of the Elder Houses (signifying their united support), legislative texts and correspondence

#### 5 - HIJO DE LA CIUDAD

**PREREQUISITE:** An Estrella Guía feels they can no longer represent what their clan expects of them and resigns his post; disregarding any prerequisites or ranks, any person can become a hero of the city by achieving something truly great for the Cartagenians

**RESULT:** Renown +1. The amenities that behoove such a hero are manifold, but it is safe to say that all doors open for them, their family may join the Clan if they are not already part of it as Rank "Familiar", they gain immunity regarding legal aspects, have the ear of the Soberano and even that of Lambech, a considerable life annuity, they drink free in all teahouses, a bodyguard, free passage across the Mediterranean Sea, etc. They are representatives, a way to increase the Cielos' influence in other port cities and to bring foreigners into the Clan.

**EQUIPMENT:** Specially made honorary mantle (Armor 1, +1 passive defense while a minimum of one Tauro is protecting the Hijo de la Ciudad)



# THE CITY

Cartagena is a ruin built on ruins. But in times of truce or peace, it reaches as high as it can. The sun baked layer upon layer together. Every destruction caused innovative renewal. Two ramparts used to gird the city towards the land, and the people's vigilance shields it towards the south. The catacombs below are an intricate maze of broken walls and slippery mud, archways and pillars that hold up the ground above. One could scour the undercity for years, without having seen it all. One complex of the Bygones stands out there, buried beneath the rubble caused by the Eshaton. There are no clues as to what it might contain, only some warning symbols above a round panel that demands some form of keypass.

## PALACIO DEL SOBERANO

The ramparts of the Palacio del Soberano reach up higher than the outer walls of the city and can be seen from nearly every location in the city as a landmark in its center. Foreign emissaries take up quarters here, the lounge is filled with all pleasantries the region has to offer. The Estrella Guía are also welcome in these courts and their machinations unfold here first among their peers. Nevertheless, this is neutral ground and they all know it. The gardens offer a respite from all of it, the upper classes sit in the shades and play strategic games, exchange pleasantries, and set trends that rub off on society at large.

Since the Black Sovereign moved into the Palacio, the heads of the Elder Houses withdrew to their respective ancestral homes to reign from there. Still, the Palacio del Soberano holds most administrative buildings along with the armory tower and is therefore indispensable to managing the city with a broader view.

## BARRIO MORADO

There are as many ways into the city as there are currents, and one additional land route from the west. Granted, the western borough in front of the ramparts is decidedly not the best way to enter the city. All merchants from Granada know: The stench is the first hurdle that visitors have to overcome, and they like to not give a warning in advance except for the grins in their faces. They themselves avoid the hard mountain pass and use ships. "Sexta Parte" is the name many locals use for this part of the city. They want to express that this is the last district a smart citizen wants to be, that the last thing they have in mind is wanting to leave the city, and to remind themselves of their last step in life: the graveyard in Barrio Morado.

The tanners are largely at fault for this bad reputation. Buckets of fermented parts of the murex snail line up near vats for dying cloth. The carriers duck underneath dripping clothesline ropes overhanging the backstreets. The rivulets run down the muddy riverbed to the clay cutters and bricklayers that yell curses at them. Behind the smokehouses for the daily catch, homes rise high on stilts — all except the towers. Slippery boardwalks and planks connect them over the coastal vegetation and lead down to the lighthouse. Cebrián is one of the few people that are visited commonly by the citizens behind the bridges. He is the reason many can find solace in these trying times.

Migratory buoys follow predictable routes and end up hidden in the thicket of the reeds at the foreshore. They are collected by those who know when and where they will end up. Burn, bribes, secret correspondence, and oddities are sent this way by Apocalypics who have to avoid the region; piracy is heavily frowned upon and even the fishers and hunters know how to handle a weapon.

Further outside, slaves of House de Salinas work the salt pans and heaters. Covered in steam and scratches, they overproduce salt that is needed in the smokehouses to preserve the daily catch. The quantities in excess are sold inland, a growing trade that benefits largely the Elder House de Salinas.

## THE MITHRAEUM

Hidden deep in the bowels of the city under Barrio Morado hides a barrel vault, built thousands of years ago. The smell of sweat and bay leaves fills the air. An altar shows a young man killing a bull. His cloak's inner lining shows stars, his clothes are those of old legends. A city founder? The first Tauro? Africans brought with them their own worldview on spirits and the dead. Cebrián began to fuse these North African mysticism and ancestor worship with the fondness locals have towards remembrance of heroes in a unique syncretism. Of those interested in discussing philosophy and seeking advice, he founded a small circle of handpicked like-minded prospects. Only they know of the underground temple at the moment. He suspects a soul has to undertake the seven initiations of Mithraism before seven universal truths are understood and the whole of creation is revealed. But he doesn't want to embark on this journey alone.

## NYX

Two workers lean on the iron parapet, joking about the new colleague and how he couldn't handle last night's shift. With experienced fingers, they exchange the activated coal in their respirators. Under the soot-covered roofs, in the shade of smokestacks and kilns, the Electrum Smelter spits out its treasures. The sea breeze blows the ashes inland, away from the city. They are left with riches. They fabricate the finest jewelry from it; filigree rings, charms, and necklaces that adorn some of the highest heads, and not only in Murcia. Craftsmanship worthy of kings. But despite all that glitters, Nyx is as poor a district as Barrio Morado. Even though many are used to handling Electrum on a daily basis, it is a

## CARTAGENA FACTSHEET

**CITY:** Cartagena, Tech-Level III-IV

**PROVINCE:** Southeastern Hybrispania/Murcia

**POPULATION:** 19,150/official birth registry

**INHABITANTS:** Clan Cielos/dominant, Scourgers/dominant, Neolybians/present, smaller Clans/present, African Scrappers/present, Anubians/rare, Apocalypics/infrequent, Jehammedans/migratorily

**CLAN CIELOS:** Composing 41% of the populace, the Clan is ever present in the city and shapes daily life; the Clan bowed before the invaders and made concessions, but has a strong hidden agenda; the Clan honors foreign heroes by adopting them into the clan as a Hijo de la Ciudad, strengthening their influence with high positions around the western Mediterranean Sea

**LEADER:** The Black Sovereign

**GOVERNING FORCE:** Nominally Lambech, practically the three Elder Houses of Clan Cielos

**FEATURES:** City walls, the towers of the city and lighthouse, large freight port, the peninsula with the Palacio del Soberano overlooking most of the city

**TRADE/GOODS:** Electrum, tyrian purple, seafood and dried fish, salts, sailing vessels, jungle woods, charcoal and quicklime, pottery, tea, trophies, jewelry; recently severed antimycotica distribution

**CITY GUARD:** 3 Scourger packs (about 100 warriors) under the command of Amarey in absence of Lambech near the estate and the harbor, Oyéwolo's Scourger pack (22 warriors), groups of the Civil Guard (of 5 heads each) in most parts of the city; units of Tauros as specially equipped heavy troops

**ARTIFACT TRADE:** Practically nonexistent, the Eruditos keep finds hidden away in private houses

**COMMUNICATION:** Directional radio network connects to Granada, postal communication via maritime trading routes, migratory buoys used by the Apocalypics of the region



commodity that feels too distant to be used by the people themselves. No wonder there have to be guards, lest some unfortunate soul tries to find a quick way out of their impoverished life.

Nyx also holds the greatest treasuries of all: the city's reserves. Tauros pound the beat around a certain neighborhood and try not to draw too much attention. Deep below the ground, they are safely hidden in eight separate storages. Only Ranai IV and a few chosen know of it, but recently some loyalties must have changed: one of them was found emptied. Fingers quickly point to the rapacity of Silvio de Salinas, but the culprit is the last person anyone would suspect...

## THE HARBORS

The harborages of the westernmost port in the Mediterranean Sea do not host many travellers nowadays. At least, not openly, since the people are chatty and especially inflammatory news easily commingle with cock-and-bull stories the unfortunate have to work hard to get rid of the stories' ties to his name. One could spend a lifetime chasing phantoms. Just the innkeepers know what to trust, and whom. For a moderate price, they share their wisdom. Only for Dinars, though, you know why. One of the inns is run by a Pelican that belongs to the Apocalyptic flock that frequently supplies the locals even outside of the annual festivities. She informs them when and where it is best to make landfall.

The Harbor is not defended by bricks, but by the courage and cunning of its residents. The shallow waters have been silted for a while now. It is next to impossible to navigate by any larger ships, but it makes for an ideal fishing port that the Cartagenians claim solely as their own. The maneuverable dhows and smaller sloops the Cormoráns use land here and bring their catch to the Main Market. The buzzing about the cornucopia of goods from near and far starts early in the morning. By the time it wakes the people living nearby, the best trades have already been made. Stolen artifacts from Toulon wander from hand to hand. Homesick stowaways wait under the planks to leave the city unseen towards Africa, or to flee to the peninsula to the northeast to continue their travels to Franka. Normally, every ship able to sail the open waters is searched before it leaves harbor. But if you know who is in whose pocket, you have a decent chance of making it.

## MANTENERSE

By far the largest district of the city is the hub of life build around the Grand Plaza and continuing over the northern exurbs. People sit on the banks

between the Glass Dome and the Private Library and listen to advice, exchange ideas while drinking tea, and tend to the people's recent strokes of fate. The Venera is an annex of the Private Library, recently barred even to those with passes by the sage Makani. Towers oversee the district; the view is only blocked by the sunsails that span the urban canyons. Lamps keep the main roads lit through the night. House Batilia and House Muñoz have their ancestral seats here, the same as many other citizens of high positions who occupy one of the towers. The district has been less ravaged due to its higher altitude and their towers come close in height to the Palacio del Soberano. One of the buildings in Mantererse is used as a forum for the people to voice their concerns and wishes. The monthly gathering is organized by the people themselves, but the Elder Houses usually make sure it can happen and provide security. It is not rare for discussions to get out of hand. These occasions are telling. The forum isn't aimed at informing the Cielos, but they learn of existing frictions, needs, and sorrows that plague the people. It is here that the need for additional Civil Guards arises and where they are best used. Unbeknownst to the people, Amarey has ears on the forum via some bought locals that need the good money or are fed up with keeping their heads down; he often knows exactly when to act.

The other side shelters the Orphanage, run by the same family for generations. They school the parentless children to become learned, to read and write, to maybe become Eruditos without political ties one day. A big dream that for most doesn't come true. Nevertheless, some poorer families give up their children in hopes that they have a real shot to one day have it better than themselves. The Sickbay is close and within the same building, where the war-disabled and ill have to share quarters. Most days the orphaned children help out, fetch water, boil bandages. They provide company to those who have lost everything and listen to their stories. Sometimes lifelong bonds blossom out of their shared misery and new families form.

## THE GLASS DOME

Hybrispania worships its martyrs. The religious would call them idolaters, but only behind their back. Too much pain is linked to the memories, and just a small remark can spark drastic reactions. During the restoration, every brick that was used to rebuild this religious venue was visibly marked with the name of the patron who paid for it or crafted it. The vitreous enameled façade instills a sense of pride. The bystanders touch the seemingly cold surface. They connect

to their past and they swear it brings luck in the near future. The fortified building itself holds the largest working observatory in Europe. The Eruditos who know how to use and reposition it could pinpoint to recurring vector-data to view even small objects in the earth's orbit or celestial bodies far away. Their exhaustive notes of spotted phenomena correlate perfectly to important dates of other places in Europe, such as the night Praha Republika fell.

## MENDE'S COMPOUND

Africans brought their faith in their hearts; they had no need for such pompous churches. Their religion is lived. Behind the metal fence of the compound near by the shore, the Soul Seer Mende, tends to the believers. He displays the trophies the Scourgers bring him on spears at the Boneyard, he anoints their skin to invite benevolent or salvific spirits, and tends to wounded warriors. He prepares the dead in the mortuary tract and buries them deep in the ground with a psychovore seed in their mouths. The planted grove, he says, connects them to their homeland and acts as a conduit. The strange growths close in or recede to protect Mende and those under his care. Some Tauros only feign the same repulsion other locals exhibit of Mende's macabre ways and visit him secretly in the cover of night. Unexpectedly, the Anubian became somewhat of a mediator between the factions, since his word bears weight with the Scourgers.

## LONG MOLE

Long Mole became a slice of Africa with the arrival of Lambech's frightloads. Fresh wind now blows through the windows of the old workshops. The youths were especially quick to catch on to new options that weren't available to their parents. The first chukudus are a fine example of that development. Brought from the African inland, they now allow for a steady flow of goods in the narrow alleys. The wooden frame is cheap and quickly became the backbone of inner-city freight transportation that extends even to the Main Market and beyond. To most Cartagenians, however, the dead straight streets of Long Mole feel like standing before the lion's den. The many Africans here carrying horrific weapons scare them. At least the southern Scrappers that came here intermingle more. Most of them support the shipyards. The entrepôts of the Commercial Ports always demand more hands with a tight grip. There is good money to be made for those who don't want to take a gamble in a Frankan port, especially

if the books of the admiralty here seem to have glaring omissions. Aggregates produce electricity for this district and some parts of Mantenerse, but the control switches are closely guarded and maintained by African Scrappers.

Behind the busy streets along the wharf lies House de Salinas and Lambech's Estate. Their closeness is not only figurative. The wealth projected here along the many kontors contrasts everything else in the region. Exotic animals, fountains that have just enough pressure from the higher-up water towers in order to work, the smell of pomegranates, songs and shanties in a foreign tongue. The new arrivals love it!

The local wholesalers teeth-gnashingly bark about their loss of control in this part of the city, but they lack ambition and end up keeping the status quo. Amarey rightly expects only this barking, but no bite. They all see the armed patrols from every window, too, and wrongdoers swiftly get their comeuppance. Whether the sentence is lenient or harsh depends upon the culprit's attitude and allegiances. Troublemakers have no hope of mercy in this district: Scourgers own the ropes, and Amarey decides who hangs.

## OUTSIDE THE CITY WALLS

Behind the mounds outside of the city, the people declare certain meadows as competitive grounds. They vent here and resolve their differences with fists. There is a lot of money in the bets that are placed, and some African Scrappers caught on to that fact.

Once, the Jehammedans closed ranks with the Cartagenians, but when the Swords of Jehammed fell with the beloved sons during the invasion, the few Jehammedans of the northeastern peninsula receded to the hinterlands. Their perceived betrayal was the cause of their banishment from the city. They interpret it as a sign from their god to return to their old ways. Their herds now graze wherever they find just enough. The pirate nests on the peninsula here know Jonas Isaija as the Iconide who fled. But Jonas is convinced by his side of the story, that he did everything right. He clearly did not. But they play the role of the understanding friend and the Magpies remain good listeners when his family has had enough of his excuses, for as long as the money from Cartagena is flowing in their direction. Only a few Jehammedan women are allowed back inside the city, and they help transport the secretive messages of the Elder Houses and refugees back to the pirate nests. It is only a matter of time before even they have heard enough from the frightened Iconide or the Elder Houses find other means of relaying their secret correspondence to the European inland.





# FALSE KINGS

The little fish flapped in Carmena's hands as she removed the hook. She stared at him for a while, sitting in the harbor on the hard cement. She thought about the days she was part of something, when she herself had a shoal to return to.

Her love lost everything she had. She now is one of the few left of Makani's flock, but Carmena wasn't there the day she lost everyone else she held dear. She thought about that moment every day. Would her presence have made a difference?

Carmena exhaled slowly, closing her eyes. She didn't know if there was a word for this feeling, of someone about to lose a loved one and being unable to stop it. Makani would know, she always did. Carmena's wet fingers caressed her necklace, a circle with filigree inlays she got from her mother. She always wore it over her heart, and one day she would give it to someone worth it. Maybe it can remind Makani of what she was, of what else she could still be.

Every layer of this cursed city had seen kings and rulers, and it buried them all beneath the rubble of their downfall. What is it that makes a king? And what realm can a king claim, when his subjects won't accept someone above them? What if there is no one left who will follow? And if a king dies alone, is he just as little and insignificant as everyone else? Just like this little fish in a shrinking sea, which probably doesn't even see the the shores closing in.

Their own world gets smaller and smaller by the day, and people dance on the edge above the abyss, fighting each other instead of grasping for the lifeline. An endless undertow that will even drown the smartest and the most vigilant among them. Even Makani.

Carmena threw the fish back; she felt she had to set him free to return. The last she saw was a quiet bubble in the murky water as she walked away, not knowing that a cormorant just dove down to devour the fish she tried to save from herself.

## THE BLACK SOVEREIGN

39 years of strife, and here he stands in the midst of enemies as their ruler. He is the Soberano of Cartagena. What has his life become? At his real home, the people adore him, children playing a game of pretend fight among themselves over who earns the right to play as him, recreating one of his great deeds. They enlarge the name Ntwadumela, "the one who greets with fire". But this name no longer belongs to him. That image will fade over time. His time runs out with it.

He lives a life in luxury, but the machinations of the Elder Houses leave him balancing on a thin rope. They eat from the same table. They learn. Every chalice they bring could hold cyanide. Every walk he takes to a requested conversation in the gardens could be an invitation to his own funeral march.

There is nothing he wishes more than to walk among all those he has lost for a last time. To feel the breeze on his skin, to play with his small siblings in the village. A distant echo. He would tell them stories of his life, share advice he gathered from a lifetime of learning about how the world really is. To bequeath what he knows to a generation that can safekeep his dream. And for a last time bask in the admiration of a continent he offered so much of himself for on the altar of war. A final gesture of acknowledgement.

## ROLE PLAY

The Black Sovereign does not show himself in public, nor does he like to show his face – as many Scourgers don't show their faces – in the land of the crow. A thread of subjects connects him to the outside world. It is the only way for him to stay alive. Most people in the city, however, don't even know who exactly it is who rules them right now. They assume that the Estrella Guía do, and the three Elder Houses like bathing in the gazes as the Black Sovereign remains hidden away. Cartagena is a golden cage for a hero without a future and a past that will inevitably catch up with him.

## PROFILE

**ARCHETYPE:** Africa, The Mentor, Scourger, Rank X: Kifo

**ATTRIBUTES:** BOD 6, AGI 4, CHA 4, INT 3, PSY 4, INS 2

**SKILLS:** Athletics 8D, Melee 10D, Brawl 7D, Force 9D, Stamina 7D, Toughness 10D, Mobility 6D, Projectiles 10D, Conduct 6D, Leadership 6D, Negotiation 6D, Focus 8D, Cunning 5D, Faith 8D, Reaction 6D, Empathy 3D, Perception 5D, Survival 5D

**BACKGROUND:** Network 1, Renown 5 (fading), Secrets 1

**SPECIAL:** Always safeguarded by a contingent of Tauros who only listen to the radio commands of Ranai IV, heavily armed and equipped with smoke grenades

**POTENTIALS:** Pariah 3, Pride of Africa 2

**INITIATIVE:** 6D/16 Ego Points (Focus)

**ATTACK:** UAO combat knife, 11D, Distance 1, Damage 6, Smooth Running (2T)

**DEFENSE:** Passive 2; Melee active (Dodge), Melee 10D; Ranged Combat active (Look for cover), Mobility 6D; Mental (Faith) 8D

**MOVEMENT:** 6m

**ARMOR:** Expensive tailored clothes with subtle armor and silk veil, Armor 2

**CONDITION:** Spore Infestation 0/16, Flesh Wounds 20, Trauma 10

**SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:** Broken Sourger mask scratched with marks of admirers on the inside, the three signet rings of the Elder Houses, written testament and manuscript of advice on vellum for his siblings (to give to someone he trusts to take home)



## UNMASKED

He will never forget the day Oyéwolo broke his mask and cast him out. It was the day he lost his closest friend to the twin trials. He believes him to be dead, since he never returned. Without him, he is nothing and no longer deserves to wear a name, as was custom since the pack formed. A Dumisai as experienced as he was understood that. The ancestors turned away from him, and with them, all Scourgers except for Oyéwolo; he wants the former Dumisai dead.

## MENDE

When he invited Mende to Cartagena, he finally had a friend from his past nearby who he could rely on. The Soul Seer was given a small remote compound in the city that proved to be excellent soil for the Psychovore seeds he brought with him. As the ancestors began to whisper, Mende first thought about guiding his old friend, to counsel him in this strange land. But the whispers also reply with the voices of the rival Scourgers who chew on the seeds they brought. Navigating and mediating between the two fronts proves to be dangerous. And the dead whisper of a luring voice that speaks secrets Mende had never encountered. A strong voice. He needs to delve deeply and descend into the catacombs below the city. He will drag into the open whatever hides in the dark bowels of this city.





## CHILD OF MAAHES

The fearlessness Oyéwolo exhibits is not just show. He doesn't know fear, he never did. Whenever he was irritated by his emotions, he channeled them into violence. His mother couldn't accept him as her son and gave him to the Scourgers. They were sure he was touched by the lion-headed Maahes, the brother of Nefertem, god of war, weapons, weather, and devouring captives. Oyéwolo's knife will always find its way deeper into the bodies of those close to death to break the last remaining clasps that hold the soul.

## BURNED BRIDGES

Belligerently spending time in Hybrispanias conflict zones, he was bound to pick up equipment that would allow him to turn every obstacle into a swath of destruction. In his Koms he stores a handful of rocket launchers, explosives, and dozens of grenades to level a quarter of Cartagena again.

The other Houses don't know that it was Ranai IV who led him and his pack into the city. No one can know. Ironically, it was a safety precaution to keep the foreign ruler in check. She brought a lion to his prey and made promises. No coin ever needed to change hands, not that Oyéwolo would have accepted. He is not under the command of Amarey, but has an independent pack. Most don't see the difference.

## OYÉWOLO

Oyéwolo is unpredictably erratic and domineering. He despises the truceseekers and the false calm, and he doesn't like that there is no one willing to take him on. He terrorizes the locals who can't tell the masks apart and feels that Amarey was too soft. But Oyéwolo came months too late to join the subjugation of Cartagena. Amarey wants to maintain calmness, but this Chaga isn't here to be what he is not. Whenever he speaks candidly, he says things they don't want to hear. When they won't listen, he goes hunting or destabilizes the hinterland paths of the eastern peninsula and brings back whoever crosses his way in chains. There, he is king.

Lately, he has seen messengers using these paths. They use pirates to get from coast to coast and bring encrypted dispatches to other port cities. He does not know who to trust with this information, as it would take someone brilliant to unravel the connections. If ships do come, he will see them, and he will sink them.

Oyéwolo has had nightmares since the omen on the night he cast out the old Dumisai from his pack: Dark beasts swam in the sea of the sky. Something wreathed in the darkness of the deep shadows they cast. And as they were about to devour the moon, a faint voice whispered of a flame to be extinguished before it becomes a warming hearth for the unguided enemy. His conclusion: The Black Sovereign, the man he cast out, has to die.

## ROLE PLAY

Oyéwolo honors guest right and will take on every challenge in accordance with tradition, as disrespectful as it might be. He won't allow anyone to openly defy him, but he will accept any outcome if he is challenged. Among Scourgers there are rumors: He won't allow other upstarts. That he won't allow Dumisais of his pack to overshadow him. They are wrong. He follows a systematic code and sees himself as honorary, even though all sides just see a rabid animal.

## PROFILE

**ARCHETYPE:** Africa, The Ruler, Scourger, Rank 3: Chaga

**ATTRIBUTES:** BOD 5, AGI 5, CHA 1, INT 2, PSY 5, INS 4

**SKILLS:** Brawl 9D, Force 9D, Melee 11D, Stamina 8D, Toughness 11D, Projectiles 9D, Stamina 10D, Mobility 8D, Legends 7D, Leadership 8D, Reaction 10D, Domination 10D, Faith 9D, Primal 10D, Survival 7D

**BACKGROUND:** Allies 3, Authority 4, Network 1, Renown 3

**SPECIAL:** All attempts to intimidate Oyéwolo fail without a check (except those based in his religion; he is extremely devout); PSY-Skills +1D and CHA-Skills -1D to social interactions; Authority pertains to all Africans except Anubians, but he is responsible for his fallen warriors

**POTENTIALS:** Hyena's Laughter 1, Elder Blood 3, Tough as Nails 3

**INITIATIVE:** 10D/20 Ego Points (Primal)

**ATTACK:** Maahes' Knife, 12D, Distance 1, Damage 6, Ensouled (Talisman, +2D), Special Damage (Wounded enemies, +2), Smooth Running (2T); Scourge & Oval shield, 8D, Distance 3, Damage 6, Dazed (8), Out of Control (3), the shield adds an additional +2D to active and +1 to passive defense; Assault rifle, 9D, Distance (30/120), Damage 11, Salvoes (3)

**DEFENSE:** Passive 2; Melee active (Block), Melee 11D; Ranged Combat active (Look for cover), Mobility 8D; Mental (Faith) 9D

**MOVEMENT:** 8m

**ARMOR:** Scourger mask (PSY+Faith +2D against mental attacks); painted lion fur, flak vest and helmet, Armor 4

**CONDITION:** Spore Infestation 3/18, Flesh Wounds 22, Trauma 10

**SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:** Lucky charms beyond counting, body paint

## MAKANI

Her name once was synonymous with wisdom. Her flock heeded her advices even when she buried them in one of the stories she likes to tell. She restored and refurbished the old library in Cartagena, and sold copies of books to Zohra at the University of Toulon. The money helped expand the library so the locals could learn and become educated. She saw the ebb and flow of forces: which powers overwhelm, which powers recede, and what keeps it all moving. She learned it was not Burn, but Ex, that controlled it all. She was a savvy businesswoman who tried to monopolize the trade on Antimycotica / Ex in the greater region. Since the Guerreros hold their hands over every Burn cusp found, she could not do what many other Apocalyptics would have done. If the Guerreros wanted to continue their forlorn war, they would have to abide by her terms. And if La Campeadora didn't want to loose her Guerreros to the call of the ether, they would have to pay. Double, of course.

Today, the locals call her "Makani the Tattered". It doesn't matter. Her thoughts orbit a supernova of determination that burn away everything else. None of the northerners give a shit when an Ibis says something. But when she grabbed the reigns, she became a threat to the Guerreros. They nearly killed her entire flock. In one of her many books she once read that buzzards can soar more than 1,000 meters in height. She only enjoyed but a single day close to the sun before she fell.

Makani is still regarded a sage, but she secludes herself in a new-build annex she calls "Venera", a fortress filled with a paranoid amount of precautions to avoid death. The walls of the antechamber are reinforced while a pitfall spans the entire floor. Embrasures point to the inside of parallel walls. A savvy mechanic installed what could be considered a stationary Cascader overhead of unsuspecting visitors. Safety, she calls it. It cost her nearly all the money she had left after the Guerrero attack and strained all remaining relationships.

## ROLE PLAY

Makani analyzes every supplicant before her and keeps her eyes on them even when they are obviously not a threat. Someone betrayed her, let an enemy slip through her lines. She can only trust Carmena, one of the last members of her old flock, beyond all doubt. But lately, all of Carmena's beseeching made her more of a distracting nuisance rather than the reliable pillar that holds up Makani's world. In defiance of everyone else, Makani tries to remain the Buzzard she was meant to be.

## PROFILE

**ARCHETYPE:** Hybrispania, The Traveler, Apocalyptics, Rank 3: Buzzard

**ATTRIBUTES:** BOD 3, AGI 2, CHA 5, INT 6, PSY 3, INS 2

**SKILLS:** Force 5D, Melee 6D, Toughness 6D, Mobility 8D, Expression 8D, Seduction 7D, Artifact Lore 9D, Engineering 7D, Focus 8D, Legends 11D, Medicine 8D, Science 10D, Cunning 4D, Faith 8D, Reaction 4D, Perception 4D

**BACKGROUND:** Authority 1, Network 1, Renown 3, Secrets 3

**SPECIAL:** Paranoia (+1D to INS+Perception to detect an ambush); Authority pertains to all Africans

**POTENTIALS:** Heaven or Hell 2, Brainwave 2

**INITIATIVE:** 4D/16 Ego Points (Focus)

**ATTACK:** Koumaya dagger, 7D, Distance 1, Damage 4

**DEFENSE:** Passive 2; Melee active (Block), Melee 6D; Ranged Combat active (Look for cover), Mobility 8D; Mental (Faith) 8D

**MOVEMENT:** 8m

**ARMOR:** Kneelong bògòlanfini dress and leather boots, Armor 2

**CONDITION:** Spore Infestation 0/16, Flesh Wounds 12, Trauma 6

**SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:** Map with routes of her severed trading network, crates filled with Ex, remote trigger for the Venera, Carmenas' necklace



## ANIMOSITIES

Makani knows the routes on which Burn pulses through the country. Although she is well-traveled, she was born in Cartagena and will always call it home. However, the recent invasion soured many citizens' trust in anyone who doesn't look like them. How she wishes for the old days. And how foolish of her to have such longings, she scolds herself right after these thoughts. Makani tries to find out who betrayed her, but she is immobilized by her setback and needs all the help she can get to uncover the Guerreros' ties that led them here. Her urge to go out again and do what she feels she has to by herself is strong. The fear of what might happen still balances out the growing restlessness in her confinement, but she cannot live like this forever.

She is willing to give up her business and offer the Ex in exchange for the perpetrators - or their heads.





### RANAI IV BATILIA

The Batilia family was at its zenith when Ranai III died in front of the masses. Ranai IV had to rise through the ranks and up to the occasion before she was ready. Her political ploy came too late to save many of her beloved, but she could prevent the death of others. She and her family were despised for a time, but sense trickled back into the valley that was their anguish. She remained the head of one of the three Elder Houses.

Her brilliant plan had to be made in the spur of the moment and was unpolished. Ranai IV didn't foresee that she – or anyone else of the other families and their ilk – would try to grab the scepter in this time of crisis. Her ego won't allow those selfish people to pull the rug from under three generations of Batilian rulership.

She knows the slope she's on is steep. She couldn't prevent Oyéwolo from entering the city after she inserted the Black Sovereign as Soberano. She has to make political concessions without losing the trust the locals place in her. She has to break bread with notorious pirates and House Muñoz to get word to the Clan's allies. To coordinate and upkeep her troops in secret, she has to rely on those who could not be bought with the Dinar.

### ROLE PLAY

Ranai IV has a child, a boy only two years of age. She wants to see him grow up free of chains, not as a political hostage to keep her in line. It is her highest priority. She can't help her anger towards her mother's sacrifice, but she understands it was the right thing to do, too. Her eyes are focused on retaking the bloodstained soil she grew up on, where her family line was almost severed. No peace, only truce.

### PROFILE

**ARCHETYPE:** Hybrispania, The Traditionalist, Cielos, Rank 4: Estrella Guía

**ATTRIBUTES:** BOD 3, AGI 4, CHA 3, INT 3, PSY 4, INS 3

**SKILLS:** Melee 5D, Force 5D Toughness 7D, Projectiles 8D, Mobility 7D, Legends 7D, Science 6D, Focus 7D, Cunning 9D, Arts 5D, Conduct 8D, Leadership 8D, Reaction 9D, Willpower 8D

**BACKGROUND:** Allies 5, Authority 5, Network 1, Renown 2, Resources 4, Secrets 2

**SPECIAL:** She, like the other members of the Elder Houses, is immune to the Authority the current Soberano supposedly holds; knows the location of caskets full of Electrum ingots (the city's reserves) that had to be moved when the Africans got to the Palacio

**POTENTIALS:** Bend the Reed, Paragon 2

**INITIATIVE:** 8D/14 Ego Points (Focus)

**ATTACK:** Pumpgun with leather sling, 8D, Distance (5/40), Damage 10; Small blowgun hidden in clothes, 8D, Distance (3/12), Damage 4, Poisoned (toxic mineral, +1 Trauma per hit), Camo (4); Huntingsword, 5D, Distance 1, Damage 8

**DEFENSE:** Passive 2; Melee active (Parry), Melee 5D; Ranged Combat active (Push forward), Mobility 7D; Mental (Willpower) 7D

**MOVEMENT:** 7m

**ARMOR:** Rubber harness over family attire, Armor 4, Insulated

**CONDITION:** Spore Infestation 0/14, Flesh Wounds 14, Trauma 7

**SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:** Radio with in-ear headset (to coordinate specially selected elite troops all over the city standing ready in shifts), the rolled up Bandera Negra (Standard (Attacks +1D))

### FOR THE PEOPLE

Ranai III, her mother, was beloved as someone under whom the city reached highest, where everything seemed possible. She gave everything she had to make the society she ruled over as wholesome as possible. In return, she received compassion and trust. She could mingle with the people without a guard, likely safer in the midst of their reverence.

When Amarey dragged her to the harbor, Ranai III knew that she had to be an example for the people, but not the one Amarey wanted her to be. Her unwavering determination is what the people now want to see in her daughter. This House shall be the anvil upon which the city will forge the weapons of their revolt.

### CEBRIÁN

Most who pass by would pigeonhole the elderly man into the category of favorite grandpa. The one who always has an open ear and knows what to do. People come with pains and aches and leave feeling better in every way. He always had a knack for it. The people feel safe around him, begin to tell him what happened and is going on in their respective lives: Ishtara had seen her neighbor with another woman and now she seems pregnant, the Scourger who keeps an eye on the water towers prefers to hang out in the nearby brothel, or that he should rather get his cooking water from Nyx, now that the dyers drainage their sewage in the harbor. These things.

Cebrián, however, looks older than he feels. The symbol on his chest and a newfound religiosity fill him with fervor. He hides his stigma well. His other possessions became worthless to him the day he found that little oddity in the undercity. Questions that elevate the senses are what he now holds dear, fleeting sceneries of abstract feelings that overwhelm him. He became one with the land. Slowly, he recruited others to what became a mystery cult. He rebuilt the Mithraeum and fathoms its truths. Mende doesn't know that Cebrián is close to a truth he himself doesn't even begin to grasp. Maybe Cebrián's wave is running out, but he managed to herald a new tide.

### ROLE PLAY

Cebrián tries to avoid confrontation, despite feeling a sense of superiority. A flood of impressions pulsate the closer he gets to the Mirar, threatening to devour his mind, but he knows. He knows of all the dirty little secrets the Guerreros want to keep hidden. Their plans, their thoughts, what they whisper into the darkness when they wield their mightiest weapon: Argus. For the invaders, he would be the key to find and crush all resistance Hybrispania can hope to muster in its infancy. But he seeks for deeper truths instead of betraying his brethren and helping in some conquest by his own volition.

### PROFILE

**ARCHETYPE:** Hybrispania, The Seeker, Cielos, Rank 3: Erudito

**ATTRIBUTES:** BOD 3, AGI 2, CHA 4, INT 3, PSY 3, INS 5

**SKILLS:** Brawl 4D, Force 4D, Toughness 4D, Crafting 6D, Conduct 6D, Mobility 4D, Arts 8D, Legends 8D, Science 7D, Engineering 7D, Medicine 7D, Faith 7D, Reaction 6D, Stealth 6D, Empathy 7D, Perception 10D, Primal 7D

**BACKGROUND:** Authority 1, Renown 1, Secrets 5

**SPECIAL:** Can link a believer's fate to constellations like all Eruditos as described with the ranks; Clan tattoo (PSY+Faith +1D), +3D to INS+Orienteering in the undercity

**POTENTIALS:** Danger sense 1, First Language 1, Ether Call 3

**INITIATIVE:** 6D/14 Ego Points (Primal)

**ATTACK:** Fists, 6D, Distance 1, Dazed (2), Smooth Running (2T)

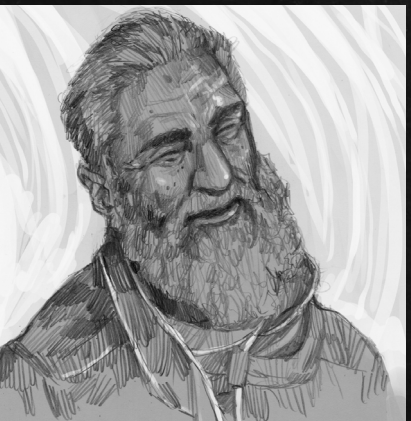
**DEFENSE:** Passive 2; Melee active (Back away), Brawl 6D; Ranged Combat active (Look for cover), Mobility 4D; Mental (Faith) 7D

**MOVEMENT:** 4m

**ARMOR:** Leather clothes and climbing harness, Armor 2

**CONDITION:** Spore Infestation 8/14 (5 perm.), Flesh Wounds 8, Trauma 6

**SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:** Mind's Eye, reusable alumbre sticks, 5x Argus-Burn (potent), waterproofed darklantern, leatherbound folder with notes and scribbles (INS+Empathy (5) to follow his train of thoughts), pass to the private library



### INVENTORY THE MIND'S EYE

If the Spitalians carbon-dated the small porous wrought coin-shaped oddity, they would repeat the test. Then again. No question: It dates back to the precambrian period, even before there were any humans. It was pulled into this form and into the present by a Pregnoctic for an unknown reason. Cebrián only knows with certainty that it attracts mussels, the reason why so many shells can be found at the Foreshore. When lain on the tongue, breathing causes unresisted rd6 spore infestation if the user isn't already a carrier of the seed. What happens next he calls "The True Sight": It opens the forehead chakra in a unique way, linking the minds of those who consume Argus to his. Reading thoughts is possible while delving into an ancient ocean of wisdom. One can even unearth knowledge from the days of yore. Cebrián jealously guards this treasure, not knowing that he also whispers into this ether. And the Anubian Mende is not the only one who heard him...

### ALUMBRE

What locals also know as bittersalt prevents the skin from sweating and stops the bloodflow of lighter injuries. It can be applied by pressing it down on the fresh wound in lieu of bandages. Reusable. It recovers one Flesh Wound immediately. But: Excessive use on large areas prevents perspiration, which leads to hyperthermia.



# PLOTHOOKS

## THE RIGHT BAIT

There are several ways to get the characters to the scenes and make them aware of what is going on in Cartagena. What happens behind the scenes can link to other plotlines that can be used to form a personalized campaign depending on the players' choices and allegiances. Depending on how it unfolds, it can be a mere jumping-off point to other regions or even culminate in the liberation of the city and a first victory against the invasion forces.

## TIMELINE

This supplementary product doesn't feature a plotline designed to be played as a premade sketch for a campaign. Rather, it should be used as an inspirational guide for what is possible and about to happen inside Cartagena and the greater region. However, each of the following 20 suggestions can be played in order to form a cohesive storyline, with necessary adaptations to fit the players into key roles. This assumes that they take the side of the Cartagenians, but it could be rewritten to feature the other sides. Generally, these are staging points that need to be flexible enough to incorporate the choices of the players and their respective characters.

These events unfold within two years and conclude with the freedom of Cartagena in 2600 AD.

### NEW ARRIVALS

01 – Visitors are shielded by both locals and invaders from what is boiling in the guts of the city. Lambech wants to protect his fiscal interests and keep it all running, and the Cartagenians are wary of outsiders. This grants them a form of protection by both fronts, as long as they don't take sides. But it is easy to be mistaken as taking sides: Saving a convicted person from excessively brutal punishment by a Scourger, giving alms to orphans using Chronicler Drafts instead of Dinars, or smuggling one of the many things in the city that could be considered contraband. The player characters will inevitably draw attention to themselves and the locals are likely to see them as sympathisers – their way in. If the characters manage to stay clear of all trouble and navigate through the city's politics cleverly, they become an interest to higher-ups as a potential asset that can travel freely through the city or even outside its boundaries.

02 – Each evening, workers from Nyx curse Amarey and drink to the health of Ranai IV,

who shall deliver them from oppression. They engineer a revolt, and every glass of alcohol stokes the flames of their anger to a furnace. Families' savings are spent to buy every single bullet from visitors (including the characters) to hide away until the call to arms can be heard. They train under the cover of darkness, teach each other lessons on military tactics and urban warfare, and inspect smuggled goods from Europe. If the characters have either goods or expertise in any of these fields, they can be brought in this way. They will be able to prove their loyalty soon.

03 – An African supply chain is terrorized by this group to make clear who is truly in charge. This should include the characters; they can help to plan the assault. Ideally, some of the group, including some characters, are injured. The next morning, the Africans hang some Cartagenians. Most of them weren't the actual culprits.

04 – A speech by one member of the Elder Houses ought to calm tensions. They know they are not yet ready, but the people are fed up. They demand the Soberano – who is as of yet unseen and unknown in public – to answer their pleas.

05 – Here could be a jump ahead in time, in which characters (maybe they have different agendas?) try to mobilize forces themselves, connect with the locals, and try to gather support for their respective causes.

### IN GOOD HANDS

06 – Introduction of Cebrián as a healer after a brawl in the night, especially if either the characters need advice or an NPC they care about got injured and wants this man's help.

07 – When his basement flooded, thousands of mussels flooded in and with byssus threads climbed up from the waters. He is shaken by the phenomenon and keeps the door sealed shut. He doesn't yet understand what knowledge dwells below, but soon he will. Some of the shells hold embedded memories of inhabitants of a city called Valencia, forgotten by time.

08 – Visions of Cebrián pulsate through the ether and puts the remote Cartagena back on the map for the freedom fighters. What is happening there must be new. Also, a Pregnocic has become curious about Cebrián and what he is doing. She wants the oddity back and anticipates Cebrián to be a threat to the Guerreros' uneasy pact with the spawns of the Mirar.

### ALL THAT GLITTERS

09 – Usually, for the Cormoráns, finding the city's treasure again would prove to be an easy task. They know the region and recognize those who behave differently. But they are at their wits' end. A plotline organized like a detective plot would fit, bringing the characters closer to the secrets of the city and who pulls the strings.

10 – Makani's behavior has been strange for a long time. Her plans start to manifest when the first Guerreros arrive by ship. She plans to capture them for interrogation, but she needs help. Here, the characters might join her or become additional names on her list. She now has part of the city's reserves to fund her retaliation.

11 – If the characters can outwit Makani, they can turn on her or help her, since they may have their hands upon the monetary reserves of the city. Their reputation in the city, with the local powermongers and their ties with Makani, hinges on this decision; Carmena might help them out.

### AWOKEN

12 – Months ago a lone bunker in the Pyrenees opens for the first time to spit out a sleeper. The woman with the tattooed number begins to understand the world, prepares to infiltrate and topple a civilization primed for conflict. She doesn't remember that she once fled to safety from Valencia, but like a carp she is drawn back there. She is supported by determined strangers as pale as moonlight who follow her every command.

13 – Oyéwolo has made his intentions clear in the past, and he is the first who gets blamed when explosions shake the Palacio del Soberano. The Black Sovereign manages to break free and flees headlong. He can't yet be far and pays the African Scrappers with promises of a city full of ancient artifacts and riches: Valencia. He connected the dots using old documents and burned the originals piece by piece unseen in his exile. Ranai IV and the Elder Houses are now forced to act, since the Africans are taking action as soon as they assume that the city's accordance with Lambech has been broken.

14 – Cut the breaks.

### VALENCIA, THE FORGOTTEN RUIN

15 – Multiple action scenes ensue. More than one party races either to get their hands on the

Black Sovereign or reach Valencia quickly: the African Scrappers with the Black Sovereign from Long Harbor, Oyéwolo's pack on speedboats hellbent on killing him, and the characters, supported by the Cartagenian upper-class.

16 – It is possible, that Apocalypitics from Aero's Nest or the Nest of Eagles get involved here in their maritime territory.

17 – Arrival at Valencia, the forgotten city. The hour of truth. During the hunt, House de Salinas shows its true colors and supports their own and the characters. When they arrive, they are greeted by a Sleeper and her supporters, defending the valuables that could be used to support the revolt in Cartagena. There is not much time to lose in Valencia; only a handful of African Scrappers stay behind to try to establish an unwelcome outpost (it may function as a new Neolibyan Concession in the future, depending on the outcome there).

### WHEN THE STARS ALIGN

18 – Tensions reach their height in Cartagena. 19 – Oyéwolo returns and is about to unleash hell. The omen he saw is about to fulfill itself. For the Estrella Guía, the stars align as the Eruditos predicted. The reed snaps back.

20 – All commands are at Go! A volatile showdown to retake the city and drive out the invaders. There are well coordinated strikes everywhere. The reed springs back. End credits.

### CONCLUSION

The events take their toll; the population is decimated. Roughly 2,000 people die either during the events themselves or during the aftermath. Cartagena is left nearly defenseless, having lost most of its warriors. If it remains in a vulnerable position, only time will tell what the fate of Cartagena will be. The longer the city is left to its own, the more likely the people will recover, as they always have.

One thing is for certain: The Bank of Commerce and Lambech have a lasting interest in the city, and the Scourgers want their defeat to be seen as a mere tactical retreat. Maybe the stalemate in Hybrispania hinges on these events. The capture of Cebrián by African forces or Makani's failed revenge machinations might as well the thumb on the scales of the decades-long Hybrispanian war of attrition. The Sleeper has larger plans, and, depending if she learns of her people's fate in Cebrián's mussels, she'll decide how these unfold.



PATH TO THE  
HINTERLANDS

MUDDY  
RIVER BED

THE SALTPANS

KILNS

NYX

WORKER  
HOUSINGS

THE HARBORS  
MAIN  
MARKET

GALLOWES

GRAND  
PLAZA

MANTENERSE

WATER  
TOWERS

BARRIO MORADO

FISHING  
PORT

BONEYARD

PALACIO DEL SOBERANO

FISH SMOKEHOUSES

GRAVEYARD

WATER  
TOWERS

WAREHOUSES

WAREHOUSES

LONG MOLE

PETRO  
TANKS

COMMERCIAL  
PORTS

THE WESTERN BRIDGE  
AND ROAD TO GRANADA

REEDPLANKS

FORESHORE

THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

LAMBECH'S ROUTE

# CARTAGENA

RAMPARTS AND STARS  
2598 AD



## INFORMATION

1. THE LIGHTHOUSE
2. CEBRIÁN'S HOME
3. ELECTRUM SMELTER
4. 'GILDED CAGE' OF THE SOVEREIGN
5. THE GLASS DOME
6. PUBLIC LIBRARY / THE VENERA
7. PUBLIC FORUM
8. ELDER HOUSE MUÑOZ
9. ELDER HOUSE BATILIA
10. MENDE'S COMPOUND
11. SICKBAY AND ORPHANAGE
12. ELDER HOUSE DE SALINAS
13. LAMBECH'S ESTATE

0 200M 400M 600M



# RAMPARTS AND STARS

