

Reservo Scientia - A Teaching Covenant

Site

The covenant of *Reservo Scientia* is located in the northern Iberian Peninsula in the nation of Navarre, atop Monte Hacheuta in the Pyrenees, west and a bit north of Pamplona¹. Access to the covenant is via a single, roundabout road up through steep and difficult terrain, and the covenant itself is located on the far side of the mountain crest, and so is not visible from the valley below.² The covenant is in two parts – the covenant village, where covenfolk and families of grogs and other non-Gifted individuals live, and the covenant proper³.

The covenant itself is a well fortified castle with curtain walls and mural towers⁴. The towers are, at the moment, square, though there is some discussion within House Tremere of funding reconstruction into the newer rounded towers. The foundations of the covenant have been built into the bedrock to prevent mining, and the complex forms an impressive and modern fortification – one that might cause quite a stir among the local nobility if more people knew of its existence. Within the curtain walls lie several important structures, including –

1. The main keep – this structure houses the extensive covenant library, as well as the main covenant meeting hall. There are also limited guest quarters here, mostly for important visitors such as the Praeco or archimagi.
2. The Hall of Har – this building, named after the founding Bonisagus magus of the covenant, houses the Bonisagus magi, their labs, and their apprentices. Formerly the most impressive of the four Halls, the building is now somewhat underutilized, and there are spare rooms which are used for storage.
3. The Hall of Caterina – this building, named after the founding Guernicus maga of the covenant, houses the Guernicus magi, their labs, their apprentices, and any additional apprentices who might be visiting from Duresca. At present it is the least used of the four halls, and the one most likely to house magi of other Houses present at guest instructors at the covenant.
4. The Hall of Penizzo – this building, named after the founding Mercere magus of the covenant, houses the Mercere instructors, both Gifted and non-Gifted, who teach Mercere apprentices here. There are a small number of labs, but a large dormitory for the many Mercere who train here. At the moment this building is the most used of any of the teaching halls.
5. The Hall of Veliko – this building, named after the founding Tremere magus of the covenant, houses Tremere instructors and their apprentices. There are also facilities here for housing visiting Tremere, and the Tremere have painstakingly hollowed out an area under the building for use as a storehouse in case of siege. Of the four teaching halls Veliko is the only one that posts apprentices and/or grogs at the entrance as guards. It is also the most heavily fortified of the four.

¹ Major Plot Hook: Tribunal Border. While not an issue at the beginning of the campaign, once Navarre becomes a principality of Provance the question of which tribunal the covenant should belong to will become important.

² Minor virtue: Difficult Access. Minor virtue: Secluded.

³ Minor plot hook: Outbuildings

⁴ Major plot hook: Castle. Major virtue: curtain walls and mural towers.

6. The Iberia Mercer House⁵ – this building houses the administration of House Mercere in the Iberian Tribunal. House records, the vis exchange, and a large store of ready cash for money lending and banking are all kept here. The building also houses a Mercere Portal⁶ which connects to the Domus Magnus of House Mercere in the Roman Tribunal. This building is heavily guarded at all times by grogs of the covenant and non-Gifted Mercere. It is also magically warded.

Within the covenant grounds the magical aura is 5⁷. This aura is unstable⁸ however, and requires that all the magi of the covenant cast a ritual spell to strengthen the aura each year – if they do not the aura falls to 4. This ritual spell has been worked into a special version of the Aegis of the Hearth that the magi cast each year.

Outside the walls of the covenant and just down the mountainside lies a small village where the covenfolk dwell. Many of the covenfolk serve the covenant directly, as cooks, servants, or specialists. Some are families of senior grogs and companions. Many are Mercere families. Many of these families have served the covenant for generations, and the village as a whole quite loyal to the covenant⁹. At the same time, the community is rather insular, and outsiders are looked on with suspicion¹⁰. It usually takes about a generation for a new family to find its place and fit in. Because the terrain of the covenant is mountainous and unsuitable for widespread farming, the village generates much of the covenant's income through forestry and hunting.

Traditionally, *Reservo Scientia* has also relied on support from the True Lineage houses to support its operations. In years past support was quite generous, and the covenant was able to save up considerable stores of wealth¹¹. However, in recent years as the importance of *Reservo Scientia* has declined somewhat the financial support of the True Lineage houses has also declined, and at present the covenant is beginning to deplete its savings¹².

Structure and Organization

Reservo Scientia is governed as a hierarchy. Leading the covenant is the Dean, who is the covenant's oldest living Bonisagus magus. It is the responsibility of the Dean to organize and oversee seasonal meetings of the magi, and to represent the covenant on formal occasions which may demand it, such as Tribunal meetings. The Dean receives an extra vote at covenant council meetings, may set the agenda, and receives first choice from among the covenant's library books, and receives an additional pawn of vis, chosen from among any of the types available, each year. Below the Dean are the Senior Members – these are magi who have served the covenant for a minimum of 40 years, have trained multiple apprentices, and have contributed at least one valuable summae to the covenant library. Senior members often hold important secondary posts within the covenant such as diocetes (treasurer), praefectus (provost), curator (overseer) and librarius (librarian). Senior members have full access to the covenant library, and receive full

⁵ Major Plot Hook – Mercer House

⁶ Minor Virtue: Mystical Portal

⁷ Minor Virtue – increased aura, taken twice

⁸ Minor Plot Hook – flickering aura

⁹ Minor Virtue – Loyal Covenfolk. Most grogs and covenfolk should have a Loyal score of +3.

¹⁰ Minor Virtue: Strong Community.

¹¹ Minor Virtue: Wealth

¹² Minor Plot Hook: Dwindling Resource.

shares of covenant vis. They may select books for study prior to those of lower status in the hierarchy.

Below the senior members are the members – these are individuals with at least 15 years of service. They are required to have trained at least one apprentice (though not necessarily for the full 15 years of an apprenticeship. Members often take over apprenticeships of those whose masters have died, or who have been removed from their previous master by quaesitorial decree). To be accepted as a member, one must also have written at least one tractus of value to the covenant library. Members receive full shares of covenant vis, and have unrestricted access to the covenant library.

Below the members are the probationary members – these are individuals with less than 15 years service to the covenant, or who have not completed the other requirements to become a member, but who have sworn the covenant charter. Magi receive half shares of covenant vis, and have only restricted use of the covenant library.

Below Magi are Magi In Residence – these are either a) Magi from Houses other than the True Lineage Houses who choose to spend 15 years at the covenant teaching an apprentice, or b) graduates of the covenant who have not yet signed a covenant charter (either for *Reservo Scientia* or another covenant. The former receive no covenant vis, and have restricted access to the covenant library for the duration of their stay. The later may live at the covenant for up to ten years, receive one pawn of vis annually (nature of the vis determined by the Council) and have restricted access to the covenant library, but have last choice in books. Magi in Residence are not considered to be members of the covenant council. They may attend council meetings, but have no vote, and have voice only at the pleasure of the Dean.

The Turb

In its more famous days *Reservo Scientia* maintained a turb of over 100 grogs. These were trained as infantry and fought with sword and shield. As the Reconquista began to expand across Iberia, however, it became increasingly lucrative for skilled soldiers to join the armies of the reconquest, earning loot and potentially land grants. Because of this the size of the turb has dwindled over the years, and the covenant at present employs around 30 full time grogs, plus an approximately equal number of militia, foresters, and scouts. The grogs are typically armed with whatever weapon they happen to favor. A fair number of grogs come from local Mercere families.

Grogs are given surcoats in the covenant's colors, but are only expected to wear them 1) when accompanying magi outside of the covenant, 2) when on duty at the front gate, 3) when on duty at the door to the library, 4) on special occasions such as during the visit of the Praeco.

External Relations

In general *Reservo Scientia* maintains good relations with the covenants of the Iberian Tribunal, as well as other covenants throughout Europe. The covenant maintains particularly close relations with the covenant of Duresca, the main Quaesitori covenant of Iberia, and apprentices of Duresca are frequently sent to *Reservo Scientia* to study for one or two seasons per year. The covenant also has excellent relations with Harco, the Mercere Domus Magnus, to which it is connected by a Mercere Portal. It also has ties with Durenmar the Bonisagus Domus Magnus,

located in Germany; with Magvillus, the Guernicus Domus Magnus, located in Italy; and with Coeris, the Tremere Domus Magnus, located in Transylvania.¹³

At present there is but a single covenant that is at odds with *Reservo Scientia* – that of Estancia es Karida, a Moorish covenant located in southern Iberia. Both covenants are powerful, and Estancia es Karida is attempting to become something of a mirror image of *Reservo Scientia*, save for Muslim magi of the Order. Over the years as the relationship between Muslim covenants and non-Muslim covenants in Iberia has deteriorated, the rivalry between Estancia es Karida and *Reservo Scientia* has become somewhat sharper. An unpleasant incident in Toledo 1198 left one grog from each covenant dead and several more wounded, and resulted in a quaesitorial investigation of both covenants. Though the quaesitori determined that neither covenant was at fault, neither turb has forgotten the incident. Though now restrained somewhat by the dictates of their respective magi, grogs of the two turbs will brawl at the drop of a pin. Both covenants have lodged formal complaints against the other on such charges as interfering with the purchase of rare books, and interfering with covenant vis sources. These matters are under investigation by the quaesitori, and reports will be issued at the Tribunal meeting this year, though it appears at the moment that insufficient evidence exists to prove anything in any of the incidents.

El Caballero De Apuro

One unique feature of *Reservo Scientia* is the phenomena referred to as El Caballero de Apuro (“the Knight of Trouble”) said to lurk in the area. It is rumored that El Caballero was once a knight who applied for work at the covenant, but proved so arrogant and haughty that none could get along with him. Such was his arrogance that he even attempted to order the magi around as though they were servants! Eventually, it is said, the knight got into a fight with some of the grogs of the turb and slew several before being killed by one of the magi. With his dying breath he cursed the covenant and vowed to become a plague to haunt it until such time as “he was given his due”.¹⁴ There are no indications in the covenant records that such an event ever took place, but it is undisputed among the grogs and covenfolk that the Caballero actually exists, though the matter is rather more in doubt among the magi, some of whom have actually looked for the restless spirit and have been unable to find him.

The Caballero is reportedly limited to minor mischief, though what is considered to be minor is a hotly debated topic. “Known” abilities of the Caballero include the power to make milk go sour, the ability to move minor objects, the ability to make small noises, and the ability to trouble dreams. Somewhat more disputed abilities include claims that the Caballero can cause impotence, can make horses shy, can summon a breeze or wind, and can raise or lower the temperature. The caballero’s most feared ability, however, is that of his attack, in which he can thrust his ghostly sword into his hapless victim, making the individual actually feel for an instant as though they have been pierced by a ghostly blade! Aside from these well known abilities all manner of trouble is ascribed to the Caballero, and it is not uncommon for grog who unaccountably fails at some seemingly minor task to mutter “apuro”!

¹³ Minor Story Hook: Hermetic Politics

¹⁴ Minor Story Hook: Resident Nuisance. Several versions of this story, with suitable embellishments, circulate through the grog community, the covenfolk, and the apprentices. There are many favored theories regarding the exact nature of the Caballero.

The Caballero normally spreads his afflictions out among the grogs, covenfolk, apprentices, and even younger magi of the covenant, but for some reason will occasionally determine to pick on one individual for a length of time – possibly days, weeks, or in a few cases even months! In these cases there are two generally agreed upon remedies. First, one must be unfailingly polite and respectful to men at arms, particularly to caballeros, and offer them extra services and assistance. It is believed that this will placate the Caballero, but often takes time. In emergencies it is possible to frighten the Caballero away temporarily by pretending to be a powerful magus, about to cast a spell. This involves shrieking loudly in gibberish syllables and vigorous body movements such as running around, waving ones arms. This will cause the Caballero to go into hiding for a time, but may make him angrier, and so is used only as a last resort.

Magi of the Covenant

At present there are fifteen magi at *Reservo Scientia*, not counting apprentices, graduates, guests, and the magus in residence.

Callidia – Dean of *Reservo Scientia*, Maga of the Trianoma line of House Bonisagus. Callidia has been Dean of *Reservo Scientia* for 18 years following the death of the previous Dean. During her time as Dean she has worked to involve the covenant more heavily in the doings of the Order as a whole and in Tribunal politics. Some (particularly the other Bonisagi magi) feel that she has led the covenant away from its reason for existence to some extent. Nevertheless she remains well liked by the magi and her rule has been relatively free of trouble.

Percontorius – Senior Member of the covenant, member of the Bonisagus line of House Bonisagus. Percontorius is the stereotype of a Bonisagus lab magus – when he is not in his labs he is usually tucked away in the covenant library poring over books. He resents anything that takes him away from his precious experiments and is a reluctant trainer of apprentices, though he does what is expected of him. Currently serves as Librarius of the covenant.

Cognoscus – Member of the covenant, member of the Bonisagus line of House Bonisagus. Filius of Precontorius. Cognoscus is younger and more energetic than his parens, and is more likely to travel in search of new information than negotiate a book trade then spend 10 years waiting for it to appear. Nevertheless he shares his paren’s love of the lab, and will often collaborate with Precontorius on projects. He alone seems to be immune to his parens rambling and pedantic style, and the two get on quite well, with Precontorius countering, to some extent, the younger man’s impetuous nature and Cognoscus vibrant energy inspiring the older magus to see things in new ways.

Fencilus Consuasorus – Senior Member of the covenant. Fencilus is the oldest member of the covenant, and likely the most powerful. Unlike many magi of House Guernicus he has never aspired to travel throughout Europe investigating potential breaches of the Oath of Hermes. Instead he explores the idea of law, its basis, its divine inspiration, and its effects. He is a teacher and thinker, not a prosecutor. He has reluctantly assisted in a few cases over the years, but his primary love is to debate the fine points of law, to explore the boundaries of the legal system, and to predict the implications that changes might have. He also loves to teach, and his primary purpose in lab work is to develop or refine spells that he can then teach to others. Many

of Fencilus's apprentices have gone on to serve House Guernicus with distinction. Fencilus is widely believed to be the next of the covenant's magi who will enter Twilight.

Pettoa – Probationary Member of the Covenant, filia of Fencilus. Pettoa is the latest of Fencilus' apprentices, and has only recently joined the covenant. Her real interest is in Hermetic advocacy, defending and advising those brought under quaesitorial investigation, but she has found herself having to spend increasing amounts of time assisting Fencilus as the old magus' health deteriorates. She does not begrudge the time, but is anxious to take a more active role in the affairs of House Guernicus in the Iberia Tribunal. She is particularly interested in mediating the difficulties between the Muslim and non Muslim covenants of the tribunal. [Note that if Pettoa is chosen as a character's parens, the character will be the first apprentice that Pettoa has ever trained.]

Pettoa has developed a close friendship with Mayrelli of House Tremere. The two often travel together.

Vindicus Certus – Senior Member of the covenant, Magus Mercurius. Before coming to the covenant Vindicus led a long and exciting career. For over forty years he traveled Europe as a Gifted Mercere. To hear him tell it there is nowhere he has not been and nothing in Europe worth seeing that he hasn't seen. Fifty years ago, however, an encounter with a malevolent faerie robbed him of his legs. For many Mercere this might have been an unbearable tragedy, but Vindicus determined that if he could no longer travel Europe he would train apprentices who would do it for him. He came to *Reservo Scientia* and was offered a membership. He has been working his way up in the hierarchy and has only recently reached Senior Member status. Vindicus spends as little time in the lab as he can get away with. He has written numerous tracti and summae for the covenant library on a variety of topics. He usually has two apprentices at any given time, and has been known to have four at once! He is extremely well loved by many in House Mercere, and about half the mail delivered to the covenant is missives to him from his many friends across Europe. Vindicus currently serves as the Diocetes of the covenant.

Foria – Member of the covenant, Maga Mutanta. Foria is unusually studious for a Mercere magus, and membership at *Reservo Scientia* suits her well. She enjoys teaching, enjoys lab work, and enjoys writing texts. One of her long term goals is to further codify the Mutantus lineage of magic.

Just because she is rather studious, however, does not mean that she is not a Mercere! Since coming to the covenant she has volunteered for more covenant services than any other magus currently in residence, and travels back and forth yearly to the covenant of Harco via the Mercere Portal. She is active with the Tribunal Mercere House and is sometimes called in to deal with issues that non-Gifted Mercere might find difficult.

Monnio Mercer (Member of the covenant, non-Gifted Mercere)

Monnio oversees the day to day operation of the Iberia Tribunal Mercer House. He knows quite a bit about the Hermetic economy, be it in terms of vis trades, money lending, or the acquisition of books. Far from being a penny pinching miser, he firmly believes that money (or any other economic commodity) has value only if it is used, and supports using the economic clout of

House Mercere in Iberia to make House operations run smoothly. He is a good teacher and is pleased to share his skills with apprentices. He usually finds a new apprentice as soon as the previous one graduates.

Andemio (Member of the covenant, non-Gifted Mercere). Andemio oversees the record keeping of House Mercere in the Iberia Tribunal. He can lay his hands on every registered vis claim, every report from a traveling Mercere, and impressively detailed confidential reports about the doings, condition, and plans of virtually every covenant in the Tribunal at a moment's notice. He is extremely conscious that he has information that some among the Tribunal would be quite anxious to read, and takes the security of his information very seriously. He is one of the few non-Gifted who routinely meets with the Praeco of the Iberia Tribunal.

Frunimius – Probationary member of the covenant, non-Gifted Mercere, brother of Maria. Frunimius is a classic non-Gifted Mercere. His great love is traveling the land, singing for his supper, meeting interesting people, hearing interesting tales, having exciting adventures, then coming back to the Mercer House, passing it all along, and bragging to his fellow Redcaps. He is handsome, rakish, and just a bit too overconfident to know when he has really gotten himself into trouble. He serves as the officially appointed Redcap to the covenant.

Maria – Probationary member of the covenant, non-Gifted Mercere, sister of Frunimius. Maria is as beautiful as Frunimius is handsome, and shares his love for travel. For her, however, travel is just an excuse for intrigue. She is skilled with the arts of disguise, stealth, lock picking. Maria acts as a freelance repossessor for the Order, recovering items that are lost or stolen, or which a magus refuses to give up despite quaesitorial decree. She is also quite good at acquiring valuable items such as rare books from mundane authorities.

Menyerth – Senior Member of the covenant, Experienced Magus of House Tremere. Menyerth originally hails from Hungary, and his accent is still detectable. He is the senior House Tremere magus of the Tribunal, and is responsible for supervision and upkeep of the defenses of every covenant in it. Though he is an Experienced Magus he does not currently hold his sigil – that is held by his Parens, the Exarch of the Iberia and Provençal Tribunals.

Menyerth is serious, studious, and dedicated. Most believe him to be totally without a sense of humor, but those who know him well, such as his fillii, dispute this. Menyerth has an uncanny knack for leadership, and has an easy, comfortable relationship both with other magi and with grogs. He currently serves as Curator of the covenant.

Recessvinda – senior member of the Covenant, Experienced Magus of House Tremere, filia of Menyerth. Recessvinda was Menyerth's first apprentice, and has served under him all her life. The pair has a good working relationship – Recessvinda is a firebrand who comes down hard on those who do not keep their defenses up to the standards expected of House Tremere, paving the way for Menyerth to step in later and moderate things somewhat. She is more outspoken and less gentle than her parens, and comes across as being fussy and perfectionist. Beneath the gruff exterior, however, is a deep streak of compassion for others, both Gifted and non. Recessvinda has seen some of the results of the Reconquista first hand, and knows the often tragic results when defenses are left neglected.

Vid – Member of the Covenant, Skilled Magus of House Tremere, filius of Menyerth. Vid would probably make a better Flambeau than Tremere, at least by temperament. He is aggressive, gruff, and plainspoken. He speaks his mind and isn't afraid to offend anyone. He is currently the magus charged by Menyerth with overseeing and safeguarding the defenses of *Reservo Scientia* and the Tremere storehouse situated there. The grogs of the covenant are so far divided in their feelings for Vid. Some admire him because he leads from the front and is not afraid of putting a sword in his hand instead of relying on magic. Some hate him because he is completely uncompromising in terms of discipline, and is often harsh in meting out punishment.

Mayrelli – Member of the Covenant, Skilled Magus of House Tremere, filia of Recessvinda. Mayrelli is the most theoretical, the most approachable, and the most outgoing of the Tremere contingent at *Reservo Scientia*. She believes in the mission of House Tremere, and is very grateful to be a member of the Order of Hermes (she had a rather traumatic life before being discovered by Recessvinda) but she is not a warrior and has no interest in being one. She is quite skilled at the art of Certamen, and frequently teaches young apprentices the rudiments.

Mayrelli and Petoa of House Guernicus have developed a close friendship, and often travel together when they have business outside the covenant.

Mayrelli is the only magus of the covenant who has a mundane family. She has a husband and five children. Her children are now grown or close to it. One serves in the turb of grogs, and another one works for (but is not a member of) House Mercere. The discrepancy between her apparent age and that of her husband is beginning to be painfully obvious, and there is much speculation among the covenfolk of exactly what the circumstances of its inevitable tragic conclusion will be.