



From Fairest creatures we desire increase,  
That thereby beauty's rose might never die.  
—William Shakespeare, "Sonnet 1"

## **A Brief History of Clan Toreador**

Formally established in the fifteenth century, the roots of the Toreador extend to the legendary First City. Of course, as with any origin story, a good deal of idealization and myth are involved.

### **The Myth of Arikel**

According to the Book of Nod, the first Toreador was Arikel, a sculptor and painter residing in the legendary First City of Enoch. Embraced by Enoch himself, the first childe of Caine, Arikel designed much of the First City's statuary and artwork. She also served as a "bull-dancer," although exactly what this means, the Antediluvians have little to say. Possessing the gift of prophecy, Arikel spent a century working on a mosaic that spiraled down the walls of a massive well. (Some translations refer to Arikel's work as a "mural.") Entitled the "Fate of the Cainites," the mosaic depicted the past, present, and future of the Kindred. Upon the work's completion, Arikel guided Enoch and Caine down the long spiral, pointing out the many complexities of her vision. When they reached the bottom, she presented them with a yawning abyss. Disturbed by her prophecy, Caine extended his hand to touch Arikel's heart, thereby afflicting her with the "curse of obsession." This affliction marks Arikel's bloodline to this day, and is the reason why the Toreador are obsessed with endless creation—they must fill the gaping abyss. The moment Caine touched her chest, the sky was rent by thunder and lightning. The Great Deluge had begun, the forty-day storm that would wipe the First City from the face of the earth.

### *Arikelite Blood*

The majority of the Camarilla views the story of Arikel as an allegory, and many point to the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar, keeper of the Bull of Heaven, as a possible source for the legend. Nevertheless, Kindred scholars agree that a strong current of artistic obsession ran through

several ancient bloodlines. These ancestors of the Toreador are referred to as Arikelites. The term itself dates to the Middle Ages, when the Book of Nod was “discovered”—or more likely, composed. For most of antiquity, Arikelites were not radically different from any other Kindred bloodline. Some bloodlines focused on art, some pursued politics, some sought esoteric lore, while others went mad—how is this any different from human families?

### **The Council of Murano**

Over time, the western Kindred developed into four distinct cultural strains, and formal “clans” were established at the Council of Murano in 1111. The Ventrue, known for their formality and organization, the Tzimisce, who considered themselves more monster than human, the Tremere, who had mastered the arcane arts, and the Arikelites, who were obsessed by acts of aesthetic expression. The Council agreed that all four bloodlines were derived from a common strain of Kindred that originated in Mesopotamia, grew to power in Greece, and split asunder during the Roman Republic. The Ventrue traced their lineage to the Roman Venturii family, the Tzimisce originated from a monastic group of Greeks exiled to the wilderness of Central Europe, the Tremere evolved from a fusion of Roman order and Celtic mysticism, and the Arikelites propagated by deliberately Embracing human artists.

As time passed, the clans subdivided further and new bloodlines emerged. The Brujah and Lasombra split from the Ventrue, the Nosferatu became distinct from the Tzimisce, and the Gangrel developed an independent existence as feral outsiders. Those driven mad by the Embrace organized themselves as Malkavians, which offered them an identity as something other than castaways and rejects.

### **Clan Toreador**

As the name suggests, the origins of the modern Toreador are found in Spain—or specifically, in a Castilian bastard named Sebastián de Trastámara y Luna. A scion of House Trastámara, Sebastián quickly rose to prominence as a soldier, horseman, and bullfighter. Gracing the bullring with a new level of artistry, the young *caballero* became a figure of romantic passion for numerous young maidens—not to mention more than a few *hidalgos*. Sebastián di Trastámara soon caught the eye of Don Álvaro de Luna y Jarana, a Lasombra ghoul and mentor to the young Juan II, the future King of Castile. This vampiric attention eventually attracted an “Ariquelero” Cainite related to Don Álvaro, one Cristóbal de Luna, an adviser to Antipope Benedict XIII. Claiming direct descent from Thutmose of Akhetaten, the flamboyant Ariquelero fell passionately in love with the young *torero*. Sebastián submitted to the Embrace willingly, but Don Álvaro was killed during a Moorish raid six months later.

Headstrong and arrogant, Sebastián de Trastámara y Luna quickly integrated into *la sociedad vampírica* and established a cult of like-minded Ariqueleros. Known as *El culto del torero* in Spain and *Le culte du toréador* in France, Sebastián’s Kindred established many of the cultural norms associated with today’s Toreador clan. By the end of the fifteenth century, the term “Arikelite” and its regional variations were rendered obsolete, and “Toreador” had become the preferred nomenclature. Unfortunately, Sebastián di Trastámara was eventually captured by *la Máscara de bestia*, the covert branch of the Inquisition dedicated to unmasking and destroying vampires. In the year 1610, El Torero was burned at the stake in Logroño, and the “Moonlight Matador” passed into legend.

## **Toreador Outsiders**

The Toreador are a very large clan, and entertain a wide range of political, cultural, and aesthetic divisions. Even Toreador Anarchs are still considered part of the fold. However, there are two groups of Toreador located outside the mainstream. These groups have forsaken their Camarilla status and are known as “Outsiders.”

### *Black Toreador*

The so-called Black Toreador take their name from the Venetian custom of draping the portraits of scandalous figures with black cloth. A Toreador is pronounced a Black Toreador when his art becomes dangerously amoral, adopting pain and suffering as a medium and possibly endangering the Masquerade. The two most famous examples of Black Toreador are Venerio Brexiano, who choreographed massacres during the Black Plague; and Benvenuto da Chieti, whose opera *Messa di Requiem per Shuggay* invokes frenzies of madness in humans and Kindred alike. Despite the clan’s best attempts to censor, malign, or proscribe such work, certain Black Toreador have occasionally come into vogue. Forbidden schools, secret societies, and underground galleries are not unknown among the clan, especially within the decadent coterie of Old Europe.

### *Toreador antitribu*

A Toreador *antitribu* has forsaken the Camarilla and joined the Sabbat. Toreador *antitribu* are often younger Kindred who view themselves as artistic rebels, and run the gamut from typical *enfants terribles* to Black Toreador seeking official sanction for their work. Toreador *antitribu* have an aesthetic vision that may embrace torture, black magic, and diablerie. It is important to note that the Toreador of the Sabbat do not consider themselves *antitribu*—they simply consider themselves Sabbat Toreador. There are more Toreador in the Sabbat than any other Camarilla *antitribu*, and many feel their clan is just as important to the sect as the Tzimisce and Lasombra. Toreador *antitribu* are among the most ostentatiously wicked members of the Sabbat, but they have also contributed the most grace and beauty as well—not all *antitribu* are Black Toreador! In New York, the most famous Toreador *antitribu* are Veronica Tryst, the master glazier who produced the famous windows of Santa de Luzarches; Venus and Orchid, the witch that maintains the Sabbat’s brothels; and Dr. Galahad Barrow, the Black Toreador surgeon responsible for the Sabbat’s horrific “Garden of Pain.”

## **Wissengeist**

A small clan of humanist Kindred who trace their origins to ancient Sumer, the Wissengeist are an Arikelite bloodline obsessed with the arts of philosophy and metaphysics. The Toreador consider them a minor offshoot of the clan, while the Wissengeist claim the two clans diverged from a shared bloodline. Both clans lay claim to common ancestors, with Geshtinanna, the “Invisible Engineer” of Nineveh, being the most cited.

## **Gotham’s Toreador**

The first two Toreador to settle in New York City were Duncan Capelthwaite and Robert de Luzarches, who arrived in 1664 along with the Duke of York. Duncan quickly established a guildhouse near Bowling Green, and began recruiting Kindred to share his vision of a New World paradise. Ansel Clerkenwell and his Boston coterie arrived soon after, followed by the Saxon musician Lili Zann, the Philadelphia socialite Sally de Angelou, and the French painter Justinien Valois, who relocated from New Orleans. With the addition of designer William Danzig and stained-glass artist Veronica Tryst, by the early nineteenth century, the New York Toreador had become the largest coterie of Toreador in the New World. In 1835, Duncan began

the construction of a new Toreador guildhouse, the famous underground cathedral of Santa de Luzarches. The project united the entire New York Camarilla and brought the clan worldwide recognition. As the Gilded Age electrified America, New York emerged as the center for Toreador culture in the New World, rivaling the European centers of Madrid, Prague, and Budapest, and overshadowed only by Paris, London, and Vienna.

The clan remained strong into the twentieth century, weathering the increasing madness of the Prince and the postwar resurgence of the Sabbat. Nevertheless, it was a turbulent century marked by unfortunate events and tragic losses, beginning in 1916 with the defection of Veronica Tryst to the Sabbat. Lili Zann vanished mysteriously in the 1920s, Sally de Angelou split from Duncan in 1957, William Danzig was murdered in 1978, and the Sabbat assassinated Ansel Clerkenwell in 1993. Despite these setbacks, the clan continued to expand and evolve, acting as a bulwark against the degenerating Primogen Council and forming close alliances with the Ventrue. New York's thriving art world ensured a steady stream of new talent, keeping the Toreador rejuvenated and relevant as the *fin de siècle* approached.

Today, the Toreador of New York are poised to become the most important coterie of Toreador in the world. Madrid and Budapest have fallen to the Sabbat, Paris continues its slide into decadence and obsolescence, London is paralyzed by internal power struggles, and Berlin has eclipsed the Old World bastions of Prague and Vienna. New York has emerged as the clan's brightest light, illuminating the glorious traditions of the past, and serving as a beacon for the coming millennium. This feeling of optimism is best expressed by the clan leader himself. Speaking to the Toreador at the most recent All Hallows Eve Ball, Duncan Capelthwaite concluded the opening ceremony with these remarks:

*When Caine reached the bottom of Arikel's well and saw the abyss, he pressed his slender fingers against her heart and uttered words long believed to be a curse. But this is not true. Look into your own hearts—you have always known this is not true. You have always known the words Caine pressed upon Arikel's heart; the message inscribed in her flesh before the Flood, and carried down the centuries to this very moment, the destiny singing in your blood even as I speak: "There is no abyss. There is only the night. Go fill it with stars."*



### **Sources & Notes**

This page was first uploaded on 27 September 2017, and was compiled from several older documents dating from 1995–2001. The banner image uses works by Jean-Michel Basquiat, Andy Warhol, and John Cage.

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