

The Tribunals of Hermes:

TM

IBERIA



A guide to the war-torn lands of Spain,
for ARS MAGICA™ 3rd Edition

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INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE



The *Tribunals of Hermes: Iberia* provides *Ars Magica* players and Storyguides alike with a wealth of information on the famed Iberian Tribunal, where Magus meets mundane in a hostile land wracked by war. And yet, Iberia is not defined solely by its Magi and constant martial struggle. This supplement goes beyond, describing Spain's broad lands, exotic peoples, and mysterious beings, both mundane and supernatural. Indeed, this book helps you locate a Covenant, story, or complete Saga anywhere in Mythic Europe's westernmost continental reach. Characters may find themselves trudging through the harsh Pyrenees, in heated battle with pagan Saracens and their sorcerers, racing against pirates on the Mediterranean, or exploring the western sea toward the world's edge. You hold in your hands all you need to tell any tale in Hermes's Iberian Tribunal. Here is a land that abounds with high drama and brooding evil. It is yours to explore and yours to endure.

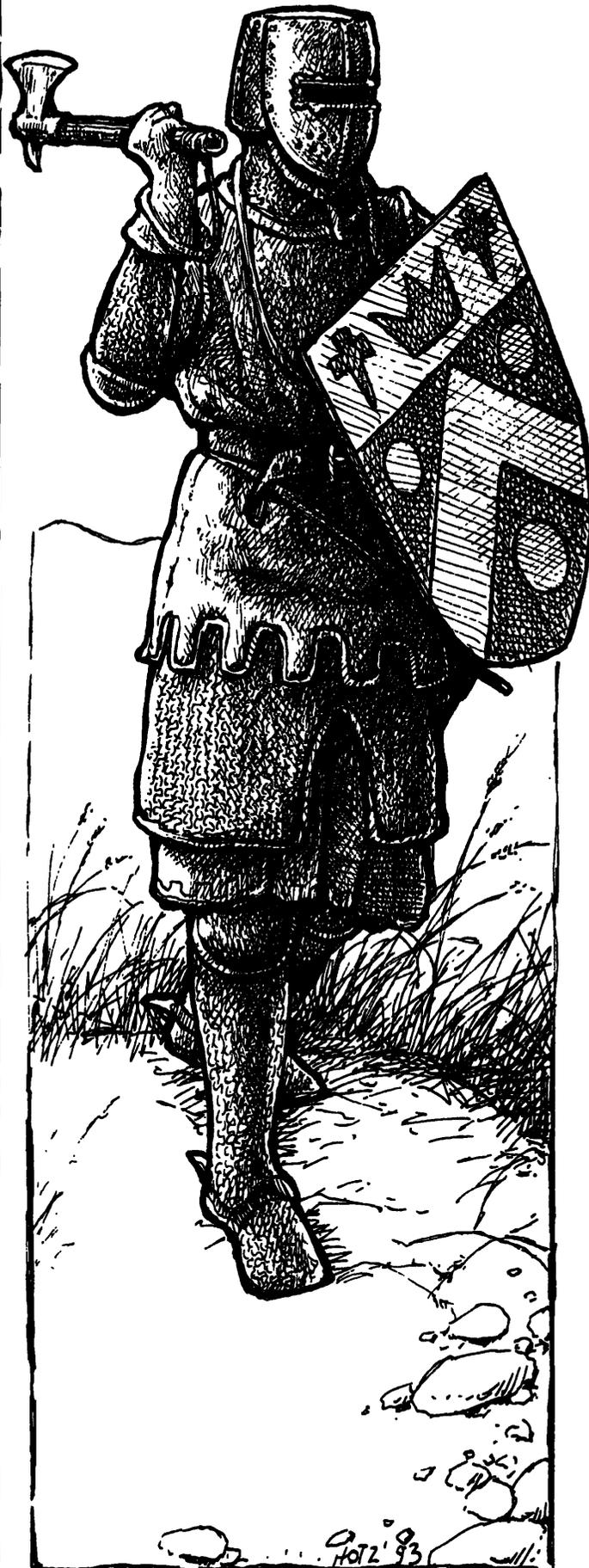
The *Tribunals of Hermes: Iberia* is an important *Ars Magica* supplement, beyond describing majestic Spain, because it is the first in a series of books that explore the *Tribunals of Hermes*. Each of these books presents for your edification and entertainment a region of Mythic Europe, with boundaries determined by Hermetic politics. Each book therefore offers a richly detailed land for discovery by both residents of the land, partaking of a Saga there, or for travelers of the land, visiting in a tale of adventure. With these Tribunal books, the grandeur, desolation, corruption, and mystery of the Order of Hermes and Mythic Europe itself unfold.

OVERVIEW

This book expands upon information provided in previous *Ars Magica* supplements. Specifically, this book elaborates on previous information on Iberia's Magi and Covenants offered in the second edition of *The Order of Hermes*. *Iberia* also develops the geographical and historical information provided in *Mythic Europe*. That is, this book rises from the largely factual, sweeping text of *Mythic Europe* to investigate the fanciful, supernatural, and strange side of the peninsula, its Magi and Covenants included.

Although *Iberia* picks up where *The Order of Hermes* and *Mythic Europe* leave off, those books are not required for broader understanding of the peninsula. This text stands on its own, being the ultimate source for Spanish information, adventures, and tales.

What does all this mean in terms of this book's content? Well, *The Tribunals of Hermes: Iberia* begins by providing a brief account of Spanish history, concentrating on epic events that have forged the features of 13th century Spain. To a large extent these events involve as much historical accuracy as they do legend and folklore. This book also accounts for the early days of the Order of Hermes, not just in terms of the Tribunal itself, but in terms of early Spain's ties to the Roman Order of Mercury. Of course, Iberia's many Covenants are also discussed, with emphasis placed on the more influential and powerful. However, minor Covenants are also discussed, and if you do not set any part of your Saga at a larger Covenant, these lesser Covenants can be developed to suit your story needs.



Also provided are accounts of supernatural places and people in Iberia. Covenants are not the only places housing the mystical. Finally, this book offers suggestions for many varied Sagas, not just stories, that you can use to express the Iberian experience. Thus, this book offers just about everything you need to bring Mythic Iberia to life.

THEME AND NATURE

Isolation and invasion; two concepts that seem antithetical to one another. These are, however, the two things that shape Iberia. The relationship between the peninsula's physical isolation and the invaders that have plagued it over the centuries has created a dynamic, proud, and fiercely defiant people.

Iberia is isolated in that it is almost completely surrounded by the waters of the Mediterranean and Atlantic. The peninsula is only connected to mainland Mythic Europe by a small stretch of land, sharing only 300 miles of border with France. Ironically, this small stretch of land further isolates Spain for it is here that the majestic Pyrenees rise, preventing nearly all travel between the two lands. And while the seas that surround Iberia contain her, limiting her bounds and reaches, they also, cruelly, fail to protect her. It is from the sea that many of the peninsula's raiders come. As the sea restricts the freedom of Iberia's people, it invites subjection, in the form of invasion.

However, given Iberia's nature, once invaders do land, they face constant struggle against the land's natives. The isolation that breeds a dynamic and proud people makes them equally fierce opponents, prepared to sacrifice all for independence.

And yet, though Iberians are isolated and victimized by their land, in some ways they benefit from both conditions. Invaders bring with them culture and law, both of which form the structure of a society that has existed for centuries. Invaders build roads, educate the people, and unify the culture. Isolation allows Iberians to retain solidarity and assimilate new-found cultures at a comfortable rate. Indeed, people of Iberia's coastal regions encounter various cultures and accept what they consider the best parts of each. Of these cultural traits, the most valued move inland on roads laid by the Romans, spreading from cities into rural areas.

The Magi of Iberia are representative of the peninsula's isolation-invasion dichotomy. Iberia's first wizards, belonging to the Cult of Mercury, came in the age of conquest, marching along side Roman armies, helping to establish a system of rule. With the fall of Rome the priests of Mercury diminished but never completely disappeared. The Roman tradition therefore lived on in only a few individuals.

The Order of Hermes emerged in Iberia much the way Mercury had. Flambeau led the invasion into Iberia and established the rule of the Order. However, where Magi elsewhere in Mythic Europe sought to flee the restrictions of mundane society, the first Iberian Covenants relished mundane society, being founded in or near cities. Only after founding urban Covenants did Hermetic Magi move into the interior, traveling on Roman roads. Many Magi found their

metropolitan lives incompatible with the lives of surrounding people. Thus, more in keeping with the rest of Mythic Europe's Magi, Iberia's wizards moved into rural areas, seeking places where studies could go uninterrupted. Once there, Magi became independent, relying less and less upon the rest of the Order. Indeed, many advocated a break from the Order, but followers of Flambeau, always numerous in the Tribunal, kept the idea from becoming reality. Without actually breaking from the Order the Tribunal became, over time, one of the most independent.

It is in this prison-like land of a fiery people that characters now find themselves, perhaps as inhabitants of the land, contributing to its nature, or as travelers, experiencing the land's unique nature firsthand.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This book has been written for two types of people. For experienced *Ars Magica* players I try to present a cohesive picture of the Iberian Tribunal. The material contained herein should be consistent with material previously published by White Wolf, while expanding in detail and color. For beginning *Ars Magica* players I hope this book evokes Iberia's splendor, to compel your characters to visit there. There is much more about Iberia than can be contained in a book this size. Think of this book as an enticement to visit your local library and delve further into the history and folklore of Iberia.

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