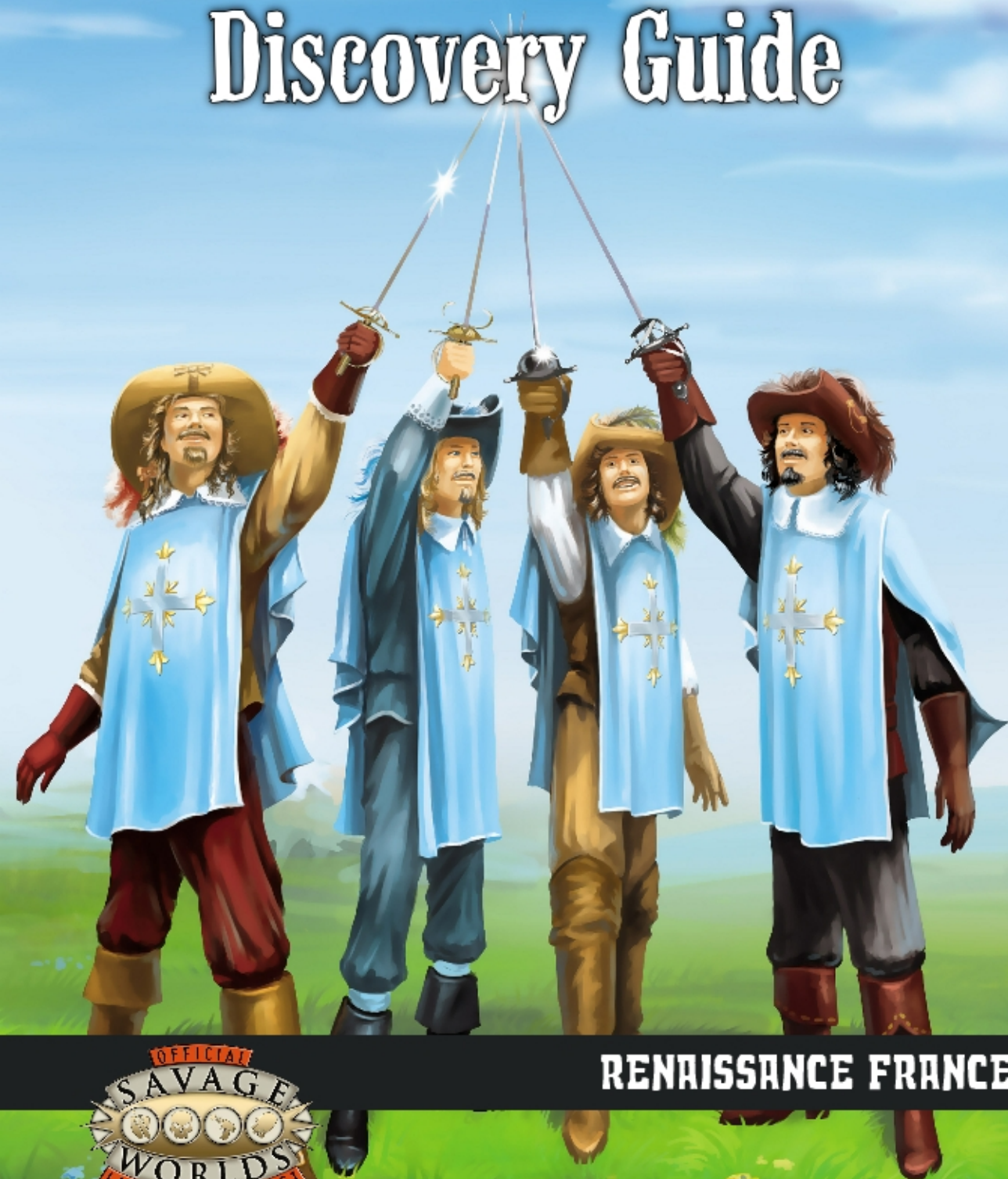# Ultimate Age of Discovery Guide

RENAISSANCE FRANCE

The world of Renaissance France spans from around the turn of the century in 1500 to the beginning of Louis XIV's personal reign in the mid-1660s. While this covers only a little more than 150 years, the changes that occurred during this period were immense.

Ultimate Age of Discovery Guide: Renaissance France is a sourcebook for Savage Worlds that delves into France during the Renaissance period. This less than two century span was filled with religious turmoil, rebellion, persecution, tumultuous nobility, blackpowder weapons, and of course the great swashbuckling musketeers!

Ultimate Age of Discovery Guide: Renaissance France includes:

- A brief history of Renaissance France.
- A look at the different areas of France during the Renaissance.
- The many military divisions of the Maison du Roi.
- The King's Musketeers.
- New Edges, Hindrances, and Equipment.
- Non-player Characters
- A collection of adventure frames.
- ... and more!

Ultimate Age of Discovery Guide: Renaissance France can lay the groudwork for a historical or alternate history adventure set within Renaissance France. It can also be used as a guide for creating swashbuckling characters within fantasy or historical games.

MYSTICAL THRONE ENTERTAINMENT

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Ultimate Age of Discovery Guide: Renaissance France

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A Brief History of Renaissance France

The world of Renaissance France spans from around the turn of the century in 1500 to the beginning of Louis XIV's personal reign in the mid-1660s. While this covers only a little more than 150 years, the changes that occurred during this period were immense – far too immense to cover in this guide, unfortunately. This section should provide some background and flavor for the period while highlighting the major figures, events, and developments GMs can incorporate into a Renaissance France-themed game for Savage Worlds.

The material is intended to be more of an historical amuse-bouche rather than a full meal, providing a bit of context for the material in the rest of the guide and hopefully triggering the imagination with gaming ideas. There are many fanatic resources in English for those interested in learning more about the period, and several of them are highlighted in the Bibliography section at the end of *Ultimate Age of Discovery Guide: Renaissance France*.

France at the Turn of the Century and the Italian Wars

France in the year 1500 bears only the slightest resemblance to the country we think of today. Forget the tricolor, Eifel tower, wide Parisian boulevards, haute cuisine, and 35-hour workweek. Our France, the France of the Renaissance, was a very different place. This was a place caught between the world of the medieval past and something new – a kind of fuzzy pre-modernity struggling to be born. The tensions could be seen almost everywhere. For instance, on the battlefield, heavily armored noble knights charged gallantly into assembled gunlines of musketeers and artillery.

The re-discovery of classical learning, that had begun in Italy a century before, had made its way into France and influenced a generation of humanists and reformers to challenge millennia-old assumptions about the way the world works. European contact with the Americas also opened new horizons as tall ships set sail from French ports to ply the vast oceans, bringing the cultures of the New and Old World into contact for the first time.

France emerged from the fifteenth century on a high note. She defeated her English rival in the Hundred Years War, allowing her to incorporate the vast costal territories of the Aquitaine (southwestern France) and Normandy into the kingdom. The king's last remaining rival within France, the rich Duke of Burgundy, died heirless and his lands passed to the throne. The French population had also recovered from the twin devastations of war and plague that had reduced their numbers by half between 1330 and 1450. By 1500, over 15 million people resided in the kingdom of France, by far the largest of any European state.

An economic boom started in the 1460s that extended into the 1520s. Grain yields rose as farmers transformed forests into fields, urbanization continued at a rapid pace, and foreign trade expanded. With its increased manpower reserves, economic might, and modernized army honed from a century of war, France was ready to flex its muscles abroad.

Charles VIII ascended the throne of France at the end of the century and set his eyes on the rich, poorly defended lands of Italy laying just over the Alps. He possessed a medieval claim to the throne of Naples and jumped at the opportunity to lead an army into Italy when the Duke of Milan literally invited him in to crush the rival Republic of Venice. The forces of Charles VIII swept away all in their path and successfully captured Naples, but a combination of disease (including possibly, the first cases of syphilis brought back from the New World) and increasingly hostile Italian states forced him to abandon his gains and withdraw to French soil. While the campaign ended in failure, it introduced France to the cultural wonders of the Renaissance and drew her into a sixty-year conflict with Spain, known as the Italian Wars, to determine who would become the master of the peninsula.

The succession of Charles of Habsburg to the throne of Spain, and subsequent election as Holy Roman Emperor, ratcheted up the international tensions in Europe. France had a new king, the dashing François I, who wanted the crown of the Holy Roman Empire for himself. He paid the imperial electors handsome bribes for it, but Charles paid more. A personal rivalry developed between the two monarchs that quickly manifested itself into clashes on the battlefield. François, reared on the popular *chansons de geste* of the legendary courts of King Arthur and Charlemagne, imagined himself as a chivalric, martial king. In a sense, François embodied the ideal Renaissance prince of Machiavelli – brave and ruthless in battle yet a great patron of the arts and learning at home. His lead-from-the-front style resulted in some of France's greatest military victories, such as at the Battle of Marignano where a victorious François asked to be knighted on the field by the great Chevalier Bayard, and most crushing defeats, such as the Battle of Pavia where François was taken prisoner by his rival Charles.

Ultimately, the combined might of Spain, bolstered by the wealth of its American empire, and the Holy Roman Empire proved too much to overcome. In 1559, an exhausted France capitulated, leaving Spain as the master of Italy. However, another deadly conflict was right around this corner, only this time it would strike much closer to home.

The Wars of Religion

While the Italian Wars were raging abroad, major social changes were taking place throughout Europe. The German monk Martin Luther's protests against the abuses in the Catholic Church had set off a religious firestorm, leading to the Protestant Reformation. The French theologian John Calvin continued in Luther's footsteps by developing his own formulation of what the new, 'purified,' Christian church should be.

The invention of the printing press allowed for the rapid dissemination of knowledge and ideas like never before. By the 1520s, the reformed doctrines of John Calvin were circulating throughout France and winning converts. François I fancied himself as an enlightened prince and at first took a moderate stance towards the religious dissenters. However, François' tacit toleration of Protestantism would soon end after the so-called "Affair of the Placards."

On the night of October 17, 1534, a group of Protestant pamphleteers swept through the streets of the largest cities in France, nailing posters (the eponymous placards) critical of Catholic doctrine in markets and town squares. One enterprising pamphleteer even made his way into the king's private residence at Blois and nailed a poster to his bedchamber door. François reacted with alarm to both the breach of security and direct attack on the authority of the Catholic Church, an institution that he was oath-bound to uphold and protect. The King loudly pro-

claimed his adherence to the Catholic faith and put out a sizable reward for the arrest of the perpetrators, several of whom were later captured and burned at the stake, beginning a general persecution of 'heretics' throughout the kingdom. In 1540, he issued the Edict of Fontainebleau, explicitly outlawing all forms of Protestant worship within France.

In spite of the edict, Protestantism continued to spread throughout the country in the 1540s and 50s. François I and his successor, Henri II, were too absorbed by the Italian Wars to fully commit to extirpating the new religion, particularly since it took root most strongly amongst the nobility and emerging, literate class of urban merchants, bankers, manufacturers, and navigators. Growing tensions between French Catholics and Protestants, known as the Huguenots, finally boiled over following the untimely death of Henri II.

To celebrate the peace of Cateau-Cambrésis ending the Italian Wars, Henri II hosted an elaborate tournament in which he participated personally. While jousting against the commander of his Scottish Guard, a lance shattered against Henri's armor, slid underneath his visor, and lodged itself in the king's right eye. Henri lingered on in pain for days, but the wound was fatal. He died of a brain infection one week later, throwing the country into chaos.

Henri's underage sons would be incapable of stopping the rapidly escalating violence between the militant Catholic and Huguenot factions. The fifteen year-old François II would reign only one year before his own death late in 1560. Following him was his brother Charles IX, taking the throne at age ten and dying of illness after a tumultuous reign in 1574. His younger brother ascended the throne as Henri III and ruled for over fifteen years before falling to the assassin's knife as the last member of the Valois dynasty. The one constant through all of their reigns and the true power behind the throne was their mother, the widow of Henri II and Dowager Queen of France, Catherine de Medici.

Catherine de Medici was undoubtedly one of the most powerful women of the sixteenth century and has therefore been surrounded by controversy from her own time up to the present day. Historical interpretations run the gamut, with some viewing her as a ruthless master manipulator while others see her in a more sympathetic light as someone who only wanted to bring peace to France and secure the throne for her sons.

The French Wars of Religion were a convoluted mix of violence, diplomacy, shifting alliances, political intrigue, and dynastic disputes that at times bears a striking resemblance to *A Game of Thrones*. Violence erupted in 1562 following an event known as the Massacre of Vassy. François, the Duke of Guise, a zealous Catholic hailing from one of the greatest noble houses in the kingdom, discovered a congregation of Huguenots praying in a barn on his estate and ordered his men to kill all of them. Outraged Huguenots throughout the kingdom took up arms in defense. While they constituted no more than 15% of the total population, the Huguenots were strongly represented amongst the warrior nobility, giving them a military presence that far exceeded their numbers. From 1562 to 1598, France was locked in a nearly constant state of religious-civil war, the periodic peace treaties little more than temporary ceasefires allowing the respective sides to rest and re-arm.

The Huguenots' leadership comprised some of the most powerful nobles in France. The House of Bourbon was a cadet branch of the ruling House of Valois, yet fiercely Protestant. The highest-ranking member was Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre (a client kingdom of France) and wife of Antoine de Bourbon, a royal prince of the blood. Her son, the young Henri de Navarre, became one of the leading Huguenot commanders alongside her brother-in-law, Louis de Bourbon, the Prince of Condé. They were joined by Gaspard de Coligny, the popular Admiral of France,

well-connected to the royal court. Opposing them was the ultra-Catholic House of Guise, who saw itself as the true defender of the Roman Church against both Protestant heretics and a weak monarchy that was too willing to negotiate.

The kings of France, guided by Catherine de Medici, attempted to steer a middle course by preserving the Catholic character of the kingdom while granting limited toleration to the Huguenots. Foreign powers also intervened as Philip II of Spain supported the Catholic forces led by the Dukes of Guise while Elizabeth I of England and the emerging Dutch Republic supported their Huguenot co-religionists.

By 1572, the two sides were locked in a bloody stalemate. The Huguenots had been driven from northern France, but were securely entrenched in their strongholds in the southern and western parts of the country, particularly their de facto capital of La Rochelle. Catherine de Medici, in an attempt to bring lasting peace to the kingdom, convinced Jeanne d'Albret to agree to the marriage of her son Henri to Catherine's daughter Princess Margot. What transpired after the wedding was one of the most horrific acts of religious violence in all of European history.

François, the Duke of Guise and perpetrator of the Massacre of Vassy, had been killed by a Huguenot assassin in the early days of the war. The assassin implicated Coligny's involvement under torture; yet despite his later recantation, Coligny's vehement denials, and no other evidence linking Coligny to the assassination, Henri, the new Duke of Guise, always blamed the Admiral for his father's murder. Coligny had arrived in Paris along with the rest of the Huguenot leadership to celebrate the royal marriage and stayed in the capital afterwards to negotiate with the royal family, another fact that infuriated the Duke. On August 22, while returning from a meeting with Charles IX at the Louvre, an assassin shot Coligny from a building owned by the House of Guise. Coligny survived the assassination attempt, yet the rattled Huguenots began to ready their troops in anticipation of an attack.

On the following day, Charles IX, Catherine de Medici, and the Duke of Guise all agreed to launch a preemptive strike against the Huguenots. In the early morning hours of August 24, the slaughter began. The Duke of Guise dispatched Coligny with his own hands while the Royal Swiss Guards murdered the rest of the Huguenot leadership. The violence quickly spread to the streets as popular tensions boiled over. The Catholic residents of Paris slaughtered their Protestant neighbors indiscriminately and in the days and weeks ahead, these massacres radiated out from the capital into the provincial cities of the kingdom. In all, some 10,000 French Protestants lost their lives and thousands more converted out of mortal fear. While this Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre did not break the Huguenots – and indeed the Wars of Religion would soon continue for another two decades – it did denote their high water mark.

Charles IX died only two years after the massacre, leaving his younger brother to succeed him as Henri III. Catherine had now seen three of her sons ascend the throne and her fourth son, the pro-Huguenot François, Duke of Anjou, would die of malaria in 1584. Her worst fear had come to pass: the childless Henri III would be the last Valois king of France and the throne was now up for grabs. According to the Salic law that governed the royal succession, Henri de Navarre was the rightful heir to the throne by virtue of being first prince of the blood. The ultra-Catholics, now organized into a militant Catholic League, could never accept a Protestant as king and pushed to have their own leader, Henri the Duke of Guise, recognized as the rightful heir. The Wars of Religion now entered their bloodiest phase, descriptively titled the 'War of the Three Henrys.' Henri III allied with his erstwhile enemy Henri de Navarre against the increasingly presumptuous Duke of Guise and ultimately ordered the Duke's assassination, earning him the everlasting enmity of the Catholic League. In 1589, a zealous Dominican monk inflicted the same fate upon the king, fatally stabbing Henri III during a royal audience. The Huguenot Henri de

Navarre ascended the throne as King Henri IV and immediately found himself at war with half the kingdom.

The new king was a skilled military leader and spent the next several years pacifying the realm. However, Catholic Paris would not submit to him and he knew that France would continue to bleed if he could not forge a permanent religious settlement. Regardless of whether he actually said *"Paris vaut bien une messe"* (Paris is well worth a mass), Henri decided for the sake of peace to convert to Catholicism while also granting substantial rights to the Huguenot minority in the Edict of Nantes. By 1598, Henri IV was secure in his throne as the first Bourbon king of France and the long Wars of Religion were over.

The Apogee: From Louis XIII and Richelieu to Louis XIV

Henri worked to rejuvenate a France torn apart by decades of civil war. He appointed both his Protestant friends and former Catholic League enemies to high positions and embarked on a program of internal improvements in infrastructure, construction, finance, agriculture, and education. His objective was to put a 'chicken in the pot' of every family, popularizing the phrase over three hundred years before it was resurrected by Herbert Hoover. Abroad, Henri authorized a number of new colonization ventures, resulting in the first permanent French settlements in North America.

The king's genuine concern for his country and people earned him the epithet 'the good king Henri,' yet it would not last. In 1610, a Catholic fanatic stabbed the king to death while he was processing through the streets of Paris. In an instant, it appeared as though someone had turned back the clock to the bad old days. The nine-year-old Louis XIII became king and his mother, Marie de Medici, was appointed as regent. The nervous Huguenots began to ready themselves for a new confrontation.

In 1620, Louis forcibly incorporated the semi-independent, heavily Protestant country of Navarre-Béarn (former domain of Jeanne d'Albret) into France and re-established the primacy of the Catholic religion there. Huguenots throughout the country panicked. Led by the brothers the Duke of Rohan and Duke of Soubise, they met in the fortified city of La Rochelle and decided to take up arms against the king. For the next eight years the so-called Huguenot rebellions raged intermittently as Protestant seafarers from La Rochelle dominated the waves while the royal army slowly ground down opposition throughout the rest of the country. Cardinal Richelieu, appointed Chief Minister to Louis XIII in 1624, believed that the king's power would never be abso-

lute if he could not destroy the Huguenot 'state-within-a-state' once and for all. In 1628, the last remaining Huguenot holdout of La Rochelle finally capitulated after a deadly siege claimed the lives of over three-quarters of its population.

Richelieu was now free to implement his plan to transform France into the most powerful nation in Europe. In spite of his position as a Cardinal of the Catholic Church, Richelieu was a political pragmatist first and foremost. He willingly worked with Protestants if it helped to further his aims and offered high-ranking posts to the leaders of the Huguenot rebellions such as the Rohan brothers and Jean Guitton, the recalcitrant mayor of La Rochelle. Catholic Spain was Richelieu's prime target and he launched a two-pronged attack to break the Habsburg encirclement of France. First, he recognized that Spain's lifeblood was the treasure returning from the New World, secured by a seemingly invincible fleet. France would need a strong navy if she were to challenge Spanish dominance of the seas and establish colonies of her own. Second, he needed to break the power of the Habsburg-dominated Holy Roman Empire on France's eastern frontier.

The French navy did not exist as an institution prior to Richelieu. The maritime regions of the country were divided into a number of different 'Admiralties,' including the Admiralty of France (limited to the northern provinces of Normandy and Picardy), the Admiralty of Brittany, the Admiralty of Guyenne (most of the Atlantic coast, including La Rochelle), and the Admiralty of Levant (the Mediterranean coast). The Admirals in charge of these jurisdictions were typically high-ranking noblemen with no experience in maritime affairs, treating the office as an income-generating honorific title. The King of France had only a small galley fleet in the Mediterranean and relied on conscripting private merchant ships into royal service during times of war.

The Wars of Religion revealed the glaring deficiencies in this system as the maritime provinces were dominated by Huguenots. As such, the Huguenots exercised near complete control of the French coast and Atlantic waterways by licensing privateers to ravage Catholic shipping. The Duke de Soubise masterfully commanded the fleet of La Rochelle during the Huguenot rebellions and at one point even captured the French flagship while at anchor. This incident allowed Richelieu to convince the king to invest in a massive naval buildup, resulting in the blockade and capture of La Rochelle. With the rebellions crushed, Richelieu set about modernizing the administration by abolishing the old admiralties and appointing himself the Grand Master of Navigation.

Meanwhile, in 1618, a dispute over religion in Bohemia (a constituent kingdom of the Holy Roman Empire) resulted in two imperial agents being thrown out of the window by an assembly of Protestants, leading to the outbreak of the Thirty Years War. Much like the French Wars of Religion, the Thirty Years War is less a singular conflict than an incredibly convoluted series of events where religion combined with balance-of-power politics to produce the most destructive European conflict prior to Napoleon. Catholic France, at the direction of Cardinal Richelieu, had been providing generous subsidies to the Protestant German states and their Danish and Swedish allies to bolster their fight against the Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor. However, by 1635, the Protestants were exhausted and their greatest commander, the Swedish warrior-king Gustavus Adolphus, lay dead, killed at the Battle of Lützen. Richelieu saw that he had no other choice and convinced Louis XIII to declare war on Spain and the Empire.

The first years saw a string of defeats for France as the combined Habsburg armies drove towards Paris. However, years of conflict had exhausted their reserves and the offensive slackened. French forces counterattacked and drove deeply into Spanish-controlled Flanders and the Imperial cities west of the Rhine, both highly sought after war prizes for Richelieu. Finally, on May 19, 1643, French forces

decisively defeated the vaunted Spanish tercios at the Battle of Rocroi. However, neither Richelieu nor Louis XIII would live to see it. Richelieu had died the year before after a period of illness and the king passed away only 5 days before the battle. Richelieu's protégé, the Italian Cardinal Mazarin, took over as chief minister to the five-year-old Louis XIV. In this way, the Battle of Rocroi marked not only France eclipsing Spain as the mightiest power in Europe, but also the culmination of Richelieu and Louis XIII's grand design, passing the torch to Mazarin and Louis XIV.

The Peace of Westphalia ended the Thirty Years War in 1648 and France was a clear victor. Her borders expanded on nearly all sides as the former Imperial cities of Metz, Toul, and Verdun came under French suzerainty along with the Italian city of Pinerolo. A later peace treaty with Spain also awarded France the Flemish cities of Artois and Arras in the north and the Pyrenean city of Perpignan in the south. However, triumph abroad did not settle matters at home. The country would once again descend into bloody civil war, the last that it would experience prior to the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789.

The five-year conflict known as the Fronde began almost immediately after the conclusion of the Thirty Years War in 1648. The great nobles of France had seen their powers curtailed and ancient feudal rights trampled upon by Richelieu for decades. His successor, Mazarin, appeared to be no different and, in fact, took an even more aggressive approach to centralizing power in the hands of the king. The traditional preserve of noble rights were the parlements, regional law courts responsible for registering – and, at times, resisting – royal edicts, the most powerful of which was the Parlement of Paris. When Mazarin attempted to impose a tax on the officers of the Parlement of Paris without their consent, the body rose in rebellion and called for a meeting of the Estates-General to impose hard limits on royal absolutism. This first 'Fronde of the Parlement' was short-lived and ended when royal troops returning from the front recaptured Paris from the Frondeurs in 1649.

The peace did not last and a more deadly 'Fronde of the Nobles' erupted in the following year. Some of France's greatest generals from the Thirty Years War, such as the Viscount of Turenne and Prince of Condé, took up arms against the young king. Mazarin adopted a masterful carrot and stick approach, a combined military force with generous patronage, in order to win nobles back into the royalist camp. Slowly, the tide started to turn against the rebelling nobles. By 1653, the final pockets of resistance capitulated and the Fronde ended with a complete victory for Mazarin and Louis XIV. This early experience with rebellion left an indelible imprint on the young king that would color the rest of his reign. Louis became committed to royal absolutism, seeing any dissention from his wishes or curbs on his authority as a pathway to rebellion and chaos.

With the old nobility broken, Louis took every opportunity he could to consolidate power into his own hands. He began an ambitious project to expand the royal hunting lodge of Versailles into a grand palace that would rival all others in Europe. Versailles would not only become a physical manifestation of his reign, representing the grandeur of the 'Sun King' in glass, gold leaf, and marble, but it would also bind the nobility to him as courtiers rather than as vassals and break the power of Paris by relocating the court outside of the city limits.

In 1661, Cardinal Mazarin died and Louis decided he would not appoint a new Chief Minister. From this point until his death in 1715, the country would remain under the personal rule of the King. While France would reach the height of its power and glory under the reign of Louis XIV, the open, adventurous, and inquisitive spirit of the Renaissance was gone, replaced by modern, technocratic bureaucracy and ever-expanding royal control over all aspects of life.

The Uneasy Pentagon

France in the Renaissance was a land divided in nearly every possible way. The northern half of the country spoke the *Langue d'Oïl*, the predecessor of modern French, whereas the southern half of the country spoke the *Langue d'Oc*, or *Occitan*. Linguistic minorities also existed in the Celtic-speaking province of Brittany and in German, Italian, Basque, Flemish, and Catalan-speaking border regions. The legal systems were also wholly dissimilar. Northern France utilized Germanic customary law while the Latinate south continued its tradition of Roman law centuries after the last legions departed from ancient Gaul. This patchwork legal system applied equally to the plethora of privileges, exemptions, and special rules that applied to the various regions of the kingdom. Therefore, it is more accurate to characterize Renaissance France as a confederation of provinces owing fealty to the king rather than as a unified nation-state sharing a common culture. This section will detail metropolitan France broken down into five, rough geographic regions along with her nascent colonies in the New World.

Île-de-France and the Royal Domains

The Île-de-France (literally the 'Island of France') was the administrative core from which all authority radiated. The capital of the Île-de-France was (and is) Paris, the greatest city in the kingdom and largest in all of Western Europe. The Île-de-France formed the personal domain and residence of the kings of France from the ninth century onwards. Unlike the rest of France, which was divided up into various Baronies, Dukedoms, Marquisates, Counties, Free Cities, and Independent Bishoprics owing feudal allegiance to the king, the Île-de-France was one of the few areas where the king reigned supreme in his own right.

Just because the king ruled in the Île-de-France did not mean his power was absolute. The Roman Catholic Church also held considerable sway and could claim a legacy that extended further into the past than the authority of the French kings. The first bishop of Paris was Saint Denis, a Fourth-Century Roman martyr whose headless iconography can still be seen all over Paris. The Renaissance bishops of Paris, presiding over the tallest and grandest structure in the entire city – the Cathedral de Notre-Dame – jealously guarded their authority against any hint of royal encroachment. Similarly, the Parlement of Paris had grown from a small offshoot of the King's Council into a permanent body whose power acted as a check on royal authority.

The Royal Domains also extended beyond the Île-de-France. The central provinces of Orléannais, Bourbonnais, and Berry were either ruled directly by the King of France or by his brothers and sons, and the provinces of Champagne, Maine, Auvergne, and Anjou were later incorporated into the Royal Domains as well. These were cold yet agriculturally productive regions and Champagne was already well known for its sparkling wines and popular trade fairs that drew merchants from all over Europe. Its capital city of Reims was the traditional coronation site of the French kings dating to the conversion and baptism of the Frankish war chief Clovis in the Fifth-Century. In the great cathedral of Reims the new king would be anointed by the Archbishop with sacred oil from the holy ampulla, supposedly descended from heaven itself, signifying his divine right to rule and the everlasting link between throne and altar.

The Île-de-France and Royal Domains are perhaps the easiest regions in which to set a Renaissance France game. It has the most classically French 'feel' as a land covered with vineyards, forests, fields, hamlets, and fortified chateaux. It is also the perfect setting for a GM looking to incorporate political intrigue and urban environments into a Renaissance France campaign. Paris is the center of power and a bustling metropolis. The authority of the king is strong here (usually) and hierarchies are deeply rooted. Players will be able to purchase nearly any material good available in the setting, if they're willing to pay the right price, and having the right connections will afford them access to the most powerful men and women in the kingdom.

Northern France

Northern France is a hard land whose rugged, fiercely independent people are reflected in its rocky coastline. In many ways the cities of northern France have closer ties to Britain – sitting just off the channel coast – than to the rest of France. The two largest areas of northern France are the provinces of Normandy and Brittany.

The name Normandy is itself a testament to the region's Viking heritage. Fierce 'Northmen' in the Ninth and Tenth-Centuries raided along the French coast and even sailed down the Seine River to attack Paris. The exhausted French kings offered the Vikings a deal: in exchange for swearing fealty to the French crown and refraining from any further raiding, they could have the northern coastline of the kingdom as a fiefdom.

Norman Duke William maintained the warlike legacy of his Viking heritage by launching his own invasion of England in 1066, becoming king after the death of the Anglo-Saxon king Harold Godwinson at the Battle of Hastings. The Duchy of Normandy now occupied a precarious position with its dukes being both vassals of the king of France as well as kings of England in their own right. Dynastic tensions between the crowns of England and France eventually led to the outbreak of the Hundred Years War in 1337 and Normandy was hotly contested territory. The province lost over half of its population during the war, yet the legal status of Normandy was settled in favor of France.

Prosperity had returned once again to Normandy by the time of the Renaissance. Rouen, its capital city, grew to become the third largest in the kingdom (behind Paris and Lyons) and seat of its own regional parlement. Boosted by the growing power of the port cities of Honfleur and Dieppe, Normandy became the primary seafaring region of France. Trade had expanded so greatly that in 1517 François I decided to build the new port city of Le Havre in Normandy.

From 1500 to the start of the Wars of Religion in 1562, the cities of Normandy were some of the most dynamic in the kingdom, drawing in people and wealth from both home and abroad. Henri II's royal visit to Rouen in 1550 typified Norman splendor during this period. The merchants of the city hosted a triumphal entry for the king and created an elaborate 'American village' as the centerpiece, complete with vegetation brought back from the New World along with several native Brazilians who staged a mock combat for the bemused royal onlooker. However, the Wars of Religion broke the prosperity of the region as cities changed hands frequently between Catholic and Huguenot forces, each time being subjected to damaging and violent reprisals. While the region would rebound somewhat in the seventeenth century, it never again returned to its former glory.

The Province of Brittany shares many features in common with Normandy, but its culture is even more unique. Unlike the rest of France, Brittany is a Celtic land. In the early sixth century, the Germanic Anglo-Saxon tribes invaded Britain and drove its native Celtic inhabitants into the western fringes of the island known today as Wales and Cornwall. Many of these people chose to migrate even farther and set out across the waves, establishing refuge colonies in Brittany. These colonies were eventually united into a small kingdom in the ninth century and maintained its independent status from France for over a century. Only the damage cause by the Vikings finally required the King of Brittany to request aid from the

King of France in exchange for an oath of fealty. Brittany's allegiance wavered between France and England during the Hundred Years War, but by 1532 François I finally succeeding in uniting the Breton and French crowns. In exchange, the province retains a distinct legal status within the kingdom that grants it a high degree of autonomy, including both its own parlement and Estates-General.

Atlantic France

Atlantic France covers the western coastline of the country, including in its reach the small provinces of Poitou, Aunis, and Saintonge, the large province of Guyenne, and the semi-independent kingdom of Béarn-Navarre. Atlantic France is a rival and competitor to northern France, yet the two regions share much in common. Both were once territories of the Kingdom of England, recently incorporated into the Kingdom of France in the last century, and both are coastal regions with thriving maritime and commercial sectors. However, the two regions are split by the question of religion. Northern France had a sizable Huguenot population at the outset of the Wars of Religion, but a series of disasters culminating in the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre slowly forced them to flee or convert. By the 1580s, both Normandy and Brittany form the home base of the zealous Catholic League. In contrast, Atlantic France is the center of French Protestantism.

Calvinism took root early in the city of La Rochelle. By the time of the Wars of Religion, a majority of its population was Protestant. Wealthy, surrounded by strong fortifications on its landward side, and possessing a formidable fleet, La Rochelle was a hard nut for Catholic forces to crack. The great nobles Jeanne d'Albret, Gaspard de Coligny, Louis de Condé, and Henri de Navarre transformed La Rochelle into the de facto Huguenot capital by locating their headquarters in the city. They banned the Catholic faith and constructed a huge Grand Temple in the city center to act as a kind of Protestant Cathedral. It maintained its special status at the conclusion of the Wars of Religion as one of the "surety cities" granted to the Huguenots by the Edict of Nantes. Richelieu finally destroyed the Huguenot "state-within-a-state" when he captured La Rochelle after a long siege, ending its period as a semi-independent maritime republic. However, La Rochelle continued to be the primary French port for trade with the Americas and supported the largest Huguenot population of any city in France.

Bordeaux is the other major trading center in Atlantic France. Unlike La Rochelle, Bordeaux did not become a Protestant bastion due to it being the seat of the Catholic-dominated regional parlement. Bordeaux's biggest exports during the Renaissance are what the city is best known from today: its world-class wines and famous eau-de-vie from the nearby regions of Cognac and Armagnac.

Southern France

The sunny Mediterranean region lying between the mountain ranges of the Pyrenees in the west and the Alps in the east has a distinctive identity all its own. This is a region that has far more in common with Barcelona and Milan than it does with Paris. For centuries, southern France has spoken a different language, used different laws, eaten different food, and often practiced a different religion than their countrymen to the north.

Atlantic France is a natural location for games set during the Wars of Religion or GMs looking to add a nautical, cosmopolitan flair to their campaign. Due to the region's centuries-long ties with England and the strong international connections its Huguenot merchants maintain with their co-religionists in London and Amsterdam, Atlantic France can feel like a world apart from the rest of the country. The primary departure point for exploration, trading, and colonization voyages to the Americas shifts from northern France to Atlantic France over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This makes the region a good home base for games that incorporate a substantial 'New World' component. Huguenot pirates setting out from La Rochelle were also some of the first to ravage Spanish colonies and shipping in the Americas. This early era of Caribbean piracy can provide a fascinating setting for a swashbuckling campaign set nearly a century before its 'Golden Age.'

The very name of its largest province, Languedoc, is a testament to the domi-nance of the Occitan language (which uses 'oc' to say yes rather than 'oui'). The height of southern France's power and glory was the thirteenth century. While the great southern nobles were technically vassals of the King of France, by practice they were de facto independent. A rich tradition of courtly romance sprung up, inspired by the chivalrous poetry of the troubadours, and Occitan spread through-out Italy and Spain as the literary language of choice. Southern France even devel-oped its own church during this period – a fact that led to its eventual downfall and subjugation to the north.

The Cathar heresy, a gnostic sect that rejected the pretensions of the Catholic Church in favor of worldly detachment and spiritual enlightenment, spread rapidly throughout the region, winning converts amongst the peasantry and nobility alike. Pope Innocent III declared a crusade against the heretics in 1209 and northern French nobles leapt at the opportunity to win lands in the south. This 'Albigensian Crusade' put an end to both the Cathars and any pretense of southern independ-ence, but the Wars of Religion would reopen the same wounds. Southern France formed a part of the Huguenot heartland along with the Atlantic coast and the city of Montauban was the second city of French Protestantism after La Rochelle.

A strong urban-rural divide exists in the south between the predominantly poor, Protestant hinterland and rich, Catholic cities. The single greatest city in the south is Toulouse. Much like Bordeaux, Toulouse remained under Catholic control due to it being the seat of a regional parlement. The great Mediterranean port city of Marseilles is another Catholic bastion. France's Mediterranean galley fleet is based here and many of its captains are members of the Knights of Malta, the last of the great crusading orders. The walled city of Avignon is technically not even part of France; instead it is the property of the popes and had served as their primary residence for nearly seventy years. The contrast to the countryside could not be stronger. A different, more ecstatic Protestantism exists amongst the farmers of the Languedoc that is almost wholly distinct from the stoic faith of the merchants and bankers of La Rochelle. These rural Protestants, known as Camisards, will remain in the rugged mountainous region of the Cévennes even after their faith is declared illegal in 1685. They will eventually rise up in rebellion against Louis XIV, led by their Holy Spirit-possessed prophets to usher in the End Times.

The Eastern Frontier

France's eastern frontier is a large region whose borders constantly ebb and flow like the tide. In the north are the lowlands of Flanders, a French-speaking region whose allegiance shifts between Burgundian, Imperial, Spanish, Dutch, and French control. The center is occupied by the Duchy of Burgundy – a land divided between France and the Holy Roman Empire – and the heavily contested free cities along the Rhine River. To the south lies a vast expanse of rugged, Alpine terrain with ill-defined boundaries separating France from the newly independent cantons of Switzerland and the Italian state of Savoy.

The northern area of Flanders is a military march that has been host to nearly perpetual conflict since the early Middle Ages. The counts of Flanders were nomi-nal vassals of the Holy Roman Empire, but operated as virtual free agents and frequently warred with the kings of France. The territory later became part of the Duchy of Burgundy, a rich territory that stretched from the North Sea down to the

Swiss Alps, and the last great independent vassal of the King of France. Burgundy allied with England for most of the Hundred Years War and continued to fight against the Crown until its last duke fell in battle in 1477. His domains were divided between France and the Holy Roman Empire, yet each covets a bigger piece. It is also important to note that England still controlled the territory around the city of Calais in the first half of the sixteenth century. Calais was the last remaining English possession on French soil and François I would extinguish even this rump after conquering the city in 1558.

The Burgundian inheritance also created issues in the center of the country. The French kings never recognized the division of Burgundy between France and the Empire as legitimate and pushed constantly to annex the territories east of the Rhine. This region is in constant flux throughout the Renaissance as cities are handed back and forth like bargaining chips between the powers. Only after the Habsburg defeat at the end of the Thirty Years War was France able to incorporate the Lorrainian bishoprics of Metz, Toul, and Verdun into the kingdom. The great cities of Besançon and Strasbourg would continue to remain outside of French control until the latter half of the seventeenth century.

The kings of France had long cast a covetous eye towards the rich Italian lands on the other side of the Alps. While the conclusion of the sixty-year long Italian Wars in 1559 established Spain as the dominant power in Italy, France continued to maintain a presence in the peninsula, especially around its alpine border with the Duchy of Savoy. Savoy was another de jure state of the Holy Roman Empire that was de facto independent. Its borders stretched across the present-day French regions of Savoie and Provence into the Italian regions of the Val d'Aosta and Piemonte. France occupied most of its territory throughout the Italian Wars, but the politically savvy Duke Emmanuel Philibert secured the independence of the Duchy as part of the treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis. In order to create further separation between Savoy and France, he moved the capital across the Alps from Chambéry to Turin and changed the official language of the Duchy to Italian.

Savoy would play a major role in international affairs for the next two hundred years as France and Spain competed for influence in Italy. At times France would control substantial territories in the Duchy such as the Marquisate of Saluzzo and the fortress city of Pinerolo – the holding place of the infamous prisoner known as the Man in the Iron Mask – in the second half of the seventeenth century.

France d'Outre Mer: The Overseas Colonies

The final 'region' in which to set a Renaissance France game are the overseas colonies of the New World. Much more than any other area in Metropolitan France, the situation in the colonies varies wildly from year to year.

France was involved in the Americas far earlier than many people recognize. Basque fishermen living in the Franco-Spanish border region had been making fishing trips to the Grand Banks since the early fourteenth century, quite possibly visiting the mainland in order to trade with the indigenous peoples of North America. French merchants also capitalized on the European discovery of the Americas by sending trading voyages to the coasts of Brazil as early at 1503. While the French were active traders, fishers, and pirates, they did not attempt to establish permanent settlements until the middle of the sixteenth century.

The Eastern Frontier is perfectly suited to military and espionage campaigns. This is an amorphous and ever changing area where borders shift constantly and allegiances vary from one year to the next. French is often a minority language throughout the Eastern Frontier. Arras, Artois, and Lille in Flanders are predominantly French whereas Bruges, Ghent, and Brussels are mostly Dutch. Verdun, Nancy, and Besancon in Lorraine/Burgundy are French while the primary language in Metz and Alsatian Strasbourg is German. The southern metropolises of Lyons and Grenoble are French with an Italian minority, Nice is bilingual, and Saluzzo and Pinerolo are majority Italian. There is also a shift in major areas of conflict. In the early part of the Renaissance (roughly 1500-1560), the primary theatre of operations were in Italy and the south, slowly moving to the north in the latter half of the sixteenth century and to the center in the seventeenth century. The later wars of Louis XIV would firmly establish French control over the regions of Lorraine and Alsace, although their status would remain a point of contention well into the twentieth century.

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RENAISSANCE FRANCE

The first permanent French colony in the New World was the short-lived habitation of Charlesbourg-Royal. Established around present day Québec City by Jacques Cartier in 1541, the small colony of 400 people survived only two years before disease, famine, weather, and hostile natives caused the survivors to abandon the settlement. A second attempt at colonization was made a decade later at the urging of Admiral Coligny, except this time the target would be farther south – much, much farther south – near the present day city of Rio de Janeiro. The colony of "France Antarctique" was founded in 1555 and lasted nearly a decade before internal religious strife and external conflict with the Portuguese tore it apart.

The third and most dramatic attempt at colonization took place in 1562. Admiral Coligny organized an almost entirely Huguenot venture to establish a French colony in Florida. The purpose behind the colony – whether it was meant to be a refuge for Huguenots fleeing oppression or as a forward base for pirates to attack the Spanish Caribbean – is still a matter of debate. However, when the Spanish discovered the existence of a colony of French Protestants located in what they claimed as their territory, they were not merciful. A war party marched overnight through miles of Florida swamp in the middle of a hurricane to launch of surprise attack on the French. They proceeded to kill most of the inhabitants of the settlement and beheaded the leaders of the colony along present day Matanzas inlet ('Matanzas' being Spanish for slaughter).

The chaos of the Wars of Religion prevented France from launching any further colonization attempts for the remainder of the sixteenth century, although individual mariners continued to sail into American waters in order to raid and trade. A second attempt to establish a colony in Brazil met with failure, but the northern settlements of Tadoussac (1600), Port-Royal (1605), and Québec City (1608) proved more successful. In spite of confrontations with the English and Dutch for control of North America (including the brief capture of Québec by the English in 1629), the colony of New France continued to expand its reach across the continent, establishing forts and trading posts throughout the Great Lakes region and down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. France also settled colonies in the Caribbean, beginning with Saint-Christophe (present day St. Kitts) in 1626 followed by Martinique and Guadeloupe. French (primarily Huguenot) castaways from Saint-Christophe founded the buccaneer stronghold of Tortuga off the coast of Hispaniola, proving to be a thorn in the side of the Spanish for the next hundred years.

The New World allows for GMs to inject some spice (literally and figuratively) into their Renaissance France campaign. An atmosphere of mystery, discovery, natural beauty, and ever-present danger should pervade games set in the Americas. In the pre-settlement period (prior to 1600), French contacts were sporadic and limited to fishing and trading voyages. Still, this early period provides plenty of opportunities for 'hidden history' narratives, including those with some low-fantasy elements. PCs can take part in lost expeditions deep into the continent looking for mystical cities of gold and fountains of youth, involve themselves in power-struggles between mighty Native American empires, and perhaps even attempt to found an empire of their own.

The failed colonization attempts in Brazil and Florida are both excellent settings for games and provide plot hooks for later adventures. Players have more options and resources available to them in the New World once permanent French settlement begins after 1600 as colonial administrators are always looking for mercenaries to fight against both European rivals and hostile native tribes. Merchants are also a welcome sight to outposts always lacking in both money and supplies. Players can also range further afield as the fur-trapping *coureurs des bois* in North America or sea-roving pirates in the Caribbean.

French Society in the Renaissance

French society during the Renaissance was imagined to be a simulacrum of the divine ordering of the cosmos, following Saint Paul's admonition that "the powers that be are ordained by God." Just as God ruled over the universe from his throne in Heaven surrounded by a hierarchy of angels and saints, so too did kings rule over their Earthly courts as divinely-appointed magistrates. In spite of the massive social upheavals taking place during the Renaissance, French society maintained its medieval, tripartite division between those who pray, those who fight, and those who work, the three Estates of the Realms corresponding to the clergy, the nobility, and the common people. This section will explore French Society in the Renaissance through the institutions of the Monarchy, Estates-General, royal army and navy, and three Estates of the Realm.

Monarchy and the Estates-General

The Renaissance monarchy formed the center of the French political universe; the sun around which all other bodies revolved. While all European monarchies were suffused with a religious aura, the French monarchy took it to another level. The kings of France had acquired the title of "Most Christian" from the pope in the twelfth century and viewed their office in both sacred and secular terms. Unlike other European monarchs, the kings of France were not coronated, but rather consecrated. By undergoing the *sacré* with holy oil, the new king became something more than just a ruler – he became a semi-priestly figure with direct access to mystical powers such as the ability to cure diseases with the royal touch. The symbolism was clear: the king derived his power from God alone and was only answerable to Heaven for his actions.

The institution of the monarchy underwent several changes during the Renaissance. While the king's power was technically absolute and his will was law, there still existed a long tradition of checks on royal authority. Kings were supposed to uphold the rights, privileges, and exemptions previously granted by their predecessors and to respect the ancient, unwritten constitution of the kingdom. Institutions such as the Estates-General theoretically constrained the king's freedom of action.

The Estates-General was the closest thing France had to the English Parliament. The body was made up of members

representing the three Estates of the Realm with each estate having a single vote. The Estates-General only met when it was convened by the king. This often resulted in extended periods where the chamber never met at all. Following a particularly contentious Estates-General in 1484, no king convened the estates again until the succession of the infant François II in 1560 – a gap of 76 years! The weak Valois kings and overall chaos caused by the Wars of Religion necessitated Charles IX and Henri III to convene the Estates-General seven times between 1560 and 1589. The Estates-General would meet again in 1614 to decide on a regent for the young king, Louis XIII, but the absolutist Bourbon kings had no desire to share power with a representative body and refused to summon the Estates-General for the next century and a half. The institution slowly died out until it was revived one last time in 1789, sparking the French Revolution.

Finances were another perpetual problem for the monarchy throughout the Renaissance. The system of financing government was, like most institutions in France during this time, a medieval anachronism that had to be adapted to modern times. There was no conception of a 'state' or 'public' treasury that existed separate and apart from the king's purse prior to the sixteenth century. The king was expected to provide for himself and pay for all the expenses of his government through revenue collected from the royal domains. Money raised through taxes were classified as 'extraordinary revenue' and generally limited to times of war. This practice began to change in the fifteenth century as the financial strain of the Hundred Years War required that sales taxes (aides), property taxes (tailles), and salt taxes (gabelles) be made permanent. As always, these taxes were subject to a range of exceptions and exclusions where certain provinces paid higher rates than others and certain classes – especially the nobility – were exempt entirely.

Army and Navy

A regular, professional army and navy did not exist at the beginning of the Renaissance. The French military of the middle ages was largely feudal, based on a system of vassalage whereby lesser lords owed military service to greater lords. The king was theoretically at the top of this pyramid, but in practice, he was entirely dependent on the good graces of the noble magnates of the kingdom. The Hundred Years War revealed the deficiencies in this outdated system. The levies were often insufficient for extended campaigning and the feudal contracts only required 40 days of military service annually – the king would need to pay hefty compensation for any additional time in the field. Furthermore, many of the most powerful nobles in the kingdom, such as the Dukes of Normandy, Burgundy, and Brittany, all sided with the English at various times during the conflict. By the end of the Hundred Years War, King Charles VII launched the first big effort to reform the system with his ordinance of 1445.

This law created new *compagnies d'ordonannce* personally loyal to the king. The Estates-General also agreed to modify the fundamental laws of the kingdom by giving the king the exclusive right to raise troops and authorized him to impose a direct property tax to fund the army in perpetuity. These new companies consisted of the heavily armored noble cavalry, called gendarmes, which formed the core of France's military strength. The French infantry was still quite poor and the king continued to depend on foreign mercenaries in order to supplement these forces, especially Italian musketeers and Swiss pikemen. The French artillery corps was the most advanced arm of the military in the early sixteenth century. The cannons were modern and the officers well trained. Many of France's victories in both

sieges and on the battlefield throughout the period can be attributed to the superior gunnery of its artillery train.

Tactics and organization evolved considerably throughout the Renaissance. Heavily armored gendarmes charging with couched lances were still decisive in the early period, but the increasing accuracy, range, and power of firearms throughout the sixteenth century brought their dominance to an end. Cavalry continued to shed armor throughout the seventeenth century and ditched the lance in favor of pistols. Infantry units began to adopt a mixed formation of pike and shot, first made famous by the Spanish tercios. The ratio of guns to pikes would continue to increase throughout the period until the invention of the socket bayonet in the late seventeenth century rendered the armored pikeman obsolete. Control over the military became a royal monopoly after the conclusion of the Wars of Religion. The Bourbon kings would no longer permit their great nobles to maintain private armies and wage petty wars in their kingdom. It is also during this period that the most famous military unit of Renaissance France emerged: the elite King's Musketeers.

The navy underwent an even greater transformation during the Renaissance than did the army. French naval forces, prior to Richelieu's reforms in the 1620s, were limited to the use of private merchant ships. Captains would either be given letters of marque, allowing them to engage in legally-sanctioned piracy, or alternatively pressed into military service by command of the Admiralty. Richelieu saw the need for a royally controlled, professional navy and commissioned the construction of dedicated warships for this purpose. While he bought the first vessels from the Dutch, investment into the French shipbuilding industry eventually paid dividends with the launch of the massive, 72-gun La Couronne in 1636. Richelieu's royal fleet allowed France to challenge Spanish supremacy on the waves for the first time during the Thirty Years Wars, resulting in naval victories, such as at Getaria in 1638 and Cadiz in 1640.

Cardinal Mazarin was far less interested in maritime affairs and the navy entered a period of decline after Richelieu's death. However, Louis XIV's appointment of Jean-Baptiste Colbert as Secretary of State for the Navy in the 1660s reversed this trend. The royal navy would reach the height of its power and brilliance under Colbert, demonstrating the power of the Sun King in both its beautifully ornate warships, such as Le Soleil-Royale, and its decisive victories against the formerly superior Spanish, English, and Dutch fleets.

Nobility and the Parlements

While the monarch was theoretically the absolute font of all power and authority throughout the kingdom, any king who wished to exercise that power effectively needed the support of the nobility. The nobility of Renaissance France were far from being pampered, effete fops. These were members of an elite warrior caste who descended from the medieval knightly aristocracy. Their considerable privileges derived (at least in theory) from the fact that their ancestors put life and limb on the line to defend the realm and the king. Their great landed estates were supposed to provide them with an income large enough to support a military lifestyle of constant training along with expensive armor, weapons, retainers, and horses. They were also responsible for administering the lands they controlled on behalf of the king and had control over the administration of justice, enforcement of edicts, and maintenance of infrastructure. The nobility also held a number of important privileges that made them legally distinct from non-nobles, including exemption from paying royal taxes, such as the taille, a monopoly on senior posi-

tions in the court, and the right to require peasants working on their land to pay a percentage of the harvest as rent (the champart), provide an annual period of free labor (the corvée), and to use the noble's mill, oven, or wine-press (the banalité).

This older conception of the nobility's role in society was already starting to break down by the beginning of the Renaissance. Military reforms over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries changed the role of the nobility from independent commanders of troops into a dedicated officer corps serving at the pleasure of the king. Their administrative role also declined as local affairs increasingly came under the control of royally-appointed provincial governors. As the number of judicial, fiscal, and administrative posts expanded, monarchs began to ennoble these royal office holders. This provided several advantages to the king, such as raising revenue (the offices all came with a hefty price tag), and diluting the power of the old nobility by creating new noble families that would owe their position to the crown. This new class of nobility in France, the 'robe nobles' (noblesse de robe), largely came from the growing class of wealthy and well-educated urban elites who were resented by the older 'sword nobles' (noblesse d'épée) as being parvenus. In spite of their reduction in status, the old sword nobility still held on to the most important reins of power, including the regional parlements.

The parlements represented the interests of the nobility as an institution. Unlike the English Parliament, the French parlements functioned as quasi-judicial rather than legislative bodies. Originally, there was only the Parlement of Paris, responsible for the entire kingdom, but the number of regional parlements multiplied throughout the Renaissance. While the parlements' primary function was to serve as appellate courts of last resort, they also held the traditional right of 'registering' royal edicts. By refusing to register an edict and 'remonstrating' against the king, the parlements could block or delay implementation of the royal will. However, the king could ultimately force the parlements to register the edict by ordering them to do so in what was called a lit de justice. During a lit de justice, the king would appear personally in front of the parlement and his chancellor would instruct the members how to vote. The members could now no longer refuse to register the edict without committing treason, a fact they resented greatly. Kings made increasing use of the lit de justice as a weapon of royal power throughout the Renaissance against the nobility who decried it as trampling on their ancient, constitutional liberties.

Clergy and Religion

It is difficult for people living in a twenty-first century, post-enlightenment world to imagine the power and influence religious institutions once held in society. It was the clergy rather than the nobility that held the prominent role of First Estate of the Realm; natural when one considers that the foundation of society was based on divine right. The Catholic Church had been present in France since the days of the Roman Empire and baptized the first French king. The popes, in turn, recognized France as the 'eldest daughter of the Church' in honor of its special status and the sacral role of its king.

The Catholic Church was the single largest landowner in all of France, controlling nearly 20% of all the territory in the kingdom. The upper clergy of cardinals, bishops, and archbishops all hailed from ancient noble lineages and tied the institutions of church, crown, and nobility together. The common priests might have enjoyed less lucrative posts than the higher-ranking prelates, but wielded consid-

erable influence over their communities. They were the ones responsible for registering marriages, births, and deaths, operating schools and universities, running hospitals, taking in orphans, providing relief to the poor and infirm, and tending to the spiritual needs of their flock.

The Church also functioned as the center of public life for most communities. Religion was not primarily a matter of belief during the Renaissance. Instead, it was the cultural glue that bound the society together. This is the reason why dissenters from the religious consensus were persecuted so severely. Heretics, Jews, and later Protestants were a threat not primarily because of their personal beliefs, but because their very presence weakened the uniformity and solidarity of French society as a whole.

The great power and wealth of the Church led to numerous abuses. An estimated 40% of French national income flowed into the hands of Church authorities during the sixteenth century. The great abbeys and monasteries of the cloistered religious orders of Benedictines, Dominicans, Cistercians, and Carthusians acted as feudal landlords in their own right. Many of these communities functioned as little more than boarding houses for the extra sons and unmarried daughters of the nobility while bishops frequently drew incomes from multiple dioceses they never actually visited or administered. All too often, the local parish priests were poorly educated, knew little Latin, and understood even less doctrine.

The Protestant Reformation broke the near monopoly of the Catholic Church on religious life in France. While the various Huguenot churches never developed a unified structure to rival the Catholic Church, they did have some semblance of organization. Regional parishes were organized into synods made up of pastors and elders from all the local churches. Areas with sizable Huguenot populations, such as La Rochelle, had powerful synods that wielded considerable influence over public life. Occasionally, the Huguenots would convene a national synod where all regional churches would send representatives. These general assemblies of the

Huguenot Church would continue until the 1620s when Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu banned them following the siege of La Rochelle. The Huguenots also maintained several institutions of higher learning known as academies – the most famous of which was the Academy of Saumur that included William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, as one of its students – to compete with the Catholic universities.

Persecution against religious minorities increased in the latter half of the seventeenth century. The Catholic Church had always been opposed to the extensive rights and privileges granted to the Huguenots by the Edict of Nantes and lobbied Louis XIII and Louis XIV to chip away at those rights. Louis XIV in particular saw religious minorities as a direct challenge to his authority. Newly founded religious orders, such as the Jesuits, formed the shock troops of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, assisting him in his efforts to re-impose religious uniformity throughout the kingdom. Louis XIV ordered the expulsion of the Jews from France and her colonies and pressured Protestants to convert, at one point even quartering poorly behaved troops in their homes. Finally, in 1685 he revoked the Edict of Nantes, requiring the remaining Huguenots to convert, flee, or go underground.

The Commons

The overwhelming majority of the French population (over 90%) belonged to neither the privileged classes of the nobility or the clergy, but formed the vast mass of the *menu peuple* – the common people. The members of this Third Estate were a varied bunch. More than three-quarters of the population lived in the countryside and occupied small villages of less than 1,000 people. These were primarily agrarian laborers – unfree serfs bound to the land, tenant farmers who rented their land, and yeoman farmers who owned their own land and could be quite wealthy. There was also a very different Third Estate made up of merchants, lawyers, doctors, financiers, academicians, and skilled artisans who lived in the large cities. While they occupied a small, strange niche during the Middle Ages, existing uncomfortably in the neat ordering of the three Estates, by the Renaissance they had come to form a growing and increasingly influential segment of society.

Life for the average French peasant was hard. While he might have had a standard of living higher than his counterparts in other European countries, death from starvation was always just one poor harvest away. Any additional income he was able to earn from agricultural surpluses went to pay for fuel to heat his home during the bitter winters and other necessities of life. Only the most well-off farmer would be able to afford the luxury goods and exotic spices for sale in the urban markets.

Wars also fell hardest on the peasantry. Men were liable to be conscripted into levies where they would be thrust into battle with little to no training while marauding armies devastated their crops and sometimes raped and murdered their wives and children. The greatest losses in warfare during this period did not come from battles, but rather from diseases, famines, and dislocations of the population.

While life for the average peasant in the Renaissance generally fit the Hobbesian description of being nasty, brutish, and short, things had improved over the past two centuries. The Black Death of the fourteenth century wiped out somewhere between one-third to one-half of Europe's population. The survivors faced a

changed dynamic. The massive number of deaths had created a labor shortage and the demand for jobs ensured better working conditions and higher wages. Serfdom disappeared throughout most of the kingdom and more peasant families were able to purchase property of their own.

The life of a peasant was filled with backbreaking labor and every family member was expected to work. However, that did not mean the entirety of the peasant's life was spent toiling in the fields. The timeless natural rhythms of the seasons dictated the pace of life's activities: sowing and plowing in the spring, tending to crops and livestock in the summer, harvesting in the fall, and finally settling in at home to wait out the long winter. The Catholic Church also had dozens of holy days (the origin of the word holiday) and feast days where no work could be performed. These ostensibly religious festivals provided peasants with plenty of opportunities to indulge in secular pleasures such as drinking, gaming, relaxation, and revelry.

The urban laborers formed a small but influential group. Most of them were employed as skilled artisans, crafting trade goods such as jewelry, glassware, metal tools, leather goods, and clothing. Practitioners of these arts were required to be members of their local trade guild – a quasi-professional, proto-union type of organization that simultaneously held a royal monopoly on its craft and regulated the work of its members. The guilds required artisans to pass through a lengthy training period first as apprentices, then as journeymen before they completed their 'masterpiece,' allowing them to receive the title of master craftsman and open their own shop.

Above the artisans in wealth and status was the educated professional class comprised of lawyers, physicians, and merchants. This expansion of trade and increasing centralization of state power led to an increase in the number of laws, and an increase in laws naturally created more opportunities for lawyers. These lawyers practiced in the parlements, royal courts, and regional tribunals through-out the kingdom and often held high positions in the government. There was even a special court called the Chamber of the Edict where litigants could resolve religious disputes arising under the Edict of Nantes.

Trained physicians also became more widespread and respected during this period. The profession transformed from one that relied on semi-magical folk remedies into one that embraced the new empiricism of the burgeoning scientific revolution. Doctors were no longer dirty, money-grubbing "leaches," but were instead learned, Latin-using gentlemen practitioners. It took longer for surgeons to gain the same level of respect, however. Surgeons were considered no more than bloody butchers and ship manifests typically list the surgeon and the barber as the same person. In fact, it was a barber-surgeon, Charles-François Félix, who changed the reputation of the profession and won royal support for an Academy of Surgery after successfully repairing Louis XIV's anal fistula.

The explosion of foreign trade during the Renaissance formed the foundation of early capitalism. Merchants became rich from the expansion of inter-European seaborne trade spurred on by the influx of commodities being imported from the New World. A new form of business model known as the corporation was being born, increasing the opportunities for financing commercial ventures while reducing risk. The Dutch and English even created the first maritime insurance companies during this period. While French merchants often lagged behind their counterparts to the north, they still formed an elite class in the major trading cities of Rouen, Dieppe, Le Havre, Saint-Malo, La Rochelle, and Bordeaux.

Maison du Roi

   Although the term *Maison Militaire du Roi* was not widely used until the 1670s, the units that made up the elite military 'household' of the King of France began under the reign of François I. The first units were the ancient Scottish *Gardes du Corps* (bodyguards) that had been regularly employed by the King of France since the beginning of the Hundred Years War. A unit of native French Guards were later added in 1563 by Charles IX and elite heavy cavalry units were also added by the end of the sixteenth century. The most famous unit, the King's Musketeers, began in 1622 and later expanded to include a second company in 1660. While some units in the *Maison du Roi* were either purely ceremonial or limited to sentry duty at palaces and royal residences, the majority were crack military regiments that took part in all the major campaigns of the Renaissance.

   The units of the *Maison du Roi* were at the vanguard of French military development throughout the Renaissance. These were the first units entirely under royal control without feudal encumbrances tying them to semi-independent nobles.

Unlike most military units, which were either organized ad-hoc or permanently maintained as mercenary companies, the units of the *Maison du Roi* were some of the first full-time, professionally trained, 'national' troops of the Kingdom of France. They were also some of the first to wear regulated uniforms. Uniforms did not exist prior to the seventeenth century and most regiments consisted of a motley assortment of soldiers wearing different styles of clothing and bearing a wide range of armor and armaments. The only way to identify them in the field was by their standard and perhaps a colored sash. A unit such as the King's Musketeers, all wearing the same uniform, would have stood out on the battlefield. This was part of its intended effect as a psychological tool. The men of the unit would feel a certain *esprit de corps* that separated them from the rest of the army and made them instantly recognizable as the elite household troops of the king to friend and foe alike. Their arrival on the field would undoubtedly boost the morale of their brothers-in-arms and spread despair through the ranks of their enemies.

Gardes du Corps (Bodyguards)

The *Gardes du Corps* are amongst the oldest units in the *Maison du Roi* and consist of four companies. The first and most prestigious company are the *Gardes Écossaises* (Scottish Guards) followed by three other companies of French Bodyguards. In addition to guarding the king's person at all times, they also accompanied him on military campaigns.

The Scottish *Gardes du Corps* date back to the early fourteenth century when France was allied with Scotland, then fighting their own war against the English, under the "Auld Alliance." Scottish units went to France to serve in their armies during the Hundred Years War, and their bravery in battle, unwavering loyalty, and hatred of the English eventually earned them a privileged place as the personal bodyguards of the king. The conversion of Scotland to Presbyterianism during the Reformation and eventual union of the Scottish and English crowns under James I in 1603 ended the Auld Alliance and the Scottish Guard became French in all but name, but its pride of place as first in the order of precedence for the entire military household remained.

The three units of French Bodyguards were raised between 1475 and 1516 to increase the size of the royal bodyguard. By 1671, each company consisted of 400 men. Members of the *Gardes du Corps* on sentry duty carried halberds and carbines. On campaign, most were armed with heavy swords and pistols for melee combat, with about a quarter being armed with rifled carbines. The *Gardes du Corps* only served as cavalry in the field, befitting their station, and was rarely deployed in combat. A distinguishing feature of the *Gardes du Corps* was that every single member, both officers and soldiers, were required to be of noble blood.

Mousquetaires de la Garde (Musketeers of the Guard)

The Musketeers of the Guard, more commonly known as the *Mousquetaires du Roi* (King's Musketeers), trace their legacy back to a detachment of mounted carabiniers created by Henri IV. Louis XIII wished to expand his military household and transformed the carabiniers into a new guard unit, replacing their smaller carbines with larger muskets and renaming them the King's Musketeers. This company would be entirely new in conception. Unlike the highly specialized military units of

the day, the Musketeers trained to serve both mounted and foot as the need arose. They were also required to be proficient with both the sword and the musket. This was highly unusual for the time as most units tended to focus on just ranged or melee combat. The King also gave the Musketeers a distinct uniform that varied little over the nearly 200 years of their existence. They wore a dark blue cassock (later replaced with a sleeveless *soubreveste*) over a red jacket, with a white, silver-edged cross in the center, having red flames at its angles and gold *fleurs-de-lis* at each end. Although they ranked behind the *Gardes du Corps* in order of precedence, the Musketeers had the most distinctive uniforms in the entire army and their panache attracted brave young recruits eager to win glory.

Louis XIII took an intense personal interest in his creation and named himself honorary Captain of the Musketeers. All future kings would maintain this unique tradition, cementing the close relationship that existed between the monarch and his Musketeers. They also served as the king's personal escort whenever he travelled outside of his royal residences.

The King's Musketeers proved to be such a success that Cardinal Richelieu decided to create his own musketeer company known as the Cardinal's Guard. Wearing a red cassock emblazoned with a white cross over a blue-gray jacket, the Cardinal's Guard looked like the inverted twin of the King's Musketeers and the two units quickly developed an intense rivalry. Impromptu fencing duels between members of the King's Musketeers and the Cardinal's Guard in the streets, marketplaces, and taverns of Paris are not just tales drawn from the pages of *The Three Musketeers* – they happened quite frequently in real life too! It appears as though Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu enjoyed the competition between their guard units and tolerated the dueling as a kind of sport. Louis XIV would later crack down on dueling and forbid members of his household from engaging in them, at least in public…

The King's Musketeers were temporarily disbanded following the death of Louis XIII in 1643. A combination of political tensions between the Queen-Regent, Marie de Medici, and Cardinal Mazarin along with the belief that the Musketeers were a personal unit of Louis XIII's rather than a permanent addition to the *Maison du Roi*, led to their dissolution. However, Louis XIV later re-established the company in 1657 and doubled their number to 300. When Cardinal Mazarin died in 1661, Louis incorporated the Cardinal's Guard into the King's Musketeers. The King's Musketeers would now consist of two companies: the older, 1st Company known as the *Grands* or *Mousquetaires Gris* (Grey Musketeers) because of the color of their horses, and the 2nd Company, formerly the Cardinal's Guard, known as the *Petits* or *Mousquetaires Noirs*.

Unlike the *Gardes du Corps*, members of the Musketeers did not need to hail from ancient noble families, meaning the king had far more control over their composition. Most Musketeers came from the country gentry; some also came from the urban bourgeoisie. Service in the Musketeers was one of the few means by which a man of humble birth could rise to the ranks of the nobility and there are several examples of Louis XIV granting lettres patent to long-serving veterans. By the end of the seventeenth century, nearly half of the new recruits came from 'Musketeer Families' whose fathers and grandfathers had served in the unit, increasing their sense of absolute loyalty and duty to the sovereign. Therefore, the king often entrusted the Musketeers with tasks requiring delicacy and discretion. As part of their all-purpose mission, Louis XIV frequently used his Musketeers to act as spies and covert agents. Nothing was above their purview, and the King's Musketeers often took part in gathering intelligence on both foreign and domestic opponents of the King, covertly arresting and guarding political rivals, smuggling secret dis-

patches, and keeping a close eye on the guests at the palaces of Versailles, the Louvre, and the Tuileries.

Being a King's Musketeer also meant enjoying a number of perks. Although the price was absolute obedience, Musketeers had closer access to the king than all but his closest advisors and confidants. Louis XIV built private barracks for them adjoining the Louvre, filled with servants, private chefs, and various furnishings that made them the height of luxury for a military man. Musketeers also had the privilege of enjoying the royal palaces, gardens, galleries, and theatres at their leisure while off-duty. However, the life of a Musketeer was hard and training consumed the bulk of their days. Much like the modern French Foreign Legion, the Musketeers operated as an army-within-an-army, maintaining their own military academy that included both coursework in mathematics, literature, science, and the arts, as well as martial training in fencing, shooting, riding, and marching in formation. Louis XIV took his position as captain very seriously and would sometimes show up randomly during drills in order to inspect the unit personally.

The first duty of a King's Musketeer was service in the field, where they were often called upon to carry out the most dangerous tasks. They first received their baptism by fire during the Siege of La Rochelle in 1628 when they dispatched Huguenot forces occupying the nearby Ile de Ré. In the following year, they successfully broke through the Duke of Savoy's Alpine fortifications set up to block the French army from entering Italy. They fought against the Spanish on several occasions throughout the Thirty Years War, including standing fast against four cavalry charges during the Battle of the Dunes. Louis XIV made heavy use of the Musketeers during the near-constant warfare of the second half of the seventeenth century. They played decisive roles in winning the battles of Lille in 1667, Dôle in 1668, Candia in 1669, Maastricht in 1673, Be-

sançon in 1674, Condé in 1676, Valenciennes in 1677, and Mons in 1691. In nearly all of the actions, the Musketeers were called on to act as *Enfants Perdus* (literally "Lost Children"), taking the lead in storming fortifications and breaking enemy lines. The life of a Musketeer was a glorious one, but often bloody and short too!

Gendarmes de la Garde (Gendarmes of the Guard)

The *Gendarmes de la Garde* dates back to the formation of the *compagnies d'ordonnance* by Charles VII in 1439. This was the first attempt to bring under royal control the plate-armored heavy lancer that formed the most effective arm of the French military. The *Gendarmerie* of France was one of the largest components of the *Maison du Roi.* By the end of the seventeenth century, they numbered more than 3,000 noble troops (a full 10% of all nobles in military service!) and were divided into sixteen companies. The *Gendarmes de la Garde* were made up of the bravest and best members of the heavy cavalry drawn from the flower of French chivalry.

The role and armament of the gendarmes changed drastically over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The increased accuracy and stopping power of firearms made heavy armor far less effective. The cash-strapped Huguenots experimented with reducing the armor of their gendarmes and armed them with a brace of pistols rather than a lance. This proved to be far more effective and the royal regiments quickly followed suit. By the mid-seventeenth century, the gendarmes were stripped of everything except their breastplate, and most units abandoned that as well in the decades ahead. However, their function as heavy cavalry remained the same and their role on the battlefield was to charge into melee and break enemy cavalry and infantry formations.

There was also a company of *Chevaux-Légers* (light horse) that originally served as light cavalry, but by the late sixteenth century they were functionally equivalent to the gendarmes. Another cavalry unit of the *Maison du Roi*, technically separate from the *Gendarmes de la Garde* and created later in 1676, were the *Grenadiers à Cheval* (horse grenadiers). This was a small, handpicked unit of 250 of the best grenadiers in the army – who were themselves drawn from the biggest and bravest men from other regiments – who fought both on horseback and on foot. Their large moustaches, fur caps, curved sabers, and bandoliers of hand grenades made them one of the most intimidating units in the entire army.

Gardes Françaises et Gardes Suisses (French and Swiss Guards)

While most of the *Maison du Roi* was mounted, it also contained two large elite infantry units known as the French and Swiss Guards. The Swiss were the masters of infantry warfare during the early Renaissance and revolutionized the use of massed pikes. François I vanquished the Swiss at the bloody Battle of Marignano in 1515 and the Cantons entered into an 'Eternal Peace' with France, pledging to provide the King with all the troops he needed. France, with the best cavalry in Europe but notoriously weak infantry, made heavy use of these Swiss mercenaries

throughout the Italian Wars; François I reportedly employed over 100,000 of them during his reign. While the increasing prominence of firearms in infantry warfare in the late sixteenth century eclipsed the Swiss pike square, the Kings of France still kept around 2,000 of them as elite guard units.

The French Guards were created by Charles IX in 1563 as the first native French infantry unit entirely under the control of the king. Recruits were required to be native-born and over 5' 8" in height, but they did not need to come from the nobility or the gentry. Perhaps more than in any other branch of the *Maison du Roi*, admission into the French Guards was determined by merit rather than connections. The guard continued to expand throughout the Wars of Religion so that by the seventeenth century, they numbered 30 companies of 6,000 men. The French Guards had the privilege of choosing their own deployment in the line of battle and typically chose the center in order to be closest to the action. When not serving in the field, the primary duty of the French Guards was to serve in the palaces of the king and to act as a royal police force for the city of Paris. Both French and Swiss Guard companies were formed as a mix of musketeers and armored pikemen (pike and shot) in the sixteenth century and slowly shed their pikes for more guns over the course of the seventeenth century.

Cents-Suisse et Gentilshommes à Bec-de-Corbin (Hundred Swiss and Bec-de-Corbin Gentlemen)

These were the two smallest units of the *Maison du Roi* and served only in the capacity of palace guards and ceremonial troops. The Hundred Swiss were originally formed as the private bodyguard of Louis XI in 1480 and remained in that position when Louis XIII included them as part of the *Garde du dedans du Louvre* (Guard inside of the Louvre). While they served as guards inside the royal residences along with the *Gardes du Corps* and French Guards, the Hundred Swiss tended to be ceremonial and decorative in nature. They maintained their brightly colored garments of striped white, red, and blue fabric even after such uniforms became archaic, looking quite similar to the present-day Swiss Guards of the Vatican. The Hundred Swiss also eschewed firearms in exchange for their traditional halberds.

Louis XI created the *Gentilshommes à Bec-de-Corbin* in 1474 to form a personal honor guard of French nobles – the first such 'royal' French infantry unit. They were outfitted as foot knights, complete with full plate armor and wielding their eponymous *Becs de Corbin*, a polearm with a spear, war hammer, and pickaxe component at its head. The unit was the progenitor of the French Bodyguards and most of its members were rolled into the 1st Company of French *Gardes du Corps* by the early sixteenth century. Only a small number of *Gentilshommes à Bec-de-Corbin* continued to exist after that time, and Henri IV abolished them entirely in 1594 for supporting the Catholic League. They were later reformed in 1604 as a purely ceremonial unit with no actual military or protective duties. The French kings throughout the seventeenth century used appointments to the *Gentilshommes à Bec-de-Corbin* as an honorific or reward for good service. Unit members would receive a generous salary and prestigious title in exchange for marching in parades from time to time.

Renaissance France Characters

The world of Renaissance France offers a variety of roleplaying opportunities to fit into almost any campaign theme and character archetype. Included in this chapter are some suggestions for GMs and players alike on how to create period characters.

Character Concepts

Coureur des Bois: Voltaire would famously dismiss the vast territory of New France as nothing more than a "few acres of snow" (*quelques arpents de neige*), yet the French Coureurs des Bois had a familiarity with the landscape of North America that rivaled their far more numerous English foes. To live as a Coureur des Bois was to straddle two worlds. They were loyalty to the Crown, fighting against the enemies of France and securing vital trade routes for the all-important beaver pelts, yet they also lived apart from colonial society, adopting the language, lifestyle, and culture of their Indigenous hosts. **Suggested Skills:** Fighting, Knowledge (Wilderness), Notice, Shooting, Survival, Tracking.

Courtesan: The opulent courts of Renaissance France are about more than just fine dining and grand balls. These are social battlefields where those who know how to plot, scheme, lie, flatter, peddle influence, deal in favors, and master the art of protocol can gain access to the highest levers of power. The courtesan is a master of the great game who can steer the fate of nations as assuredly as any military man. **Suggested Skills:** Intimidation, Investigation, Knowledge (Statecraft), Notice, Persuasion.

Musketeer: Brave, dashing, debonair, and with a wit as sharp as his rapier, the musketeer epitomizes the swashbuckling spirit of Renaissance France. A musketeer could be a member of an elite unit such as the King's Musketeers, Cardinal's Guard, bodyguard for a powerful noble, or just be a solider in a pike and shot infantry regiment. Either way, all musketeers share a culture of independent, 'hot shot' machismo that sets them apart from the rest of the army. **Suggested Skills:** Fighting, Notice, Riding, Shooting, Taunt.
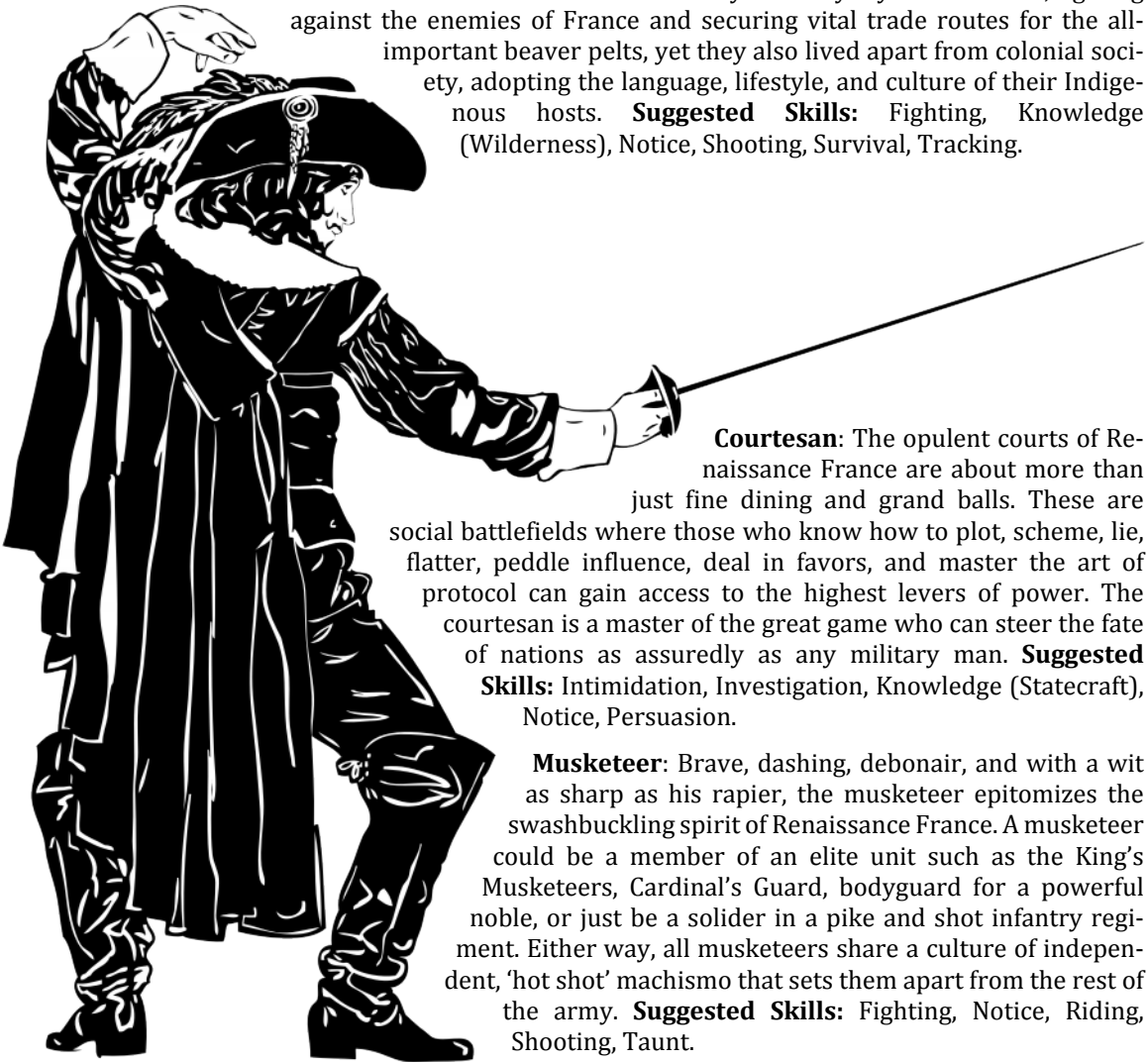
Natural Philosopher: The rediscovery of ancient Greek and Latin texts in the West along with the spread of Arabic learning led to a renewed interest in rational inquiry about the functioning of the universe. No boundary yet existed between modern concepts of hard science such as physics, astronomy, biology, and chemistry, and pseudo-sciences like astrology, alchemy, hermetic magic, and divination. The Natural Philosopher delves into both realms, combining equal parts Prospero and Copernicus. **Suggested Skills:** Healing, Investigation, Knowledge (Occult), Knowledge (Science).

Noble Commander: Technological changes during the Renaissance combined with the centralization and professionalization of the officer class to change the role of the nobility forever. Whereas the noble warrior of the Middle Ages led from the front by diving into the action, a Renaissance commander was expected to play the role of battlefield tactician more akin to Classical military leaders such as Julius Caesar or Alexander the Great. **Suggested Skills:** Fighting, Intimidation, Knowledge (Battle), Notice, Riding.

Oceanic Explorer: The sixteenth century marks the beginning of the age of exploration. Tall ships set out from the port cities of La Rochelle, Le Havre, Saint-Malo, Bordeaux, Dieppe, Nantes, and Brest to explore the newly-discovered lands across the Atlantic or make their way around the horn of Africa to reach the rich lands of India, China, and the Spice Islands. Leading these perilous voyages are Oceanic Explorers, motivated as much by a thirst for adventure as by the promise of riches and early retirement. **Suggested Skills:** Boating, Fighting, Knowledge (Navigation), Shooting.

Rake: Through the winding streets and dark alleys of metropolises like Paris, Lyons, Rouen, Marseilles, and Toulouse lies a world that the Great and Good, secure in their chateaux, never see. Here, a vast underworld society with its own rules, language, hierarchy, and ethics competes with the authorities for control. This is the land the rake inhabits – a devious character that uses his skills to pickpocket, rob, pimp, burgle, and con his way through the world. **Suggested Skills:** Climbing, Fighting, Lockpicking, Notice, Persuasion, Stealth, Streetwise, Taunt.

Wilderness Prophet: The Renaissance was a time of religious upheaval in Europe as the millennium-old dominance of the Roman Catholic Church came to an end. This fracturing of religious authority combined with the rapid dissemination of ideas brought about by the printing press created an explosion of popular piety and new, mystical devotions. The wilderness prophet was a person of humble origin whose charisma and idiosyncratic reading of scripture created a following. The wilderness prophet could be a Catholic, such as Saint Francis of Assisi, a Protestant, such as the Holy Spirit-possessed Camisard prophets of the Cévennes, or a member of a 'heretical' sect, such as the Waldensians or long-lost Cathars. **Suggested Skills:** Fighting, Intimidation, Knowledge (Religion), Notice, Persuasion, Taunt.

Hindrances

EXISTING HINDRANCES

ARROGANT

This is a common trait amongst adventurers in Renaissance France, especially in swashbuckling-style campaigns. This is an era where style matters just as much as results. It's not simply enough to vanquish one's opponent; one must also look good while doing it.

CODE OF HONOR

The knightly ideal of chivalry had morphed into a comprehensive code of honor by the early Renaissance. This code applies to anyone who considers himself to be a gentleman, regardless of social status. The principles of the Renaissance code of honor requires absolute loyalty and obedience to one's superiors, to exhibit bravery in all circumstances, to have one's word of honor be above reproach, to never permit oneself to be slandered, and to never permit a lady's virtue to be questioned. Breaches of the code of honor can only be remedied through valorous actions, in the case of a personal failure, or by challenging the transgressing party to a duel. Dueling in Renaissance France is almost always with the sword, never the pistol, and typically ends at first blood. The wounded party is expected to yield and the affair of honor is satisfied. Only the most serious slights extend beyond this to maiming or death. While dueling is almost a coming of age ritual for gentlemen in Renaissance France – and indeed, some duelists almost make a career out of it – the practice is technically illegal and violators face increasingly stiff penalties as the authorities attempt to crack down on it.

HEROIC

Heroism comes in many forms in Renaissance France, but it hews closely to the belief that the social hierarchy is sacred and that doing one's duty is a service to God. Nobles only maintain their privileged positions by acting heroically on the battlefield and members of military orders put their lives on the line to defend their band of brothers. While the King's Musketeers might have never said "all for one and one for all," their actions in the field reflected their belief in this motto.

VOW

Vows are extremely common in the world of Renaissance France. Members of religious orders frequently take vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience while secular vows of loyalty and obligation are quite common. Gentlemen might also take personal vows in honor of a woman or vows to complete some grand quest à la Don Quixote.

INAPPROPRIATE HINDRANCES

ILLITERATE

Being illiterate is the default for characters in Renaissance France. Most peasants (and even most nobles for that matter) had little use for the written word and lacked the educational opportunities to learn how to read, even if they had the desire to do so. Although literacy rates steadily improved throughout the Renaissance, the vast majority of the population could do little more than sign their name and perhaps recognize a few common words.

NEW HINDRANCES

GONE NATIVE (MINOR)

One of the particularities of French colonialism is that they tended to cultivate far better relationships with Native peoples than did their European rivals. The French were largely dependent on their Native allies for the very existence of their colonies, particularly in North America where they were massively outmatched by the far more numerous English. The famous *coureurs des bois* ('runners of the woods') were foresters who delved deep into the dark, uncharted wilderness of the American continent to hunt and trade for furs. They lived apart from the French settlements, often times dressed like their Native allies, and frequently took Native women as wives, becoming the ancestors of the present-day Métis.

These men, straddling the Old and New Worlds, were never entirely welcome by the French authorities. To these authorities, the existence of the *coureurs des bois* represented a cautionary tale laced with racial and regional prejudices – the so-called New World was beautiful and offered boundless opportunities, but was wild, foreign, and needed to be civilized lest it turn Europeans into 'savages.' Therefore, characters who have lived in the American woods long enough to adopt the language, dress, customs, and lifestyle of the Indigenous people should take the Gone Native Hindrance. Characters who have Gone Native incur a -2 penalty to Charisma when dealing with any NPCs who view themselves as culturally European.

RELIGIOUS FANATIC (MAJOR)

One of the many paradoxes of the Renaissance is that in an age of renewed learning and cultural expression, Europe bore witness to the most horrific religious violence it had ever seen. The Protestant Reformation shattered the confessional unity of Medieval Christendom and divided a continent against itself. The smoldering embers of religious hatred are stoked into an inferno by the fanatics. These violent zealots often became heroes to their co-religionists and embodiments of the Anti-Christ to their enemies.

Religious fanatics can be either devout believers who consider themselves the worldly agent of divine wrath against the enemies of the 'True Faith' or cynical opportunists who see the outbreak of religious warfare and fracturing of the Church's authority as an opportunity for their own advancement. Either way, fanatics are part of a feedback loop of growing religious violence and intolerance that leads to more fanatics who incite further violence and intolerance. Characters that have the Religious Fantastic Hindrance do more than simply wear their faith on their sleeve. They actively engage in and encourage the conversion or extermination of their religious opponents. Therefore, Religious Fanatics incur a -4 penalty to Charisma when dealing with religious opponents.

RELIGIOUS MINORITY (MINOR OR MAJOR)

Any character in Renaissance France who is not Roman Catholic must take this Hindrance; the question is whether it qualifies as a Major or Minor Hindrance. In general, Huguenots living outside of their bastions in Atlantic and Southern France (e.g. La Rochelle, Niort, Nîmes, Montauban) prior to the Edict of Nantes (1598) or after the fall of La Rochelle (1628) should take this as a Major Hindrance. Jews and 'heretical' Christians always take Religious Minority as a Major Hindrance. In only one instance, Catholics must take the trait Religious Minority if they are living in a Huguenot bastion prior to 1628.

When taken as a Minor Hindrance, being a member of a Religious Minority means the character faces some discrimination in his or her day-to-day life, is cut off from many social circles, and is often disfavored when compared to Catholics. In short, the character has to contend with an uneven playing field, but can theoret-

ically do anything and advance to any position. When taken as a Major Hindrance, being a member of a Religious Minority is a severe social restriction. Characters face regular persecution, up to and including threats of physical violence, torture, and death. The character is unable to practice his or her religion publicly and will routinely face legal hurdles in nearly every area of life. Certain professions will be closed to the character entirely and others will bump up against a concrete ceiling that limits their ability to advance in their career unless they convert.

Edges

EXISTING EDGES

ÉLAN

Elite French units were known for their ability to give the last full measure of their devotion in battle. There is a reason why the French word Élan made its way into the English language! Many members of the gendarme heavy cavalry have the Élan trait along with elite infantry units such as the Swiss Guard and King's Musketeers.

FLORENTINE

While swordplay as a martial art began during the Middle Ages, it was a brutal affair, consisting of grappling, takedowns, and dealing heavy blows with large weapons. The idea of fencing as a genteel, gentlemanly sport that emphasizes dexterity, coordination, and reflexes over brute strength developed in tandem with the humanist ideal of elegance and harmony, reaching its full expression in the fencing academies and instructional books of the Renaissance. As swords continued to get lighter and thinner and opponents shed their armor to increase flexibility, fencing developed into the physical chess of thrust, parry, and riposte that we still know it as today. However, unlike modern sport fencing, Renaissance duels were three-dimensional and two-handed affairs. Fencers typically wielded a rapier in their main hand and a parrying dagger (often called a 'main gauche,' literally French for 'left hand'), buckler shield, or cloak in their off-hand for deflecting blows.

LUCK

This Edge fits particularly well with the spirit of swashbuckling campaigns. Characters facing near-impossible odds somehow find the means to prevail time and time again. Truly, they must be loved by the fates!

NOBLE

To be a member of the nobility in Renaissance France is truly to live in a world apart. To emphasize the multi-tiered nature of nobility in this era, GMs have the option to dividing this Edge into 'Low' and 'High' nobility. Members of the low nobility are newly ennobled robe nobles, minor knights, or members of older sword noble families who have fallen on hard times. Members of the lower nobility do not automatically obtain the Rich Edge, but they also don't have the high level of responsibility either. Members of the high nobility are the only people who can rise to the highest ranks in the government, Church, and military. They also have substantial obligations and often an abundance of rivals looking to take them down. Members of the nobility have legal rights that set them apart from all common people, regardless of their wealth, including exemption from royal taxation.

INAPPROPRIATE EDGES

Edges such as Arcane Background, Arcane Resistance, Giant Killer, all Power Edges, and some Professional Edges are only suitable in semi-fantastic or high fantasy Renaissance France campaigns. The edge Rock and Roll is obviously inappropriate as there are no fully automatic weapons.

NEW EDGES

COURTLY INTRIGUE

Type: Social

Requirements: Seasoned, Charismatic

The character has mastered the intricate art of decorum, protocol, social niceties, subtle flattery, innuendo, veiled threats, and interesting conversation that allows for advancement within courtly society. Such characters receive an additional +2 Charisma bonus when interacting in an environment that requires social grace. This need not apply strictly to formal settings, but it should not include informal settings such as taverns, brothels, ships, or military camps. The GM might also give players whose characters have the Courtly Intrigue Edge some additional, secret information about the NPC they are interacting with as a weapon to use in roleplaying.

FENCING MASTER

Type: Combat

Requirements: Veteran, Florentine, Fighting d10+

The character is a master swordsman who has honed his skill through years of careful study, practice, and victory in combat. In Renaissance France, the ability to be called a Master Fencer (*Maître d'Armes*) is strictly regulated by the Académie d'Armes, established by King Charles IX in 1569. To be considered a Master Fencer, the character must demonstrate both commensurate ability with the sword through dueling demonstrations as well as a knowledge of the science of fencing as taught in the major Italian and Spanish schools. Master Fencers occupy an unusual position in society, existing somewhere on the margins between an elite solider, master craftsman, gentlemanly adventurer, and learned academician. A Master Fencer is a whirling dervish of flashing blades, adding +2 to Fighting rolls versus an opponent with a single weapon and no shield and forcing opponents to subtract -2 from any "gang up" bonuses.

UNCHARTED EXPLORER

Type: Professional

Requirements: Seasoned, Smarts d8+, Knowledge (Navigation or Wilderness) or Survival or Tracking d8+

The Renaissance is an age of exploration where brave adventurers set out into the vast unknown to discover what lies in the blank spaces beyond the outer edges of the map. Certain skilled pioneers make a profession out of this, guiding ships into uncharted waters or leading overland expeditions deep into the forests, mountains, and jungles of the Americas. Characters with the Uncharted Explorer Edge are truly at home in unfamiliar environments and able to intuit their location and direction even without maps, compasses, sextants, and the like. They also gain a free Benny each game to use in any trait test related to their chosen skill in exploring the unknown.

Gear

Typical gear in Renaissance France varied widely based on the time period and location. Firearms were just starting to enter into common use by 1500 and tended to be expensive and unreliable. Crossbowmen outnumbered arquebusiers and melee combat between lance-armed heavy cavalry and blocks of polearm-wielding infantry determined the outcome of most battles. As the cost of firearms decreased and their range, accuracy, reliability, and stopping power increased over the course of the century, gunpowder-based weapons began to dominate the battlefield.

One of the biggest collateral effects of the "gunpowder revolution" was that it continued the trend towards military centralization already underway in France. Firearms were most effective when used in mass volleys; only a unified command structure with the ability to mobilize vast reserves of manpower and the logistical expertise to arm them with guns and ammunition could take advantage of this technological change. The old knightly aristocracy – having already lost their military independence to the king through their incorporation into the *compagnies d'ordonnance* – was no longer the master of the battlefield as large, disciplined units of pike and shot infantry eclipsed them as the decisive combat arm. The growth of artillery also made their castles obsolete. Only the king had a large enough treasury to afford expensive artillery trains, and artillery allowed him to smash apart high stone walls that would have been impregnable only a century earlier.

Although historians still debate how a fractious Europe came to control globe-spanning empires beginning in the sixteenth century, firearms no doubt played a crucial role. The thunderous roar, bright muzzle flashes, and horrific destruction of the guns terrified Indigenous inhabitants of the New World. European colonizers used this to their advantage as a tool of psychological warfare and armed 'friendly' Native groups in conflicts against their neighbors, changing warfare in the Americas forever. The growth of transatlantic trade empires also led to conflicts at sea. Whereas naval battles prior to the Renaissance were similar to land warfare, where troops fought each other using rickety ships as platforms, the larger size and sailing range of ships and increasing role of naval gunnery required organized fleets and trained sailors. The monarch was the only person with the power to press merchant vessels into service and eventually to construct a royal navy of his own.

While technology changed warfare by making it more impersonal, technical, and bureaucratic, old-style armaments continued to thrive. Armor manufacturing reached its peak during the Renaissance. Master armorers (mostly found in Italy and Germany) could craft full plate armor that was lighter, more maneuverable, and more protective than ever before. The armor itself often incorporated artistic elements and humanist themes that quite literally turned its wearer into the Renaissance ideal of an enlightened warrior-prince. Increasing interest in martial arts featuring both heavy weapons and lighter dueling swords kept alive the chivalric ideal of warfare as a personal and honorable pursuit. Paradoxically, it also democratized chivalry by transforming it from the exclusive domain of the knightly aristocracy into a universal code of honor that any gentleman could subscribe to.

ROLE

By modern standards, military units in Renaissance France were hyper-specialized and had little in the way of cohesion or coordination between them. Many battles during this period were decided by generals who refused to commit their

troops at the decisive moment or cavalry who fled the field in pursuit of a routed foe rather than reengage in combat.

The French infantry of the early sixteenth century was notoriously weak. Most units consisted of poorly trained, semi-feudal levies of spearmen, crossbowmen, and a sprinkling arquebusiers. The king relied on elite Swiss mercenaries to fill out the ranks of his royal army throughout most of the Italian Wars and Wars of Religion. The Swiss formed themselves into dense blocks of highly disciplined pikemen. These units, bristling with 15-foot long pikes and heavy weapons such as halberds, Lucerne hammers, and great swords, moved around the battlefield like giant porcupines. The German mercenary landsknechts imitated the Swiss style and the two developed a fearsome rivalry, but the Swiss remained masters of the infantry combat until combined pike and shot units, such as the Spanish tercios, replaced them.

The typical pike and shot unit has a central core of armored pikemen whose job it was to fight in melee combat against cavalry and other infantry units. Musketeers, wearing light or no armor, formed up on the wings and fired volleys at the enemy. The typical musketeer carried a bandolier of twelve, pre-measured charges colorfully referred to as the "Twelve Apostles." Pike and shot units began with nearly three pikemen for every one musketeer, but the ratio had flipped by the end of the seventeenth century. The invention of the socket bayonet allowed the musketeers to protect themselves in melee and eventually spelled doom for the dedicated pikeman.

Heavy cavalry remained important throughout the Renaissance, although their role also changed. German mercenaries first experimented with using pistol armed heavy cavalry, but the results were unimpressive. They implemented a tactic called the 'caracole' whereby a group of cavalrymen would ride towards the enemy, discharge their pistols, and retreat to the rear to reload while another group rode forward to fire. However, the inaccurate pistols did little damage. Gaspard de Coligny and Henri de Navarre decided to have their pistol-armed heavy cavalry charge directly into the enemy, just as if they had a lance, and wait to discharge their shots until the moment before contact. This proved to be deadly and revolutionized cavalry tactics throughout Europe. While the cavalry began to shed armor to make them faster and more maneuverable, the limited armor they did wear became more protective. This new, 'munition-grade' armor was often 'proofed' with a bullet dent to demonstrate its effectiveness, but firearms development outpaced that of armor.

One of the biggest changes firearms brought to the battlefield during the Renaissance was the creation of an organized artillery arm. Artillery first made its way into European warfare at the beginning of the fourteenth century, but was limited to large caliber, stone-throwing bombards. By the sixteenth century, there were a wide range of cannons with exotic names like sakers, serpentines, demi-culverns, falconets, and basilisks. There was no standardization, so each piece was a unique work and could often only fire ammunition created by its manufacturer. King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden was one of the first to introduce standardization into the artillery by demanding that all cannons be rated by the poundage of shot they could fire and required to all use the same ammunition. Artillery standardization gave it a newfound importance on the battlefield and made it even more effective in siege warfare. This led to a new style of fortification called the 'Vauban' fortresses, named after the chief engineer of Louis XIV, that traded the high stone walls of medieval castles for low, thick ones laid out in a star-shaped pattern.

MELEE WEAPONS

Cutlass: The cutlass is a curved, single-handed sword, typically featuring a large basket hilt that covers the entirety of the hand. The cutlass has a well-deserved reputation as a pirate's weapon given its popularity amongst mariners. It is a heavy, slashing weapon that is both relatively cheap and easy to use, yet inflicts ghastly wounds.

Heavy Rapier: The rapier described in **Savage Worlds** works perfectly for the light, thrusting weapon used by gentlemen in duels during the Renaissance. However, there also existed a heavier style of rapier, alternatively called a side-sword, épée, estoc, spada da lato, or espada ropera, that was used as a cut-and-thrust sword in a military capacity. This is the kind of weapon a King's Musketeer would have carried into battle.

Main-Gauche: Renaissance fencing was a two-handed affair. The main-gauche had evolved from a simple off-hand dagger into a specifically designed parrying weapon, complete with a light, yet sturdy blade, a closed grip to protect the hand, and long, stout quillons to trap and deflect incoming attacks.

Sabre: Sabres are considered 'exotic' weapons throughout most of the Renaissance, being the primary sidearm of Hungarian, Polish, Dalmatian, and Turkish light cavalry. The sabre is a curved, slashing weapon easier to wield on horseback than the older style of double-edged sword.

MELEE WEAPONS TABLE

Type	Damage	Cost	Weight	Notes
Cutlass	Str+d4	150	4	Parry +1
Heavy Rapier	Str+d4+2	300	4	
Main-Gauche	Str+1	50	1	Parry +2
Sabre	Str+d6	200	3	

RANGED WEAPONS

Arquebus: The arquebus (also called the harquebus, harkbus, hackbut, caliver, and hand gonne) was the first generation of widely produced, relatively reliable infantry firearm. It was a muzzle-loading weapon that used a slow burning match to ignite the powder in the pan. Arquebuses weighed approximately 25 pounds, were typically 4-5 feet in length, and were fired from the shoulder. While the arquebus was not the first hand-held firearm, it was the first in regular use. The arquebus overtook the crossbow as the standard infantry missile weapon by the middle of the Sixteenth-Century until it too was replaced by the more sophisticated matchlock and flintlock musket.

Carbine: The carbine was the smallest of the long guns, used primarily by mounted units. Its light weight and short, 3 foot muzzle meant that it could be easily fired and reloaded from horseback, making it the weapon of choice for skirmishing cavalry. The downside was that the carbine had a short range, was inaccurate, and had limited power to penetrate heavy armor.

Musket (Matchlock and Flintlock): The matchlock musket was longer and heavier than the arquebus, but was more reliable, with a longer range and greater stopping power. The typical matchlock musket was around 40 pounds and 6 feet long, requiring the use of a forked stand to fire properly. The flintlock musket, also called a snaplock or fusil, used a piece of flint to ignite the charge in the pan

rather than a lit match. This design began to replace the matchlock by the middle of the Seventeenth-Century. However, while it was less dangerous to use and could be fired in wet weather, flintlocks were also more expensive to manufacture and their complicated firing mechanism was prone to breakdowns.

Pistol (Matchlock and Wheelock): The increasing sophistication of firearms manufacture led to the development of the single-handed pistol by the middle of the Sixteenth-Century (possibly named after Pistoia, Italy, a major gunsmithing center). Pistols were inaccurate and only suitable for close-range combat; most military manuals of the period show them being used at point-blank range, often with the muzzle pressed directly against the opponent. The matchlock pistol functioned similarly to the matchlock musket, making it a difficult weapon to reload while on horseback. The wheelock pistol used a spring-loaded firing mechanism similar to a modern day lighter to ignite the charge. Like the flintlock musket, the wheelock traded reliability and affordability for greater safety, flexibility, and ease of use.

Hand Grenade: Grenades were a late development during the Renaissance and only began to appear in appreciable quantities after the 1640s. There is some evidence that Parliamentary troops during the English Civil War used grenades, but Louis XIV was the first to create specialized units of elite, grenade-armed troops: the grenadiers. The Renaissance hand grenade was a heavy device of hollowed-out cast iron, filled with gunpowder and shrapnel, giving the grenadier only seconds between lighting the short fuse and lobbing the projectile towards his foe. While potentially useful in storming fortified positions, these devices were dangerous and unreliable and quickly went out of fashion.

Light Cannon: This is a catchall classification for any artillery light enough to move around the battlefield. These are typically small caliber, anti-personnel weapons with limited range and accuracy but a high degree of mobility. Horse artillery and the small "salvo" guns that accompanied some pike and shot units (such as the vaunted Swedish shock infantry of Gustavus Adolphus) are light cannon. Similarly, swivel guns on ships also qualify as light cannon.

Field Cannon: The designation of field cannon covers most of the artillery used on a battlefield of the Renaissance. Field cannon can be either bronze or cast iron and typically fire between a 3 to 15 pound shell. Ammunition was mostly solid shot, but some experimental explosive rounds were also coming into use. These heavy guns are difficult to attach to a horse (limber) and would typically remain stationary throughout the battle.

Siege Cannon: This category of cannon includes the large mortars and bombards used to punch holes in thick stone walls during a siege. Large armies might have only two or three of these enormous, expensive machines of war and required whole teams of oxen to drag them just a few miles a day. Siege cannon take several hours to prepare for firing and are completely immobile. The 60-80 pound ammunition is difficult to load and the intense heat generated from their firing requires long cool down periods in order not to damage the piece.

RANGED WEAPONS TABLE

Type	Range	DMG	RoF	Cost	WT	Min Str
Pistols						
Matchlock Pistol	5/10/20	2d6	1	200	4	
Notes: 2 Actions to Reload						
Wheelock Pistol	5/10/20	2d6	1	300	3	
Notes: 2 Actions to Reload						
Rifles						
Arquebus	10/20/40	2d6+1	1	250	8	
Notes: 2 Actions to Reload						
Matchlock Musket	15/30/60	2d8	1	300	14	d6
Notes: 2 Actions to Reload						
Flintlock Musket	15/30/60	2d8	1	350	12	d6
Notes: 2 Actions to Reload						
Carbine	10/20/40	2d6	1	250	6	
Notes: 2 Actions to Reload						
Grenades						
Hand Grenade	5/10/20	3d6-2	1	100	2	d6
Notes: MBT						
Cannons						
Light Cannon	20/40/80	3d6	1	2000		
Notes: AP 2, 3 Actions to Reload						
Field Cannon	50/100/200	3d6+1	1	Military		
Notes: AP 4, Heavy Weapon, 3 Actions to Reload						
Siege Cannon	100/200/400	4d8+2	1	Military		
Notes: AP 10, Heavy Weapon, 3 Actions to Reload						

ARMOR

Buff Coat: The buff coat was a very popular piece of equipment for military men of all stripes during the Renaissance. It was a protective garment of heavy, stitched leather (typically tanned oxen hide) that covered the entirety of the torso and arms, and frequently extended to the upper thighs. The buff coat provided some moderate defense against edged weapons while still being light and relatively affordable. A gentleman would wear this under his cuirass for added protection while a buff coat would likely be the only armor a musketeer or sailor could afford.

Burgonet: The burgonet was a popular helmet during the Renaissance that covered the entire head, but left the face exposed. Burgonets often had a large, central crest that ran down the middle of the helmet and a brim that extended from the forehead to provide protection for the eyes. This was cheaper, lighter, and more comfortable to wear than close-faced helms, but provided less protection.

Cuirass: While heavy cavalry continued to use the full set of plate armor described in **Savage Worlds** throughout the sixteenth century, the increasing effectiveness of firearms led to a reduction in armor overall. The cuirass was a heavy steel back and breastplate that provided good protection for the vital organs during melee combat and even some defense against wayward shots. This armor was commonly worn by heavy cavalry and pikemen in the seventeenth century.

Savoyard Helm: Armorsmithing reached its height of sophistication during the Renaissance and no piece is a better example of that than the Savoyard helm. This heavy helmet covered the entire face with a fearsome, steel mask. Named after the Duke of Savoy, who equipped his cuirassiers with these helmets during his unsuccessful attack on Geneva, the Savoyard helm soon spread throughout Europe as armorers attempted to out-do each other with the intricacy and design of their masks.

ARMOR TABLE

Type	Armor	Weight	Cost	Notes
Buff Coat	+1	10	50	Covers torso, arms, legs
Burgonet	+2	3	80	Covers head, 75% versus called head shot
Cuirass	+4	30	400	Covers torso
Savoyard Helm	+3	8	150	Covers head

MUNDANE EQUIPMENT

The type of equipment a person in Renaissance France might possess was based on social status, and most common people had little in the way of personal property. Their clothes were functional and homemade using readily available materials such as hemp, wool, and linen. Shoes, of both the leather and wood variety, required some skill to manufacture and were one of the most expensive items a peasant would own. The typical peasant lived in a one-room hovel made from wood, wicker, or mudbricks along with the rest of the family and farm animals. A central hearth would provide the sole source of heating and lighting for the household, oil lamps and even tallow candles being far too expensive for most peasants. Their only possessions might be an iron pot or two, a few knives, several ceramic plates, a large table with wooden benches, a chest or two for storage, and possibly a straw bed. More prosperous farmers or urban artisans would have larger homes with multiple rooms, feather mattresses, glass or metal plates and cups, a nicer change of clothes for the holidays, and maybe even salt or sugar on special occasions.

The nobility and rich merchant class lived very different lives, often maintaining separate residences in both the city and the countryside. Depending on their wealth, their country home could range from a handsome stone manor house to a palatial chateau. Likewise, their urban residence could be a stately apartment in a wealthy district or an opulent townhouse. Their homes would be filled with decorative tapestries, silver tableware, ornately carved wooden furnishings, glass windows, exotic spices, and possibly personal collections of armaments, war trophies, books, and fine art. Members of the upper classes, male and female alike, had several outfits and were expected to keep on top of the latest fashions in order to maintain their social standing. One of the distinguishing marks of upper class status was their right to bear arms and no gentleman would ever appear in public without his sword at his side. They would also travel only by horseback; riding any other animal, a cart, or a wagon was below their dignity. However, private stagecoaches were beginning to become fashionable by the sixteenth century as suspension methods improved and road quality increased in highly populated areas.

Non-player Characters

Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642)

One cannot talk about Renaissance France without mentioning Cardinal Richelieu. He served as Chief Minister to a young Louis XIII and helped usher in a golden age for France. It was Richelieu who crushed the Huguenots, founded the first French colonies, toppled Spain as the mightiest power in Europe, and laid the foundation for royal absolutism by consolidating power in the hands of the king. Cardinal Richelieu was one of the first great statesmen for whom realpolitik surpassed all other considerations. In true Renaissance style, he was also a great patron of culture and the arts, founding the *Académie Française* and filling his baroque Palais-Cardinal (now the Palais-Royal) with artwork, books, and scientific curiosities from around the world.

Cardinal Richelieu was born Armand du Plessis, the third son of a minor noble family whose father had been killed fighting in the Wars of Religion. While he originally studied for a military career, he shifted to the clergy when Henri IV awarded his family a bishopric in honor of their service to the crown. It was around this time that he befriended a Capuchin friar by the name of François Leclerc du Tremblay – a man who would become one of Richelieu's closest confidants, spies, and the original *éminence grise*. Richelieu rose through the ranks and was elevated to the cardinalate in 1622 on the recommendation of Louis XIII before becoming Chief Minister in 1624. He outplayed the Queen-Regent, Marie de Medici, who had grown jealous of his influence and attempted to have him dismissed from office, by exposing her plot and forcing her to leave the court in disgrace. Never again would the 'Red Sphinx' face a serious challenge to his power as he continued to direct the government of Louis XIII until his death in 1642.

MANNERISMS

Although he is not highborn, Cardinal Richelieu always exudes the confidence of someone who was born to rule. To some he might come off as haughty and aloof, but this is only because he is driven by the singular goal of advancing the power, glory, and prestige of France. Social interactions that don't further that goal are simply a waste of time and energy to him. While he can be ruthless when the need arises, he prefers to use persuasion and subtle coercion first. Richelieu also possesses a fierce intellect and is a master manipulator, making him one of the most effective diplomats of his day. His spies and informants are everywhere and he insists on being apprised of anything of note taking place in the kingdom.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Cardinal Richelieu is a tall, imposing figure with steely, hazel eyes, an aquiline nose, and a long chin upon which he wears his famous goa-

tee. In spite of the famous nineteenth century painting by Henri Motte of Richelieu at the siege of La Rochelle decked out in full armor over his red robes, he was physically frail and unable to withstand the rigors of life in the field, having contracted gonorrhea at a young age. He became increasingly sick later in life and was confined to his bed during his last years.

Catherine de Medici

Catherine de Medici's life has been the subject of so many works of fiction and conflicting historical analyses that it's difficult to sort out where the real woman ends and the legend begins. She is often portrayed either as the original *femme fatale*, a ruthless black widow forever pulling the royal strings of her weak sons, or as a master diplomat who strived against near-impossible odds to preserve the peace against religious agitators within the kingdom and foreign meddlers from without. What is undisputed, however, is that she lived a life of extremes. For over forty years, she was one of the most powerful people in all of Europe, yet she also lived a life marked by tragedy, having buried her husband, five sons, and three daughters (her last son, King Henri III, would die eight months after Catherine).

Catherine was born into the powerful Medici family, the ruling house of Florence for whom Machiavelli wrote *The Prince*. Despite being of somewhat low birth, she married into the French royal family due to her impressive dowry. Her husband Henri II took little interest in her and she struggled at court as a baseborn foreigner. The king's mistress, Dianne de Poitiers, held all the power and left Catherine marginalized. It was only after Henri II's death in 1559 that Catherine was finally able to assert her own authority during the successive reigns of her sons.

As Queen-regent, Catherine attempted to steer a middle course during the Wars of Religion. She wished to maintain the official Catholicity of the kingdom yet realized that military conflict against the Huguenots would only drain the crown's limited resources and weaken France against Habsburg aggression. The growing power of the Duke of Guise and the Catholic League soon presented themselves as an even bigger threat to the House of Valois than Protestantism. Catherine's conciliatory and pragmatic approach did her no favors amongst the ultra-Catholics, while her alleged (yet never proven) poisoning of Jeanne d'Albret and complicity in the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre earned her the everlasting enmity of the Huguenot faction.

MANNERISMS

Like nearly everything concerning Catherine de Medici, descriptions of her personality and mannerisms vary wildly depending on the source. What seems clear is that she was committed to her family above all else – particularly to her children – and would sacrifice anything for them. The fact that she lived through the deaths of so many of her close family members makes her life even more tragic. Never a gregarious person, Catherine became even more withdrawn and somber in her later years as it became clear that the House of Valois was doomed.

CARDINAL RICHELIEU

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d4

Charisma: +6; **Pace**: 6; **Parry**: 2; **Toughness**: 4

Skills: Intimidation d6, Investigation d8, Knowledge (Latin) d6, Knowledge (Religion) d8+2, Knowledge (Statecraft) d10+2, Notice d10, Persuasion d10

Hindrances: Arrogant, Enemy (Habsburgs), Vow (Chastity)

Edges: Charismatic, Command, Courtly Intrigue, Noble (Low), Scholar (Religion and Statecraft), Strong Willed

Armor: None

Weapons: None

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CATHERINE DE MEDICI
Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d10, Spirit d12, Strength d4, Vigor d6
Charisma: +6; **Pace**: 6; **Parry**: 2; **Toughness**: 5
Skills: Intimidation d6, Investigation d6, Knowledge (Statecraft) d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d10
Hindrances: Bad Luck, Cautious, Stubborn
Edges: Charismatic, Common Bond (Family), Courtly Intrigue, Noble (High), Filthy Rich
Armor: None
Weapons: None

There is a long tradition linking Catherine with the occult – a rich vein of potential plot material for GMs to mine. She famously kept Nostradamus at court (who became famous after 'predicting' the death of Henri II) and was fascinated by magic and astrology. Many of her enemies went further and accused her of witchcraft, although she was never formally charged. Catherine was also a great patroness of the arts and sponsored musicians, artists, writers, actors, dancers, and architects in order to extol the humanist virtues of her House.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Catherine was certainly no beauty. The Venetian ambassador described her as, "small of stature, and thin, and without delicate features, but having the protruding eyes peculiar to the Medici family." Another said, "Her mouth is too large and her eyes too prominent and colorless . . . but she is a very distinguished-looking woman." One would imagine she must have carried herself with a certain degree of gravitas and self-confidence in order to survive as a female in such a precarious and hostile environment. Catherine's Italian birth, accent, and manners are also objects of scorn by her enemies who see her as an unwanted interloper, introducing foreign elements to the French royal court.

D'Artagnan

D'Artagnan, the dashing protagonist of Alexandre Dumas' *D'Artagnan Romances,* was actually based on a real-life musketeer. Charles de Batz de Castelmore d'Artagnan lived a dramatic and charmed life. Although he hailed from a minor noble family in Atlantic France, he was able to earn a spot in the highly prestigious King's Musketeers in 1633 thanks to the help of an influential uncle. While a young officer, the politically savvy d'Artagnan attached himself to Cardinal Mazarin, increasingly one of the most powerful men in the kingdom. He was able to win the gratitude of the Cardinal and eventually of King Louis XIV himself by taking on highly dangerous, secret missions, especially during the Fronde. Louis continued to use d'Artagnan for secret missions, including the covert arrest of the powerful finance minister Nicolas Fouquet, whose opulent wealth and alleged desire to build a personal empire in the Americas made him a threat in the King's eyes. In another Dumas-related coincidence, Fouquet's time at the Italian fortress-prison of Pignerol coincided with the incarceration of the 'Man in the Iron Mask' there, leading some to believe that the mysterious prisoner was actually Fouquet himself.

In 1667, d'Artagnan was promoted to the rank of captain-lieutenant of the King's Musketeers, making him, in effect, the *de facto* commander of the elite unit as the king himself held the honorary captaincy. While serving as head of the Musketeers, d'Artagnan developed a reputation as both a brave warrior and able administrator, even serving as the governor of the newly conquered city of Lille for a time. Ultimately, d'Artagnan's lead-from-the-front style proved to be his undoing. While storming the fortifications of Maastricht with his troops in 1673, he was struck by musket fire and killed. Although the Musketeers were successful in their attack and

the city capitulated, they had lost their greatest member. Louis XIV was greatly affected by the death of d'Artagnan and arranged for his funeral to be held in the private royal chapel.

MANNERISMS

It is entirely up the GM's discretion how closely their d'Artagnan reflects the historical figure or the literary legend. In both accounts, he is depicted as being loyal, reliable, brave, – even to a fault – and a good leader. There are no records of him being the hothead that Dumas describes him as in his younger years, challenging Athos, Porthos, and Aramis all to a duel in the same day, but there is no reason why he could not be in a Renaissance France campaign.

D'ARTAGNAN
Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d8
Charisma: +2; **Pace**: 6; **Parry**: 8; **Toughness**: 7 (1)
Skills: Fighting d12, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Shooting d8, Riding d6
Hindrances: Code of Honor, Heroic, Vow (King)
Edges: Brave, Élan, Fencing Master, Noble (Low)
Armor: Buff coat (torso, arms, legs +1)
Weapons: Heavy rapier (Str+d4+2), flintlock musket (15/30/60, 2d8, RoF 1, 2 actions to reload), brace of wheelock pistols (5/10/20, 2d6, RoF 1, 2 actions to reload)

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

As far as we know, no contemporary image exists of d'Artagnan. The only hints we have about his appearance come from a later, semi-fictionalized account of his life that Dumas drew from to write his book. Several statues of him exist throughout Europe, although they tend to reflect the romantic character from the *Three Musketeers* more than the actual person. He likely had a moustache, which was the style for soldiers at the time, and long hair. He also would have worn the distinctive tabard of the King's Musketeers – first in blue with the stylized silver cross in the middle, and then in dark burgundy with black and white trim after his promotion to captain-lieutenant.

Gaspard de Coligny

Gaspard de Coligny was the great Huguenot martyr of the Wars of Religion. In so many ways, he embodied the France that could have been. Coligny was at once a devout Huguenot and loyal subject of the crown whose greatest desire was to end the religious conflict tearing his beloved homeland apart. His dream was not to create a separate Huguenot 'state-within-a-state', but only to secure an equal place for Protestants within French society. However, Coligny would not survive to see his dream of a multi-confessional France realized. He was brutally murdered by the Duke de Guise soon after the marriage of Henri de Navarre to Princess Margot, triggering the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre.

Coligny belonged to one of the great noble houses of the kingdom and held extensive lands throughout Burgundy, Normandy, and the Loire valley. He pursued a military career, as befitted a scion of the sword nobility, and took part in several campaigns of the Italian Wars. Henri II awarded him the position of Admiral of France for both his record of service and high noble blood, yet Coligny began to drift towards Calvinist teachings in the late 1550s. By the outbreak of the Wars of Religion in 1562, Coligny was one of the great noble leaders of the Huguenot party along with Louis, the Prince de Condé, and Queen Jeanne d'Albret of Navarre.

Coligny served both as a military commander, developing a reputation as an expert cavalryman, and lead diplomat of the Huguenots to the Valois court. Al-

though he sometimes led troops against the king's armies, Coligny saw no conflict between this and his role as Admiral of France. Coligny believed that the crown was under the control of extremist elements, led by the House of Guise, and his fight was only one of self-defense, never rebellion. On several occasions, Coligny wrote letters to Charles IX and Catherine de Medici urging them to unite French Catholics and French Protestants in a war against their common Habsburg enemy in Spain. Coligny had grand plans for France and used all of his influence to gain royal support for colonization ventures in the New World. His attempts all ended in failure – particularly in Florida where the Spanish executed nearly 500 Huguenot colonists – but his vision of an Atlantic empire would endure.

MANNERISMS

Admiral Coligny fits into the archetypal mold of the wise, paternal leader. He has the birth and bearing to command respect from both high and low born alike, yet is not at all arrogant or haughty. Rather, Coligny tends to be soft-spoken and reserved in his interactions and presents as a rather stoic figure. This is not to suggest that he was cold, however. His ability to command such a high degree of loyalty from his troops indicates he was able to connect with people at an individual level and to inspire them by brave action. He was also an extremely devout man who took his religion very seriously.

Coligny was not an ideal, paladin-like figure. He could be ruthless when circumstances required it and he believed that defense of the 'True Religion' (i.e. Reformed Protestantism) justified nearly any action. He was also a realist and understood he needed to recruit uncouth pirates and foreign mercenaries in order for his side to have a fighting chance. While there is no definitive evidence linking him to various political assassinations carried out by the Huguenots – including, most famously, the father of the Duke de Guise – he may have passively acquiesced to such plans without needing to get his hands dirty.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

Several surviving portraits exist of the Admiral. In nearly all of them, he is portrayed as striking a classically 'noble' bearing – dignified and handsome, with fair skin, hair, and eyes. Because of his upbringing and experience in both the military and the court, Coligny is able to shift between refinement and gruffness when needed. Like all leaders at the time, he leads from the front in battle and likely has his fair share of scars and war wounds.

GASPARD DE COLIGNY
Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d8
Charisma: +2; **Pace**: 6; **Parry**: 6; **Toughness**: 10 (4)
Skills: Boating d10, Fighting d6, Knowledge (Battle) d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Riding d8
Hindrances: Code of Honor, Loyal, Religious Minority
Edges: Command, Élan, Hard to Kill, Leader of Men, Natural Leader, Noble (High)
Armor: Cuirass (torso +4), buff coat (torso, arms, legs +1)
Weapons: Heavy rapier (Str+d4+2), wheelock pistol (5/10/20, 2d6, RoF 1, 2 actions to reload)

Jacques de Sores

Very little is known about the early life of the infamous Huguenot pirate Jacques de Sores. He was likely born somewhere in Normandy and began attacking Spanish and Portuguese ships returning from the New World in the 1540s. He first made a name for himself by taking part in a massive pirate attack on the Spanish Caribbean – the first ever in history – with another famous corsair, François Le Clerc, known as 'Jambe de Bois' ('Peg Leg'). The two pirates ransacked several colonies, but their most

famous was the sack of Havana in 1555. After pillaging and burning the city for eight days, Sores led his men in a display of sacrilegious theatre as they paraded through the town decked out in stolen clerical vestments while smashing relics and statues in a macabre mockery of a Catholic festival. This combination of piracy and religious zealotry would become a trademark of his throughout his career.

Sores pledged to support the Huguenot cause after the outbreak of the Wars of Religion in 1562. Gaspard de Coligny, as Admiral of France, and Henri de Navarre, as Admiral of Guyenne, had the authority to issue letters of marque, essentially licenses to engage in sanctioned piracy, and used it to create a formidable fleet. The Huguenots were always strongest in the maritime centers of Atlantic France and soon their ships were ravaging Spanish, Portuguese, and Catholic French shipping.

In 1570, Sores committed an act that topped even the sack of Havana in both its brutality and religious undertones. he had been pursuing a small Portuguese flotilla of seven ships off the coast of the Canary Islands, en route to their new colonies in Brazil, when he launched his attack. Taken completely by surprise, the outgunned Portuguese ships had no choice but to surrender. When Sores discovered the presence of forty Jesuit missionaries on board, he flew into a rage, ordering his men to kill all of them and throw any Catholic paraphernalia they could find into the sea.

This and similar actions earned him the undying hatred of the Catholic powers of Europe but made him a hero to the hard-pressed Huguenots as a portion of Sores's captured booty went into funding the war effort. Two years later, he would be appointed vice-admiral of the formidable Huguenot fleet at La Rochelle, one of a growing number of crusading Protestant privateers fighting not just for gold, but for the "defense and advancement of the True Religion."

MANNERISMS

Sores was almost certainly a surly and combative fellow, yet he didn't fit the pirate mold of rebelling against authority. He knew how to obey orders and function as part of a hierarchy. He earned the good graces of Henri de Navarre, future King of France, and was a well-known litigant in the admiralty court of Jeanne d'Albret where he routinely brought his captured prizes. By all accounts, Sores was a devout man who managed to stay on the good side of the religiously conservative consistory of La Rochelle.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Although there were several woodcuts made as propaganda pieces showing Jacques de Sores's attacks on Havana and the Jesuits, we have no reliable information from the time describing his appearance. He likely dressed in a similar manner to other sixteenth century pirates, such as Sir Francis Drake, wearing a ruffled shirt with a high collar, buff coat, quilted doublet, knee breaches, and high leather boots. Sores must have carried the smell of the sea with him wherever he went and presented as a very intimidating figure.

JACQUES DE SORES
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
Charisma: -4 (among Catholics) / 0 (among Protestants); **Pace**: 6; **Parry**: 7; **Toughness**: 6 (1)
Skills: Boating d8+2, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Navigation) d6, Shooting d8
Hindrances: Arrogant, Enemy (Catholics), Religious Fanatic (Major)
Edges: Ace, Command, Fervor, Inspire, Quick
Armor: Buff coat (torso, arms, legs +1)
Weapons: Cutlass (Str+d4; Parry +1), brace of matchlock pistols (5/10/20, 2d6, RoF 1, 2 actions to reload)

Renaissance France as a Setting

There are many aspects of Renaissance France that can be incorporated into a Savage Worlds game in part or in whole. These historical elements can be mixed and matched within new or existing settings to create new environments or used on their own to create a standalone Renaissance France setting (historical or otherwise). Here's some guidance on using Renaissance France in your games.

Setting Styles

The beauty of basing a game in Renaissance France is both the richness of the setting and its incredible degree of adaptability. Nearly any type of game catering to all styles of play can work here. The crucial question to ask is "Which version of Renaissance France is this?" Offered here are examples of five different styles of Renaissance France games: 1) Trailing the Pike; 2) Courtly Intrigue; 3) Swashbuckling Adventure; 4) Seafaring and Exploration; and 5) Semi-Fantastic.

GMs are encouraged to mix and match these themes or come up with ones of their own.

TRAILING THE PIKE

War was an ever-present fact of life in Renaissance France. The major conflicts French armies fought in during the period covered by *Ultimate Age of Discovery Guide: Renaissance France* were the Italian Wars (1494-1559), the French Wars of Religion (1562-1628), the Thirty Years War (while the war began in 1618, France did not intervene until 1635, yet continued fighting against Spain until 1659), the Fronde (1648-1653), and the War of Devolution (1667-1668). While much of campaigning was drudgery punctuated by disease, privation, and brief moments of existential terror, military life did offer opportunities for advancement to noble and commoner alike.

The nobility still saw themselves as warrior-elite whose primary purpose was to fight. The heavy cavalry was the most prestigious branch of the army and it was made up almost entirely of young noblemen. Nobles also dominated the officer corps and had a monopoly over its highest ranks. While the military was far from a meritocracy, it was one of the few areas in French life where a common person could rise above his station based on his deeds. The bulk of the infantry – by far the largest of the three branches consisting of a mix of pike and shot – and the artillery were staffed by non-nobles. An ambitious soldier could get noticed for fighting bravely, rise in the ranks, and, if lucky, possibly even win ennoblement for a conspicuous act of gallantry.

Military campaigns offer a fine setting for a Renaissance France game. Warfare is one of the most dramatic and tragic activities human beings engage in and one of the few that lends itself to a narrative structure. The other advantage of military campaigns is that they offer the GM a ready-made reason for why all the players are together as a party.

The GM can either base the game around the actual fighting or simply use the military campaign as a backdrop for other adventures. Field battles remained rare throughout the period and were often the culmination to a campaigning season

filled primarily with small skirmishes, sieges, and counter sieges. When battles did take place, they were often decisive.

In general, armies were divided into "battles," each under the control of its own commander who often acted based on their own initiative. The most common configuration was to have a central "battle" composed primarily of infantry with cavalry "battles" located on the wings and perhaps a rear reserve. In order to simulate the disorganized and piecemeal nature of Renaissance warfare, both the overall army commanders and the subordinate commanders of each "battle" should make their own Knowledge (Battle) rolls. In general, battles during the Renaissance consisted of the cavalry fighting out on the wings while the infantry engaged in a deadly exchange of musketry before closing in for the melee "push of pike." The winner of the cavalry fight on the wings would have a clear advantage as they could now charge their cavalry into the flank of the enemy infantry or push into the rear to attack the enemy artillery and supply train.

The important thing is to keep the actions of the PCs front-and-center amidst the chaos of battle. Unless they have risen through the ranks to become commanding officers, it is likely the PCs will be rank-and-file troops. The units that offer them the greatest chance to stand out are the cavalry, elite units of the *Maison du Roi*, or the reckless *enfants perdus* (forlorn hope) charging directly into pike formations with halberds and two-handed swords. The PCs should have plenty of opportunities for dramatic action, especially if the GM is running a swashbuckling-style campaign. Battles should also be dangerous. Death is a very real possibility and it heightens the sense of heroism and glory when players know they are risking their character's lives in order to turn the tide of a battle.

COURTLY INTRIGUE

The Renaissance was the age where courtly life was born. Royal courts prior to the sixteenth century were iterant and sporadic. It was far more likely for the king to make a tour of his realm and stay at the chateaux of the great nobles than for them to come to him. The creation of a royal court with formal rules of order was a means by which kings centralized power into their own hands. Nobles, in order to remain in the good graces of the king, were required to spend much of their time at the court, allowing the king to keep a close eye on them, no doubt. The elaborate social rituals and formal rules of decorum also functioned as a way to determine who was welcome and who was excluded from access to the sovereign.

These new rules became increasingly international and formalized in hand-books, such as Baldasarre Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*, during the sixteenth century. The concepts they brought together of courtly manners, chivalry, virtue, and honor reached a height during this period and all who considered themselves to be gentlemen were required to abide by them – somewhat paradoxically considering that the old, knightly elite this code was based on was in terminal decline. A gentleman courtier was expected to uphold the code of honor, but also to be fashionable and well-educated, with an extensive knowledge of languages, the humanities, and the fine arts. This greatly benefitted the growing ranks of the robe nobles who compensated for their lack of pedigree with higher education, which the sword nobles often eschewed.

The growth of royal courts and importance of courtly intrigue changed the nature of political power in Renaissance France. Diplomatic and interpersonal skills could advance one's status just as much, if not more, than military prowess. This opened the door for previously excluded groups, such as the lowborn, foreigners, and women, to have greater influence in government. While the roles of men and women were far from equal and the code of chivalry often served to put women in cages while claiming to place them on pedestals, some of the most

influential people in Renaissance France were women who had mastered the game of courtly intrigue, such as Catherine and Marie de Medici, Marguerite de Navarre, Jeanne d'Albret, Anne de Bretagne, and Diane de Poitiers.

Courtly intrigue offers perhaps the richest possibilities for players and GMs who love the roleplaying aspect of **Savage Worlds**. It is entirely possible to have an entire campaign focused around the machinations of fighting for influence at court without ever having actual, physical combat. A courtly intrigue game can also serve as a nice change of pace for swashbuckling, exploration, or trailing the pike campaigns. A good real-life example of what a courtly intrigue game can offer is the "Field of the Cloth of Gold," a three week diplomatic summit between Kings François I and Henry VIII of England. The two rival kings spared no expense and built extravagant temporary palaces, monuments, tournament grounds, and allegedly even wine-flowing fountains in an attempt to out-do the other. Newer fashions such as music, dancing, and poetry reading were combined with older courtly styles of feasting and martial competitions such as wresting, hunting, and jousting. Even the kings took part in the action. Famously, Henry challenged François to a wrestling match and was dismayed after he was quickly thrown and defeated by his smaller rival (although he recovered some of his honor when he did better than François in the joust). All of this was done under the guidance of the English Cardinal Woolsey, a mastermind who undoubtedly used the opportunity to gather intelligence on the French court. Each side brought hundreds of noble retainers, each of whom came with his own entourage. Truly, the possibilities for courtly adventure in such a setting are nearly endless!

SWASHBUCKLING ADVENTURE

The foremost image most of us have in our minds when we think of Renaissance France is of the dashing swordsmen featured in Alexandre Dumas novels. This is perhaps the easiest type of game to run because players will already be familiar with the style and pacing. Swashbuckling campaigns lean heavily on action sequences and GMs should be generous in handing out Bennies to players who throw their characters into perilous, heroic situations. In keeping with the spirit of *The Three Musketeers*, swashbuckling campaigns often dabble in themes of military conflict and courtly intrigue as a means to drive the action. More than in any of the other playstyles, the PCs in a swashbuckling campaign should be the undisputed heroes of the story.

A key to any good swashbuckling campaign is a nemesis for the PCs. Alexandre Dumas used Cardinal Richelieu as the chief antagonist of Athos, Porthos, Ararmis, and D'Artagnan, earning him a reputation as a master schemer that lives on to this day. GMs are free to use Cardinal Richelieu, especially if the players are also in the King's Musketeers, or invent an enemy mastermind of their own. The key is to make the antagonist sufficiently powerful to present a threat to the PCs while also being insulated against a direct attack. He or she should have several layers of underbosses who handle most of the dirty work (think Milady de Winter and Rochefort from the novels) and a veritable army of mooks to throw in the PCs' way (such as the Cardinal's Guard). Players should be amply rewarded for acts of heroism by receiving lands, titles, awards, and of course, romantic possibilities.

Although swashbuckling campaigns tend towards lighter themes, it is certainly possible to incorporate more complex topics. For instance, the crushing of the Huguenots at the Siege of La Rochelle plays a prominent role in *The Three Musketeers* and Dumas posits that the Man in the Iron Mask was actually the twin of Louis XIV. GMs could incorporate elements such as these to force players into making difficult choices about what matters most to them. Does their personal sense of honor come before all else, or does their duty to obey their superiors require them to follow orders they believe to be unjust or immoral?

SEAFARING AND EXPLORATION

The world of Renaissance France is not limited to Europe alone. Beginning in the first decade of the 1500s, French seafarers set out across the Atlantic to trade, explore, and eventually settle in the New World. GMs can include trips to the Americas in order to add some variety, mystery, exoticism, and spice (both literally and figurative) into their European-based campaigns, or set a campaign entirely in the New World. An important consideration to keep in mind is that European influence in the Americas increases enormously over the time period covered in this sourcebook. From the French perspective, GMs can draw a line between the pre-colonial and post-colonial periods.

The pre-colonial period begins with the first French voyages to the Americas in the early sixteenth century (primarily to trade with South America, fish off the Grand Banks, and engage in piracy against the Spanish and Portuguese) and ends with the founding of Québec by Samuel de Champlain in 1608. Although there were several attempts to establish permanent colonies prior to 1608 – Jacques Cartier in New France (Canada) in the 1540s, Villeganon in Brazil in the 1550s, and Ribault and Laudonnière in La Florida in the 1560s – all of them ended in failure. Characters that come to the New World prior to colonization are truly stepping foot onto an unknown and inhospitable land. The only European settlements belong to the Spanish and Portuguese who claim the entire Western Hemisphere as their own and will kill or capture any Frenchman they discover as a trespasser. While the

characters' steel armor and black power weapons might give them an edge over hostile Natives, they are outnumbered and surrounded by wild and unfamiliar terrain.

The pre-colonial period lends itself well to GMs who wish to incorporate fantasy elements into their campaigns. For centuries, Europeans imagined strange people with the heads of beasts or with faces in their chests inhabited distant lands along with legendary creatures such as griffons, manticores, basilisks, giants, harpies, rocs, and unicorns. There was a reason that the unknown outer edges of maps were labeled with "Here there be Dragons." A lost expedition can easily run into one of these creatures or many of the other beasts described in the oral traditions of Native American folklore.

The New World becomes a more Europeanized place after 1600 as the English and Dutch join the French in scrambling to settle North America and the Caribbean. The French adopted an approach that favored light settlement spread out over a very large area, allowing them to maintain good relations with their Native allies, which they in turn leaned on heavily to supply them with both valuable trade goods and military protection. Outside of the cities of Québec, Louisbourg, Trois Rivières, and Montréal (small even by colonial standards), French settlements were limited to small forts and trading posts strung out along the shores of the Great Lakes and down the banks of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers. Settlement in the Caribbean began in the 1620s and 30s, but were mostly limited to tiny free-holds and pirate havens, such as the infamous island of Tortuga off the coast of Haiti.

The French in North America were far superior to both the English and Dutch in woodcraft and had mastered the Indigenous art of guerilla war, or as the French called it, *la petite guerre*. PCs might take part in punitive expeditions against either rival European powers or hostile Native tribes. They might also be called upon to explore and chart unknown territory, possibly even joining famous expeditions such as the Sieur de La Salle's voyage across the Great Lakes and down the Mississippi River, or investigate reports of mythical lost civilizations like the Kingdom of Saguenay. The French, particularly the Huguenots, also took quite naturally to piracy against the Spanish and Portuguese.

Any campaign set in the New World will, by its nature, run into difficult themes of racism, slavery, and genocide. The GM will need to decide how and to what extent she wishes to include these themes into the game. Although the French tended to foster good relations with Native peoples, Francis Parkman's famous formulation of "Spanish civilization crushed the Indian; English civilization scorned and neglected him; French civilization embraced and cherished him" is an over exaggeration. The French simply made the pragmatic decision that it was far better to work with Native peoples when they could in order to further their colonial objectives than to make war against them.

Slavery in the Caribbean colonies remained rare during the first half of the seventeenth century, but was starting to pick up by the 1660s. The French colonies strung out along the Lesser Antilles consisted primarily of small farmers trying to scratch out a living and some larger plantations that relied on a mix of European indentured servants and African slaves. It was only when Dutch refugees from Brazil brought their techniques for refining sugarcane to the French colonies of Martinique and Guadeloupe that the era of mass slave labor really began. The French soon settled in the western end of the island of Hispaniola, turning it into the highly profitable colony of Saint-Domingue, the so-called "Pearl of the Antilles." In spite of later attempts to regulate slavery in the 1685 Code Noir, conditions for slaves in Saint-Domingue remained particularly brutal and mortality rates were high until the Haitian Revolution ended the regime in the late eighteenth century.

SEMI-FANTASTIC

While erudite scholars in the academies might talk of the universe being governed by knowable, natural forces, the average peasant in the countryside knows better. Theirs is a demon-haunted world where the presence of magic and spiritual forces, both beneficent and malicious, are simply a part of day-to-day life. They know that the old woman who lives in the moss-covered cottage by the lake is able to craft charms and heal illnesses, and that the dark forest lurking at the edges of their fields contains all manner of spirits, cursed shapeshifters, and foul undead who roam the earth in the impenetrable blackness of the pre-modern night. The faeries are also a constant, capricious presence, at times bearing gifts and good luck, while at other times causing injuries, laming cattle, spoiling milk, and stealing children away to replace them with evil changelings.

These tales can be used to provide flavor in a historically based Renaissance France, even though the players will never encounter the supernatural. However, there is also nothing stopping the GM from making these things real and incorporating an element of low fantasy into their games. The key is to keep fantastic elements sufficiently distant and mysterious. The abandoned tower in the mountain pass might house a sorcerer or alchemist, but there probably shouldn't be an elite corps of war wizards in the *Maison du Roi* – unless the GM wants to run a full fantasy game, in which case that's fine! For most semi-fantastic historical settings, though, the players should always be able to suspend their disbelief.

The semi-fantastic setting also blends well with the other game styles. In a courtly intrigue game, the GM could incorporate an ancient artifact of great power that allows its possessor to bend others to his will. Swashbuckling games can easy incorporate fantasy elements; characters might be called on by their superiors to investigate strange rumors of unnatural occurrences taking place in a remote town or run afoul of a powerful cabal of magic users. Campaigns featuring exploration lend themselves naturally to fantasy elements; the New World is uncharted territory where anything is possible. Europeans devoured tales brought back from explorers describing never-before-seen creatures and exotic civilizations living in cities of gold. GMs also have the resources of Native American folklore to draw on here, and can easily include tales of the wendigo, death bats, or skin riders into their Renaissance France campaigns.

Religion in Renaissance France

Religion in the Renaissance went far deeper than simply being a matter of personal belief. It determined which circles you operated in, what opportunities were available to you, and in which areas of the country you could legally reside. Characters in Renaissance France – both PCs and NPCs alike – should choose a religious affiliation. It is entirely up to the player/GM how seriously that character takes the precepts of his or her religion and characters are of course free to convert (either voluntarily or otherwise) at any time, but they should be a least a nominal member of one of the three major religious groups: Catholics, Protestants (Huguenots), and Jews. Other sects exist, such as the Waldensians and Anabaptists, but they are very small and have no legal recognition. Members of 'foreign' religions such as Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and practitioners of Indigenous faiths are also occasionally present in Renaissance France, but only on a temporary basis as diplomats, traders, or guests.

CATHOLICISM

Roman Catholicism is the state religion and by far the most common affiliation throughout the kingdom. At least 80% of the French population belongs to the Roman Catholic faith throughout the period, and their numbers continue to increase after 1628. The administrative structure of the Church is divided into various dioceses controlled by bishops and territorial abbeys controlled by the great monasteries. The Pope acts as the head of the Roman Catholic Church, but the King of France also has a substantial role to play in running the national 'Gallican' Church. Catholic religious practices of the time rely heavily on elaborate rituals, veneration of the saints, and folk piety. However, the reforms of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) seeking to curb abuses and make religious practices more rigorous are slowly making their way into France. With the exception of Huguenot strongholds during the Wars of Religion such as La Rochelle, Catholics are at all times free to live and practice their faith anywhere in the kingdom.

Advantages: In addition to the fact that Catholics are free from harassment by the authorities, they also dominate the largest institutions in French public life such as the royal court, the regional parlements, the universities, the guilds, the bureaucracy, and, of course, the Catholic Church itself.

Disadvantages: Even nominal Catholics are expected to at least pay lip service to the authority of the Church and defer to the clergy on matters of religion. All Catholics are expected to tithe 10% of their income to their local parish as well. Non-conforming Catholics can be hauled in front of religious tribunals (although nothing like the Spanish Inquisition ever existed in France) and punished for expressing dissenting views.

PROTESTANTISM (HUGUENOTS)

The second largest religion in France – and the only one other than Catholicism to have a recognized legal status in France – is Reformed Protestantism. The practitioners of Reformed Protestantism, known as Huguenots, constitute between 10-15% of the population throughout most of the period. Their religion is based on the teachings of John Calvin and stresses the importance of justification by faith alone, predestination, personal reading of scripture, and the "priesthood of all believers." The Huguenots reject the efficacy of the Catholic sacraments and the Church's claim to a monopoly on religious truth. Huguenots live predominantly in a geographic crest running along France's Atlantic coastline and sweeping down through the south of the country. There are also some Lutherans who live in cities along the eastern frontier.

Advantages: There are many Huguenots amongst the growing class of urban bourgeoisie and they tend to dominate newer professions with fewer entrenched interests such as bankers, navigators, and book publishers. Because of their out-sized presence in trade and their international connections to merchant houses in London and Amsterdam, the Huguenots tend to have in wealth and influence what they lack in political power.

Disadvantages: This varies wildly depending on the time period and location. After the end of the Wars of Religion, the Edict of Nantes granted religious toleration to the Huguenots that made them near-equals with Catholics until the fall of La Rochelle in 1628. Their fortunes swung wildly after that. They were denied most senior government posts (although Huguenots did make up a sizable chunk of the naval officer corps) and were restricted to practicing their faith only in areas with sizable Huguenot congregations. Persecution continually increased throughout the seventeenth century until Louis XIV finally revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685.

JUDAISM

Despite being present in France since before the arrival of Christianity, the position of the Jews during the Renaissance was more tenuous than ever. For much of the Early Middle Ages, the Jews existed under the protection of the king and lived a mostly secure, albeit second-class, existence. Things began to change in the eleventh century with the increased religious radicalism brought on by the Crusades and later pogroms initiated by the inveterate anti-Semite, Saint Louis IX. They were expelled from most of France in 1394, although pockets continued to thrive in the more tolerant South until the late fifteenth century. Small Jewish communities existed clandestinely and at the margins of society in the southern cities of Narbonne, Marseillies, and Arles along the eastern frontier. More would slowly return over the course of the seventeenth century and many were active in both trade and settlement in the Caribbean until they were banned from the colonies by royal decree in 1685.

Advantages: Jews, like the Protestants, exist at the margins of French society yet have wealth and connections that far surpass their numbers and political rights. Although financial institutions such as banks are starting to emerge by the Renaissance, Jews traditionally had a near-monopoly on banking due to the Catholic ban on lending money at interest. The Jews were also one of the most highly educated groups in Renaissance France and had long dominated careers such as medicine, another profession traditionally disfavored by the Church.

Disadvantages: Living openly as a Jew in Renaissance France is technically illegal. While the Protestant Reformation has turned official attention away from persecuting Jews and towards crushing the Huguenots, life as a Jew is still precarious. Dispossession, expulsion, and physical violence, including the risk of death, are constant threats. Many chose to live publically as Catholic converts while continuing to practice Judaism covertly. Others foster powerful Catholic allies that provide them with a degree of protection and legitimacy to practice their faith in the open.
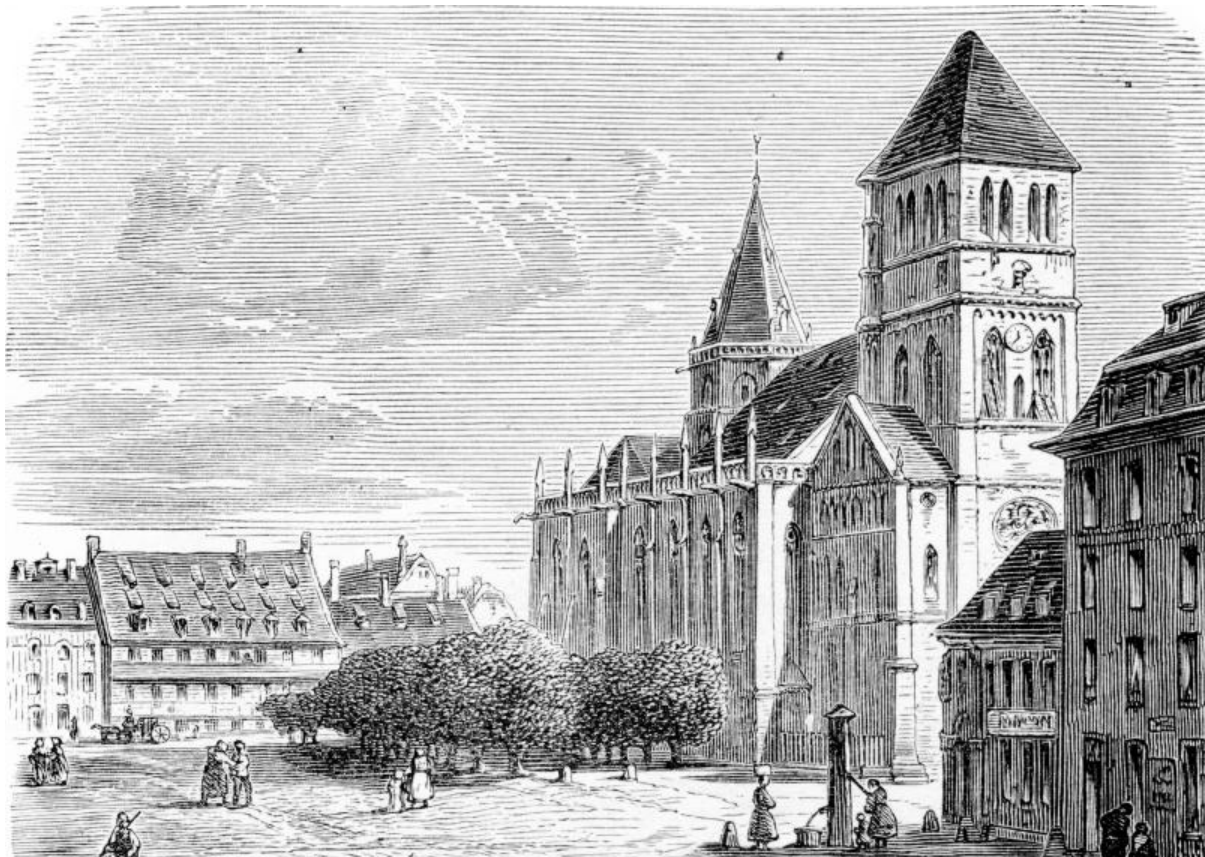
Adventure Frames

This chapter includes a collection of adventure frames. Each one provides the framework for an individual adventure, without delving into how to resolve everything within the described scenario. Instead, each framework lays a foundation for the adventure to be built upon, by providing background details, describing who's involved, and offering suggestions on how to run the adventure. GMs may then run the scenario as they please, allowing it to fit into the wider context of their own campaign. This method also allows each adventure to be resolved in a way suited to the gaming group, rather than providing a single path to completion.

Secrets of Ys (1625)

BACKGROUND

Louis XIII's annexation of the Protestant Kingdom of Béarn-Navarre in 1618 and re-imposition of Catholicism there ignited the flames of rebellion. The Huguenot General Assembly, seeing their rights under the Edict of Nantes at risk, voted to resist the King and declared their allegiance to the brothers Henri and Benjamin of the House of Rohan in 1620. Louis XIII, in turn, vowed to crush the seditious Huguenots once and for all. This would be the endgame to the Wars of Religion.

The young Louis XIII and his new First Minister, the Cardinal Richelieu, have made some incremental gains over the past five years by capturing Huguenot fortress towns such as Montpellier, but the twin strongholds of La Rochelle and Montauban remain defiant. Richelieu, realizing that La Rochelle could only be defeated by cutting off its access to the sea, convinced the King to build a new war fleet at the port of Blavet. However, in January of 1625, Benjamin attacked the royal fleet by surprise and captured all of it. The Huguenots now have an overwhelming naval advantage and seem closer than ever to securing their independence.

With the victory over the royal fleet at Blavet, a growing number of the Huguenot high command believe the time has come to issue a formal declaration of independence from the Kingdom of France. While most assume the new Huguenot state would be a confederation along the lines of the Dutch Republic, the Commander-in-Chief Henri de Rohan has far grander plans.

His ancestral domain of Brittany had once been an independent kingdom prior to its incorporation into France by Henri II in 1547. The House of Rohan has a direct claim to the defunct throne by virtue of its descent from Ruhan, second son of Conan Mériadec, founder of the Kingdom of Brittany. According to legend, after leading the remnants of Arthur's shattered kingdom across the Channel to Brittany, King Conan built his own grand capital of Ys as the successor of lost Camelot. The city of Ys was thrust out into the sea, a symbol of Conan's defiance of the Saxons and his vow to retake his conquered homeland. A great seawall guarded the city and only the king had the key to open the harbor gate. His son and heir, King Gradlon, married a sorceress named Malgven who gave birth to their daughter, Dahut. Dahut lived a life of debauchery and after a night of heavy drinking, opened

the sea gate at high tide, flooding the city. King Gradlon saved her on his magical sea horse, but their combined weight proved to be too much. Right before the waves overtook them, Saint Winwaloe appeared before the King and bade him to cast his sinful daughter into the waves. He reluctantly obeyed and pushed Dahut into the sea. Gradlon survived and founded his new capital at Quimper, but Ys was lost forever.

Henri de Rohan is well aware of the story of Ys, having listened to the tales of the bards as a young child growing up in Brittany. He also knows that a druidic circle continues to meet in the forest of Paimpont, the last remnant of the legendary forest of Brocéliande where the Lady of the Lake imprisoned Merlin. If these sages know a way to raise the ancient metropolis from its watery grave, Henri could reclaim the mantle of Conan Mériadec and lead the Huguenots as a king in his own right.

GAME MASTER NOTES

The PCs will likely be Huguenots, close confidants of Henri de Rohan, come highly recommended by members of Henri's inner circle such as his brother Benjamin or La Rochelle Mayor Jean Guiton, or all three. This is a sensitive mission and Henri will only divulge it to a group that he trusts implicitly. He realizes if word gets out he is looking to raise the sunken city of Ys with the help of pagan druids, he will be the laughingstock of Europe and possibly hauled in front of La Rochelle's consistory to be tried as a heretic. Henri is not entirely sure the legend is true, but he believes anything that might boost his claim to royal status is worth exploring.

This adventure offers many different opportunities for the GM. In a campaign that uses the semi-fantastic style of gameplay, the GM can play the legend straight. The city of Ys existed, an ancient order of druids continues to gather around the tree where Vivane imprisoned Merlin, and the druids know of a way to make Ys rise from the waves. It is also possible to run this adventure in a strictly historical setting. Here, the legends and magic are all allegorical, but Henri will settle for anything that reinforces his ancient claim. The GM can still have the cabal of druids meet in the forest (although they will have no actual powers, of course) and they can possibly direct the PCs to ancient artifacts connected with Ys, such as the sword of King Conan or the bridle of King Gradlon.

Whichever way the GM decides to run the game, the forest of Paimpont is a very wild place and ripe for adventure. While much reduced from the Brocéliande of Arthurian legend, it is still covered with ancient burial mounds, tree carvings, and megalithic structures such as mehnir and dolmen. In a semi-fantastic setting, it is also filled with fey creatures like elves, korrigans, and sprites, along with enchanted groves and magical fountains. If the PCs are able to reach the druids and strike a bargain with them (the druids will not give away arcane knowledge for free and certainly do not respond well to threats), they reveal the ancient prophesy: When Paris is swallowed, the city of Ys will rise at the approach of its rightful king. This requires two things, flooding Paris and bringing Henri de Rohan to Ys. And if that wasn't difficult enough, Dahut continues to guard the ruins of Ys as a morgen – a kind of evil Breton sea hag. She can detect that Henri de Rohan carries the Blood of Conan and will attempt to drown him as a relative of her treacherous father.

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Relief of Saint-Jean de Losne (1636)

BACKGROUND

French intervention into the Thirty Years' War has not gone as planned. In spite of his reputation as the destroyer of the Huguenots, Cardinal Richelieu is more statesman than zealot. When the Protestant princes of the Holy Roman Empire rose up against the Catholic Habsburgs, Richelieu quietly supported them against his rival co-religionists. However, after the combined forces of the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain slowly ground down the Protestant powers one by one – first Bohemia, then the Palatinate, then Denmark – Richelieu was forced to take more aggressive measures. In 1631, France signed a treaty with Sweden, the last remaining belligerent nation led by the military genius King Gustavus Adolphus, promising an annual subsidy of over 1,000,000 livres a year in exchange for Sweden maintaining an army of 36,000 troops in Germany. Only one year later, Gustavus Adolphus was dead, slain at the Battle of Lützen, and the Protestant alliance began to crumble. In 1634, the Imperial-Spanish army crushed them at the Battle of Nördlingen and forced the Protestant princes of the Empire to sue for peace. Sweden was now completely isolated, nearly bankrupt, and still reeling from the loss of its greatest king. France was left with no other choice if it wished to avoid encirclement by Habsburg Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. Richelieu convinced Louis XIII to lead his country into war in 1635.

After only a year and a half of fighting, it appeared as though France was about to suffer the worst military defeat in her history. The Imperial-Spanish commanders had learned from their repeated losses to Gustavus Adolphus and changed their tactics. The bulky, square tercios became longer and less dense to emphasize massed firepower and increased maneuverability. The unprepared French armies were in full retreat on all fronts, pulling back from their holdings in Italy, the Low Countries, and along the Rhine. Imperial-Spanish armies continued to push deeper into French territory and were menacingly close to capturing Paris. However, they had one glaring weakness: their supply lines were overexposed. The major avenue of supply for the Habsburg armies ran along the so-called "Spanish Road," a route extending from their domains in northern Italy up through Rhine valley and connecting to the Spanish Netherlands. The weakest link in the chain was in Burgundy, a territory divided between France and the Holy Roman Empire. Imperial-Spanish forces were attempting to control all of Burgundy by capturing the French capital of Dijon. It is vital that the French remain in possession of Dijon to slow the Habsburg advance in the north.

Reports indicated a large Imperial-Spanish force under Matthias Gallas was seen marching through Burgundy en route to Dijon. It was late in the campaigning season (mid-October) and he either had to take the city immediately or retreat to winter quarters, waiting until next April to try again. Only one force stood in his way: the tiny French fortress town of Saint-Jean de Losne. If Saint-Jean de Losne could withstand a siege and save Dijon, the Prince de Condé would be able to march his army south to reinforce Burgundy in 1637. The Prince scraped together whatever spare forces he could find at his camp in Auxerre and stocked several supply wagons for a relief mission to the fort.

It is vital that Saint-Jean de Losne holds on, no matter what the cost.

GAME MASTER NOTES

This scenario is perfect for trailing the pike campaigns and can work with a party of nearly any experience level. Novice or Seasoned PCs will likely be glory-seeking volunteers in the relief mission while Veteran or Heroic characters will either be unit officers or perhaps in command of the entire effort! The relief mission is small, numbering no more than 500 men, but is well-equipped with fresh troops and plentiful supplies. The small fortress town of Saint-Jean de Losne numbers barely 800 people, but it is strategically vital as it guards one of the few bridges over the Saône River. It has a permanent garrison of 300 troops and can arm an additional 200 townspeople as militia. While small, the fortress is relatively modern and well equipped. The walls are strong and low, and its artillery is well-positioned for overlapping fire. The wide and fast-moving river prevents any form of a frontal assault or complete encirclement. The nearest fordable point in the river is a three-day march to the south. Gallas has sent several cavalry regiments to ride around the rear, but he knows the only way to make the fortress capitulate is to smash it to bits and march through the front gate.

The Imperial-Spanish army of General Gallas is 17,000 troops strong, but they are tired, cold, and hungry, having ravaged the local countryside and stretched their supply lines to the limit. They are also lacking in artillery as most of the heavy pieces became stuck in muddy roads brought on by autumn rains. Gallas' army will arrive at the walls of Saint-Jean de Losne on October 27, set up field works to invest the town on October 28, and begin bombardment on October 29. He will open a breach in the fortifications on November 1 and order a full-scale assault of the walls, sending waves of troops charging across the bridge and crossing the river by boat, but the defenders will hold. Heavy rains begin on November 1, rendering much of the gunpowder unusable and causing the river to become even more treacherous. Gallas will order further unsuccessful assaults on November 2 and 3, but the defenders will be pushed to the breaking point. If the PCs do not arrive in time to relieve the fortress by November 4, the sheer weight of numbers will overwhelm the defenders and Saint-Jean de Losne will fall, opening the way to Dijon.

The relief force sets out from the camp of Condé's army at Auxerre on October 24, facing a 120-mile march through difficult terrain to reach Saint-Jean de Losne. Armies at this time were lucky to average 8-10 miles a day on good terrain, so the relief force will need to force march at a much faster pace than that. The GM should throw all manner of obstacles in their way along the journey. Suggestions include: skirmishes with enemy raiders; starving villagers blocking the road and pleading for supplies; heavy rains and possibly even early snows; stuck or broken down supply wagons; dissention within the ranks of the relief force, including spies and potential traitors; getting lost along the way; and outbreaks of disease. Assuming the relief expedition reaches the fortress in time, they must decide on what course of action to take. The clearest plan is to enter Saint-Jean de Losne and reinforce the garrison there. If they arrive after November 2, they will face a strong cavalry detachment sent by Gallas to cut off the rear of the fortress and will need to fight their way through. The Imperial-Spanish army will launch five total assaults on the walls (one each day, beginning on November 1) before they break off the siege due to exhaustion and lack of food. Heavy rains continue all week, making conditions miserable and rendering all matchlock gunpowder weapons (including artillery) useless.

The PCs can also decide to sortie out of Saint-Jean de Losne and take the offensive, although this is a far riskier option. Members of the garrison reveal there is a hidden ford only a day's ride north, but the river is only passable there for 15 minutes twice a day at low tide. The current flooding of the river makes it barely passable even then. However, if the PCs manage to take even a relatively small cavalry force across the river, they will catch the Imperial-Spanish army completely by surprise. They can decimate the last of their supplies and force whole demoralized units to flee from the field. Gallas will have no choice but to break the siege and retreat back to Besançon to lick his wounds for the winter.

The Count's Tournament (1651)

BACKGROUND

France is tearing itself apart in a great civil war known as the Fronde. Some of the most powerful nobles in the kingdom, such as the Viscount de Turenne, Duke d'Orleans, and Prince de Condé, have risen up against the young Louis XIV and Cardinal Mazarin in a last-ditch effort to preserve their ancient powers and privileges against creeping royal absolutism. The Habsburgs in Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, still licking their wounds from their costly defeat in the Thirty Years War (brought about in no small measure by French intervention on the side of the heretical Protestants!), see this as an opportunity to get even. Habsburg money flows into the coffers of the *Frondeurs* and into the hands of influential nobles along the Spanish and Flemish frontiers, convincing them to join in the rebellion against the "tyrant" Louis XIV and his Italian puppet master.

Louis de Foix, the Count of Bayonne, is one such noble whose loyalty hangs in the balance. Bayonne is an important port and strategic fortress city that sits along one of the few clear passes running through the Pyrenees Mountains separating France and Spain. While Bayonne has nominally been under the control of the King of France since the end of the Hundred Years War, the ancestral seigneurs of the de Foix family still hold considerable influence there. Count Louis is attempting to straddle both sides in the conflict. He does not wish to incur the wrath of the Crown in case Louis XIV and Mazarin put down the Fronde and is wary of the Spanish forces on his doorstep, but he also realizes the potential to greatly expand his wealth, power, and influence if he plays his cards right. Control over the Pyreneean passes is crucial to both the Crown and the *Frondeur*-Spanish alliance, and both are actively courting Count Louis.

In an attempt to burnish his bona fides as an international conciliator and Renaissance gentleman, the Count has called for a meeting of *Frondeur*, Spanish, and Royal representatives at his Chateau-du-Triton on a private island off the Béarnaise coast. However, the Count is a quixotic fellow and his proposed meeting will be more than just a diplomatic summit. After the opening feast, the next several days will feature a fencing tournament between champions of each side. The winner of the tournament will become the Knight-Commander of the Guard of

Bayonne, with full military authority over the garrison. In this way, the Count can settle the question of allegiance in chivalric style reflecting the knightly tournaments of old.

GAME MASTER NOTES

Louis XIV and Cardinal Mazarin think the tournament is a ridiculous idea, but dare not refuse to send a representative. They believe (quite correctly) the Count de Foix harbors *Frondeur* sympathies and is using the tournament as an elaborate ruse to hand over control of a strategic border fortress. Still, it is too risky to strike against him directly. A failed attempt would justify him switching sides immediately and could very well encourage other fence-sitting nobles to do the same. No, they must use this opportunity to play his game and turn the situation to their advantage.

The players can all be members of the same unit, such as the King's Musketeers, or brought together as an elite task force for this sensitive mission. Either way, the characters form the royal party to the Count de Foix's summit. This adventure can combine aspects of both the swashbuckling and courtly intrigue styles of gameplay, and the GM is free to modify the adventure more in the direction of one style or the other depending on the interests of the players and skills of the characters.

The first night of the tournament will feature a grand feast on the chateau's open balcony overlooking the crashing waves. The Count spares no expense and is evidently delighted to be the center of attention. He wishes to awe his assembled guests by portraying himself as the ideal Renaissance prince. He routinely dresses in custom made Greco-Roman armor and his palace is replete with frescos, marble statuary, and bronze fountains. He invites his guests to participate in poetry reading, musical competitions, and philosophical debate. The fact that so many of them seem annoyed by his presumptuousness is completely lost on the Count de Foix.

The fencing tournament proceeds over three days. The GM can modify the number and skills of the combatants based on the composition of the party. It should be a challenge to win the tournament and the PCs should not take it for granted that they will advance out of the preliminary rounds. There should be a constant atmosphere of menace amidst the opulence and forced merriment. Something more is going on here and it is up to the PCs to figure it out. The isolated nature and increasing violence of the tournament should evoke the feel of martial arts movies such as *Enter the Dragon* and *Bloodsport*.

Count Louis de Foix is in the pocket of the *Frondeur*-Spanish allies and plans on them winning the tournament. He will do nothing at first in the hope that the royal party loses fairly, but if any of them looks like he might win the tournament, the count will begin to interfere. Louis XIV and Mazarin care nothing for winning the tournament; their sole objective is to secure Bayonne for the Crown. If the PCs can do this by winning the tournament, all the better, but no matter what, they must not allow one of the *Frondeur*-Spanish participants to become Knight-Commander. Preferably, the PCs should do nothing that brings ill repute on the Crown. Therefore, kidnapping or secretly poisoning or assassinating the Count is acceptable (once his plot is revealed), but outright murder is not.

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