

Galleys of the citystates

While the merchant fleets of Tilea usually are made up of sailing ships the warships are still powered by oars.

Even before the invention of cannons tilean galleys have successfully fought on the seas of the old world to protect the coasts of their homecountry and in the service of various states of the Empire.

The days of such (lucrative) military aid are now over though as the Empire soon started to copy the Tilean design to build up it's own fleet.

They only replaced the small tilean cannons with less but bigger ones, a development which inevitably led towards the construction of the Hellhammer and the great number of crude jokes about imperial sailors and the size of their "cannons" which can be heard in every tilean tavern.

To this day Galleys control the Tilean Sea but over the years the design has changed and the various city states have developed their own style, depending on the way they fight their wars.

Remas once has suffered severely by the hands of a Dark Elf fleet and as a reaction their own fleet has been rebuilt to prevent such devastation to happen again.

They reduced their efforts to retake Sartosa from the arabian corsairs to a minimum and sold their huge transport galleys to Luccini which was in need of such ships as it now had to stem the tide of pirates alone. (Although a few ships of Tobarro took part in some battles too)

Instead they increased the number of small wargalleys.

They can maneuver easily in the harbour entrance and will turn it into a deathtrap for all enemies daring to sack their city again.

Of course, they are also capable to pay Miragliano or Luccini a visit should it become necessary but usually these are kept busy by their other enemies.

To continue their trading they also had to find new means to get across the seas.

Remas was the first citystate to exclusively use sailing ships for trade and exploration and chose the breton design for it's ability to ride stormy seas but combined it with the lighter build and rigging of the arabian corsairs which had troubled them so successful in the past.

Luccini has found it's arch enemies in the inhabitants of Sartosa. The will to wipe out the whole place has grown more and more and the galleyfleet has developed accordingly.

The principdom can send forth a great number of soldiers with their big galleys.

In the days when Remas decided to let Luccini stand alone against the corsairs of Arabia and in this way forced them to buy their old ships at a horrendous price (an act which has not been forgotten by the people of Luccini) the biggest ships were trieres which were manned with more than 200 fighters of which 170 were rowers.

Now Luccini's fleet hardly contains anything smaller and the common ship is the quinquere with 5 rows of oars on each side, with the biggest one beeing the "Pride of Luccini", a gigantic catamaran, with more than 4000 rowers.

With these ships Luccini owns a dangerous invasion force and who knows what the city's prince will do with it once Sartosa is conquered again.

Luckily the fortifications built by Luccini, in the short period after the arábians had been driven off and the pirates were not yet a serious threat, are strong and inhabited by vicious fighters, so that until now all attempts to take the island have failed.

At the moment Luccini suffers from a lack of soldiers anyway with the main problem being that those soldiers also have to be trained rowers.

Those big galleys cannot be manned by untrained crews or even slaves as those many oars have to be wielded with precision or will end in splinters.

Additionally, regarding the difference in numbers between rowers and other crewmembers, it makes no sense to waste so much space on civilian rowers.

Now all Mercenaries who want to be employed have to train rowing, but as this is the national sport anyway it won't take all too long before the fleet of Luccini leaves the harbour again.

Sartosa has been home to various kinds of people and most of the time these have been seafaring villains.

After Settra and the Darkelves had destroyed the tilean settlement came the Norse, followed by the arabian Corsairs and, after the short period of Luccini's rule, the Pirate Princes and their lot.

All of these groups had the problem that they needed food. While there is plenty of drinkingwater found on the island, vegetation is scarce and these people were no farmers anyway.

So usually, when they were not successful enough in their trade, they had to plunder the natural resources available. They had to start fishing.

Even the early Highelf inhabitants knew about the rich fishgrounds which could be found in the area now called the Pirate's Current. As a result fishing has a great tradition on the island and while noone would admit it, most of Sartosa's pirates are also skilled fishermen.

Sadly, over the centuries things have changed as more and more large seamonsters had moved into this region and the number of fish had dwindled. But the people of Sartosa allways had been creative and most importantly quite fearless and so they started to hunt the large beasts and became quite good at it; so good that they now even have to leave the coastal waters to find decent sized ones.

Although the pirates use quite a lot of different shiptypes they tend to rebuild them to suit their needs. Additional rigging is added to the masts so that they can either be used as cranes to pull out heavy nets or to grapple ships. These constructs are commonly called *tentacoli* and ships thus equipped *Seppia* with, depending on the origin, *Impero*, *Bretonnia* or *Remas* added.

The downside is the loss of speed but usually the pirates ambush their victims anyway so that this is no real problem.

This customizing also results in one of the most unusual shiptypes of the tilean coast :

The *Calmar* and it's *braccia*.

Calmars are huge ships, based on the imperial Greatship or the bretonnian Galleon, which now are used to hunt down the big Seamonsters living in the Tilean Sea.

The calmar transports the braccia close to their prey and these small rowingboats then attack it with their harpoonguns and bring it down with their great number.

In the end, the dead beast is dragged back to the big ship where it will be pulled onboard . There the crew already waits with blades and hooks to tear it apart and store it in the ship's belly.

The braccia crews are ruthless hunters on short range and although they are specialists in bringing down beasts they will not hesitate to attack ships if they have the opportunity.

These occur when the enemy ships have to be slowed down. Then they will fire their harpoons towards them and let themselves beeing dragged along while rowing hard to stay out of the ship's firearcs

Miragliano lives in a constant state of alert, in constant fear of the pest which is called "the Skaven". The times when those mutant ratmen were only rumoured to exist, stories to frighten children, have long gone.

Over the years Miragliano suffered several attacks of those creatures, no great battles, but an everincreasing number of small skirmishes between Gutterrunters and the cities specialist guards, the Ratcatchers.

Once they have only been just this, the catchers of rats, which infest the city and its canals in uncountable numbers. Over the years they have evolved into one of the hardest mercenary troops of miragliano, coldblooded tunnelfighters knowing every dark corner of the city, but nowdays they have even been seen to patrol the city in bright daylight.

Although it is not possible to deny the threat completely, the princes of Miragliano have done everything to make their citizens forget it as much as possible, by financing pompous events like operas, fireworks and other diversions.

But the leaders of the city know that the number of people, who have been found dead in the canals, has increased significantly and the heads of the various assassin's guilds have proven to be innocent in this matter as they were amongst them without exception.

An other predator stalks the city and, although Miragliano's defenses are strong, its claws are already active within its walls. Its ugly head, an increasing number of enemyships, had been sighted close to the harbour, as it prepares to go for the city's throat.

But a true Prince of Miragliano will not sit idle and wait for his death. He will try to kill his opponents first, (preferably from behind, when he is unarmed and from a distance, but you can't have everything) that is the way he got his job anyway.

A lot of tacticians were convinced that the attack would come from below, from the sewers and canals, with only limited support from their fleet.

It was unbelievable that those vermin should have a fleet big enough to conquer a city.

Even a classical assault of an army, coming from the marshes, would be more likely.

But the last sightings and the venomous glances from the prince have convinced them that there is truly a huge fleet amassing in the murky coastal waters of the marshes.

This was an unfortunate situation as Miragliano's fleet was in a bad state.

Explorers were well liked by the people for all the news and riches they bring but the common sailors had been branded as uncivilized ruffians and bringers of strange diseases, a remnant of the severe plagues which had struck the city in the past.

Of course, ships are important for trade, which is the foundation of the city's wealth, but the merchants finance their sailing ships on their own and hire mercenaries for their protection, so there was no need to maintain a fleet. Additionally there had been quite a long period of peace with only some raids which had all come from the Empire or Bretonnia, across the mountains.

Thus noone really cared when the warfleet literally fell apart due to lack of funds.

Now Miragliano is in dire need of one.

For this reason the shipyards have been producing a new fleet, hopefully without the Skavenagents taking notice.

Of course, a fleet cannot be hidden but no one would see a threat in the ever growing number of goldclad, heavily decorated ships which make up the evening parade through the city's canals, filled with orchestras and people in costumes.

Those ships are called *Buccaros* and they come in two sizes. They are galleys of an unusual design with a two storey building, four storeys in case of *Buccaro Principesco*, taking up most of the upperdeck while the prow is equipped with a huge leaning tower. They are powered exclusively by oars and look as if they are completely unarmed.

As stated above, they are heavily decorated, even with velvet curtains, and covered with sheets of brass. Some people like to say, it makes them look like floating brothels, although "palace" is the official term.

Despite the decadent looks they have been built for a deadly purpose.

The skavenfleets usually leave their secret harbours in the Blighted Marshes when the Gulf of Pearls is covered by fog and it is most likely that the attack will take place in such a condition. The city does everything to maintain a system of lookouts, disguised as harmless fishermen or smugglers, too insignificant to kill, as this would raise suspicions about a threat from the gulf.

Once the message of an incoming fleet reaches the city, the Buccaros will be manned by an army of ratcatchers, armed with boardingpikes and crossbows. Stucko will be ripped from the rails to reveal hidden gunports as the broadsides of tilean cannons get loaded.

The plan is to send the fleet into the thick mist where they will hopefully end up amidst the skavenships.

Once a Buccaro makes contact it will light the signalfire at the top of it's tower showing it's location to it's own side and illuminating the enemy, so that the cannons and crossbows can do their deadly work. Especially the crossbowmen are trained to kill the enemy crews and without hindering sails they have an all around firing arc, so that a Skaven ship will loose most of it's crewmembers before being able to board.

A skaven boarding party would be efficently skewered by the pikemen of course.

In effect the ships become small, gleaming fortresses with the brass reflecting the lights.

(An effect which has become the main attraction of the evening parade.)

In battle, the gleam is meant to dazzle the skaven gunner's eyes and thus spoil their aim, while giving the tileans some means of orientation. The metal also protects ship and crew from projectiles and fires, as do the curtains which will be soaked with water.

These will even give some protection from the fiendish poisonous fumes which some ratmen use as weapons.

No one knows if these tactics will work and all that is known about the Buccaros is, that they maneuver well enough, with the narrow canals beeing a good training ground.

Surprise is one of the main aspects of the plan and secrecy is crucial.

So, no mock battles have been fought, no cannons fired and no ship has ever left the harbour.

A risky business, but tileans are traders, allways willing to take a risk if the profit seems right.

And if it is true, that the incoming fleet carries the major part of the Skaven forces (otherwise the city would be doomed anyway), it's destruction would save Miragliano from further Skaven attacks for years to come, which will secure traderoutes and thus income.

High enough profits for those who have to make the decisions and so, if everything goes well, the Skaven will be received in a way they will not forget.

Tobaro lies a little bit outside the common trading routes and is quite difficult to reach, due to the great number of islands and shallows which are spread along the coast.

The ships of Tobaro are built accordingly so that only the foreign ships need the expensive pilots to reach the harbour savely.

Usually this is the case when traders on their way to Estalia and other parts of the old world get caught in the Tilean Sea by a storm.

Such storms are quite common and start with a wind which blows strongly north so that the ships have to sail against the wind. Most captains will notice soon enough that they will not even make it past Gorgon's Ola and that their ship will become just another wreck on the beach of one of the many isles.

Some try to reach Remas or Luccini across the Tilean Sea which is quite a risk, especially for galleys as with the wind come very high waves which shatter oars like matchsticks.

A save alternative is Miragliano but this city is much further away than Tobaro.

Unwilling to loose even more time by sailing there, the captains will grudgingly pay the required amount.

Not to pay is seen as a sure death sentence as the shallows are vicious and due to the various currents they could change their positions within weeks, so that former visits would be of no help. On the other hand, once in the city's harbour, a captain will find enough traders and skilled shipwrights to put his ship back in full order and to replenish his stock, and as long as the captain still has an other option(i.e he could reach an other habour), for reasonable prices. This natural defense should keep hostile fleets at bay but there have allways been ruthless admirals willing to sacrifice some ships just to find the safe route.

This tactic was applied successfully by Sultan Jaffar in 1448 when he sent his fleet against Tobaro as revenge for its support of Estalia.

In his rage he drove his ships mercilessly through the shallow waters towards the harbour. One ship in ten had sunk in this madness.

Still there were enough ships left to become a dire threat to the city but its formidable defenses held.

Tobaro's fleet did not see much action as they were greatly outgunned and outnumbered. They had to confine themselves to some small raids on stragglers when they could be sure to have enough headstart to reach their hideouts amongst the isles.

In the beginning they had some successes when they could lure those few ships which could pursue them past the Isles of Sirens where Jaffar's arabs quickly succumbed to their deadly spell. Since then it is tradition for Tobaro's sailors to carry a pair of earplugs made from wax on a string around their necks.

In the end the arabs had learned their lesson and simply let their enemies run, only to lure them in ambushes a few hours later.

The only good aspect was, that the city's fleet was not destroyed and able to prevent the raids of pirates which usually show up to take advantage of the weakened state of the city's defenses.

Since then the fleet of Tobaro has not changed significantly, as their ships are too well adapted to these difficult waters. A few shoreforts have been built though, to defend the harbour entrance.

Still the fleet is made up by a mixture of small galleys with the biggest ones having two rows of oars but still not reaching the length of an average imperial ship.

Those shiptypes are called the *Razza Agile*, a quarter galley capable of enormous sailing feats, the *Razza Coraggioso* a half galley, capable to ram and damage much bigger ships, but risking its own destruction in the attempt and the *Razza Robusto*, a full size galley but, although it is a bireme, smaller than its counterparts from other countries and of very light build.

Tobaro's ships are only effective in great numbers and usually only close to the coast where they can outmaneuver their enemies amongst reefs and sandbanks.