



Vodacce - Nations of Theah Book 6

A 7th Sea Sourcebook

by Ree Soesbee. Alderac Entertainment Group. 127pgs.

Reviewed by Johanna Mead.

Vodacce – Nations of Theah is the sixth in a series of nation-state sourcebooks supporting AEG's swashbuckling game of historical fantasy, **7th Sea**. *Vodacce* is a fantastical reading of Italy and Venice during the most turbulent times of the Renaissance - an era rich with roleplaying possibilities. If readers expect intrigue, history and violence, they will find them in well-mixed proportions in this volume.

The first section, History, opens with a brief chronology of *Vodacce*'s history and moves quickly into interesting descriptions of *Vodacce*'s culture, geography and the seven families that rule the unstable republic. The material is suitable for a game-master who is looking for a quick read ten minutes before their players arrive. Hero offers specific details about those who rule *Vodacce*, from the seven princes of the nation to its famous courtesans and infamous destiny-manipulating Fate Witches. It's the usual slew of NPCs for a game-master's use, although the characters are so archetypal as to provide little inspiration for players looking for ideas. The saving grace of this collection of characters is Morgause Mercuri, a *Vodacce* woman in the merchant marine - she provides relief from the occasionally relentless parade of courtesans and Fate Witches.

Drama provides the usual assortment of new skills and advantages with which a player can give their character a distinctly *Vodacce* flair. However, the poisoned-hatpin style of self-defense popular amongst courtesans struck me as a sop thrown to female characters and a bit silly. Give me a trained spider for my Fate Witch, any time... Meanwhile, the much-ballyhooped 'Destiny Spread' was over-complicated and doesn't add much to a character.

A high point: Let's be honest, the most compelling aspect of the *Vodacce* is the Fate Witch. Every nation has a distinctive trade or specialty, and the Fate Witches are *it* for *Vodacce*. This sourcebook delves further into the cultural rules that *Vodacce* women in general and Fate Witches in particular must live by, all useful stuff. The Fate Witches are compelling, true, but not every woman in *Vodacce* could be born a Witch, otherwise *Theah* would be neck-deep in them and too frightened to do *anything*. As an alternative to the black veil of the Witches, the courtesans are introduced. Like the Fate Witches, they are hobbled by socially-mandated illiteracy and chauvinism - but the courtesans manipulate *Vodacce* politics deftly while they are vied for by the men in power. The social and political rivalry between courtesan and Witch is described in rather stark terms, but it is a strong base upon which a player or GM may build a well-developed character.

Some nods to history are more obvious than others - the ancient Lorenzo family is clearly inspired by the wilder stories of the Borgias, for example - but given that **7th Sea** is a *historical* fantasy, it's acceptable if history is sometimes in the forefront, rather than fantasy. The occasionally overt rewriting-of-history has been a constant flaw in **7th Sea**, but it is a minor flaw and forgivable.

This sourcebook is valuable to both game-masters and players. After reading it, I wanted to sit down and immediately start planning an intricate *realpolitik* campaign set amid the lush trappings of *Vodacce*. While the strength of any game is in its core-rules, its long-term stamina will be proven by its supplements. With supplements like *Vodacce*, **7th Sea** is sure to remain a long-time favorite on the gaming scene.