

Castros

Arms of House Telman



Capital: Bourne

Population: 578,980 (Humans 88%, Elf 5%, Half-Elf 2%, Mountain Dwarf 2%, Hill Dwarf 2%)

Government: Monarchy with Feudalism

Religions: House of the Five

Imports: Salt, Ivory, Oil, Silk, Olives, Olive Oil, Glass, Spices, Copper

Exports: Furs, Pipe weed, Stone, Coal, Silver, Livestock, Magic Items

Alignment: LE, LN, NG, LG

Currency: Crowns Bits and Tangs.

Life and Society

The Kingdom of Castros can be traced back to King Verzies Telman some six hundred years ago. Over the last three hundred years Castros has grown and shrunk and grown again. The current size of the mostly human kingdom is reaching near its previous pinnacle. While it is commonly known that Castros is not the most militant kingdom of Tharstelding, its recent magical and religious power is quickly drawing the attention of its neighbors. The people of Castros have not yet adopted that big nation feeling, and for the most part a man works when the sun comes up to when it goes down with little regard to the taxes and laws of the lords. Festivals are common place in the kingdom, as are tournaments and games.

Major Geographic Features

Castros has most major geographical features accounted for. It has two impressive mountain ranges to its east and west. Two large swamps, forests rivers and lakes. The most noteworthy of its features are listed below.

The Spine: The Spine makes the Eastern Backbone of Tharstelding, this range is a massive array of jutting granite peaks. Recently smoke has been seen snaking up from deep within the range. No known active volcanoes are within the mountain range, nor can anyone remember a mountain ever erupting. It is however famous all over the island for its gigantic stone quarries and coal mines. It is also famous for the tales of lost dwarven keeps and dragon hordes that always work their way into conversations about the mountains. The latest stories being carried to town with the mountains goods speak of great armies of giant men clashing in the mountain passes. The church of Rafar, the Bedlam Road, is headquartered here just North of the Castran Bay. A massive network of masonry and towers which span several mountains, and the great lair of Darastrixmaekrix.

Blackfoot March: The Blackfoot March, or Blackfoot as the locals call it is home to a long forgotten castle. No one remembers the name of the keep or when it was built. But rangers and trappers report strange noises and lights coming from the abandoned castle at night. Most people stay clear of the place and rumor of its haunting is spreading across the kingdom. The swamp is very stagnant with swarms of creepy crawly bugs, lizards and far worse creatures. Constant fog covers the swamp during the day and night. And quicksand has been reported by those that have escaped. The name Blackfoot March has two parts for a reason. One comes from a terrible disease that can be contracted in the swamp, in its late stages it turns the subject's feet black as pitch, requiring amputation. The second part of its name claimed more lives than the last. Three hundred years ago the border of Castros and Pax Thallos was a matter of opinion. King Ramel Telman of Castros went to war with Pax Thallos and after ten thousand men had died on both sides created the border now accepted by both kingdoms.

Heman Dal: The Heman Dal is accepted as Castro's western border, and widely accepted as the center divide of the continent. The spires of its mountains remain snow capped year round, its peaks said to have never been walked on by man. The range is said to be impassible by foot any other way than the Western Cross (See Below). The area of the Heman Dal is known to have volcanic activity, however nothing major has happened in near four hundred years. Scholars estimate a large eruption is quite due. Its eastern mountains controlled by Castros are rich in silver, a fact that has drawn countless dragons to take over mines from time to time only to be rooted out by a band of heroes or the kings men. It is said that networks of tunnels connect the Heman Dal with the Thunderpeaks and open unto great dwarven holds long abandoned to the Giants. The few remaining dwarven towns in the Heman Dal of course laugh at such rumors.

Ice Iron (special material): A weapon made from this blue veined iron acts as a +1 magical weapon in temperatures 32 degrees or below. Weapons made from Ice Iron are always masterwork quality. (cost to add to a weapon +1,000 GP)

River Endin: Birthed in the mighty peaks of the Heman Dal this river contains over two hundred species of fish. It is the second longest river in Tharstelding measuring some two thousand total miles in distance and a average width of over a mile. The River Endin is a major artery for trade, towns dot its banks sending goods into the Eldross Ocean and then the world. Like all good arteries however, Endin has its cholesterol. River pirates are not uncommon, often trade by night results in not only loss of important goods, but bloated bodies on the banks as well. Smuggling of goods has also been known to happen on the river, the current king of Castros King Artis Telman is currently assembling a royal navy in the port city of Janport to battle the pirates that reign on the river.

Western Cross: The best known pass to cross Xar Zanth into Castros. The Western Cross remains at an elevation where snow melts during late spring allowing almost half a year of excellent travel with the heart of winter being its only impassable time. Besides travel, the Western Cross has a colder history. In the early years of Castros the Western Cross was the lair to the great white dragon Vessix. The first king of Castros, not yet king at that time, Verzies Telman along with a host of clerics devoted to the god Radiance set out to rid the land of Vessix. Many clerics of the sun god were slain in the battle, and Verzies was terribly wounded. Leaving his men behind the would be king of Castros chased the dragon into its ice walled cave high in the peaks of the pass. And after a long and tiresome battle Verzies killed the Great wyrm Vessix and cast its great white head down the mountain side to the Clerics below. In years come to pass Verzies became King Verzies Telman, first king of Castros. And as a sign of gratitude to the clerics of Radiance set aside a large tract of land to be used as a grave and monument to the brave warriors of the western cross. It is also said that Vessix the great wyrm had many children, and those offspring now have lairs of their own in the Heman Dal mountains, but that of course is only a fairy tale to scare children.

The Glaive Sea: Towering Blade Grass sweeps for miles in all directions in this area known as the Glaive Sea. Blade Grass appears much like dark green crab grass but can reach an amazing 10 feet in height, this bizarre plant gets its name from its razor sharp edges, which have been the undoing of many an unsuspecting traveler. It is rumored that an old and powerful druid lives within the Glaive Sea, and is the very reason for its massive Blade Grass. It's also whispered in taprooms around Castros that beasts of massive size hide within the verge, and that a great and cunning Meadow Dragon lives within this realm, with her brood of a thousand wyrmlings.

Brownback Hills: The River Endin winds through these soldierly hills, the Brownback Hills surround the port city of Janport in southern Castros and are abundant with wild game. Giant eagles can sometimes be seen soaring high above the hills in search of large prey. It is known that at least a dozen clans of Hill Dwarves and Hill Giants live within and around these hills, and it is thought that a large Hill Giant graveyard is hidden somewhere within the tracts of brown bumps. The Brownback Hills have become a popular hiding spot for bandits and mischievous monsters, as they flank the major road leading from Janport to Fain.

The Sunken Forest: Long before the kingdom of Castros the Sunken Forest was the heart of a mighty elven empire called Vildarru. Nearly as large as the Greatland Forest then, now it is a vibrant swampland teeming with bizarre and alien life that lurks under the dead and half buried canopy of the long fossilized forest. Their capital of Triskelmeen still remains, ruined and half consumed by the surrounding forest. The location of Triskelmeen is a well known site, only the strongest and most foolish dare search its submerged chambers for treasures of the lost elven people. The disaster that is now the Sunken Forest is rumored to be the result of elven high magic and a conflict with a long deceased troll shaman of great power called Grull.

Important Sites

Bywater: (Large Town, 2,340) This city is the primary exporter of Castros stone and coal resources. It is a large mining town that sees the random adventurer passing by on his way into the Spine to make his fortune. The town is ruled by the Dwarven Baron Skelvon Ten Rings (LN) who personally oversees the mining operations in his city. Skelvon's clan has long defended the eastern shores of Castros from the ever present danger of the nearby mountains inhabitants. Bywater is also known for its master blacksmiths that produce blades and armor peerless within the kingdom. Many students come to town each year to learn from the Dwarven craftsmen.

Bourne: (Metropolis, 30,560) Bourne is the capital of Castros. Many noble houses have residence within its high walls, most notable of these is house Telman which has been ruling the kingdom for the last six hundred years. Bourne is a major trade city with the kingdom of Pax Thallos, exports are shipped to the city from all over Castros to be traded via land with the northern kingdom. The residents of Bourne are city folk to the core, most residents of the metropolis have never traveled farther than a score of miles from the walls. Not that they would have any need to, Bourne is safe, clean, and has just about anything anyone would need to buy. The current ruler of the city also has domain over the whole of Castros. King Artis Telman (LN) the 16th King of Castros is well liked by his populace. His son Prince Brandon Telman (LG) is an example of the courage and vigor of the kingdoms bright future.

Janport: (Large Town, 2,980) Also called Jannisport by its residents, the name of a great hero for which the town is named Ser William Jannis. sits at the end of the river Endin. It is the largest port in the Kingdom, and if its growth rate continues as it has, it will soon be the largest city in the kingdom. Janport is ruled by Duke Ruelk Jannis (NG) a elderly lord with a little to much family pride. Janport is the largest exporter of furs, livestock and pipe weed in Tharstelding. It is also the largest importer of goods in the kingdom. Janport has had problems with frequent pirate raids up and down the Endin. It has by order of King Artis the 3rd begun construction of a royal navy to patrol the river and sea routes.

Fain: (Metropolis, 27,560) The city of heroes, twenty years ago this city was the size Bywater. The metropolis can contribute its massive growth to the arrival of powerful heroes throwing fistfuls of gold to the wind. Fain is the center of many organizations and a religious nexus. The Hand of Radiance, or The Hand as most call them, began here. The city boasts the largest druid grove in Tharstelding The city is ruled by one of the heroes whom the city has grown under, Duke "Filthy" Ike. However the city also is protected and governed in certain aspects by the House of the Five, or more specifically The Hand of Radiance. Coop Dawnbringer (NG), another of the famed heroes, started the Hand in the city twenty years ago, his generous donations have created a financial powerhouse for the religion.

Triskelmeen: (Ruins) The old capital of the elven kingdom of Vildarru, the sunken halls of Triskelmeen have lain untouched for centuries. Home to a great Black Dragon known as Gildarrzimisk these ruins are a popular place for adventurers and glory seekers. Trolls breed like rabbits in the old elven kingdom, the remains of the host responsible for its destruction. Likewise the survivors of the elven people have adapted to the swamp over the years, and have formed several large tribes throughout the surrounding region.

Operton: (Ruins) Once a powerful city state, Operton was razed in 1722 CM by the first king of Castros and his three sons. The City of Spires, Operton was once one of the largest and most powerful cities in all of Tharstelding. Many of its spires and towers are still standing today. The ruins are known to be home to two powerful vampire brothers known simply as the Lords of Night, original leaders of the city from long ago. The brother vampires have been at war with each other since the city was flourishing, that struggle continues today through the cluttered and ruined halls.