



# 1023 THE STORY

THE GREAT  
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PARTENAIRE OFFICIEL DE BICOLLINE



In 1022, **Hamilcar de Villar Macedo**, a man of imposing bearing and penetrating gaze, stood before the vast assembly of the Hanse of Merchants from the South of the Duchy of Bragança in the good city of Bragança.... Her heart pounded in her chest, filled with immeasurable excitement. The sun's rays streamed through the meeting room's large windows, casting a warm glow over his face, lit by a triumphant smile.

For months, Hamilcar had devoted every waking moment to devising an audacious plan, convincing influential members of the Hanseatic League to finance a maritime expedition to the mysterious Old World (Mundus) and what was to be called the Duchy of Bicolline. For many, this “continent” was no more than a legend told to children. They were told that beyond the Great Ocean, there was a land populated by monsters and vile creatures, and that if they were not wise, they would be sent there...

Yet Hamilcar and his adventurer friend, **Vencesclas de Bois Maury**, proudly presented the few worn leaves that spoke of a crossing. The *Récit de voyage* by **Christian Fréon de la Tavernière** seemed to provide the first proof of their claims.

Financing this voyage was therefore an opportunity, a chance to push back known frontiers and discover a new land filled with riches and unexplored wonders.

Hamilcar had a gift for captivating his audience, carrying them away in his vibrant dream of adventure. The members of the Hanseatic League listened attentively, cautious at first, but then their eyes began to sparkle with interest. The decisive moment finally arrived, when the last words escaped Hamilcar's lips. A suspended silence settled over the room, as if time were holding its breath. Then a wave of cheers erupted, filling the space with a joyous, triumphant tumult. The Hanse had given its unanimous approval. Christian Fréon de La Taveniere's manuscript, the map and the few coins had been key elements in the decision to try and find the men mentioned in the manuscript, the first to make the crossing to Bicolline, including their leader, a man named **Tache le Lent**.



As the Hanseatic members congratulated each other, Hamilcar found himself isolated in a corner of the room, letting his thoughts drift away. He was already imagining the sails unfurled, the powerful wind blowing through his hair, the ship braving the rushing ocean waves. He felt the electric thrill of the unknown, the irresistible call of discovery.

He had persuaded the Hanseatic League, and now he would guide his intrepid companions to the Duchy of Bicolline. Life was a journey, he told himself, and he was ready to throw himself body and soul into the tumultuous waves of the unknown. With his heart throbbing with excitement and his mind ablaze with dreams, Hamilcar de Villar Macedo prepared to undertake the most daring expedition of his time.

Long months had passed since Hamilcar had convinced the Hanse of Southern Merchants to finance the expedition. He had made the round trip, and in the meantime the Hanse had made all the preparations and armed the ship.

Now, on the afterdeck of the galleon L'Haruspice, he watched the scene unfold before him. The quayside was alive with a colorful crowd, vibrating with excitement and hope. In one of the harbor buildings, he had asked La Franche Compagnie des Villar Macedo, a military troop of the noble Villar Macedo family, to manage the flood of volunteers rushing to be selected and maintain order. He had asked Bois Maury to make an initial selection, as places on board were limited for this expedition.

Hamilcar couldn't help smiling as he saw familiar faces among the volunteers. He spotted members of the Compagnie du Loup, brave warriors whose reputation was well established. Among the crowd, he spotted a member of the Guilde des Allouettes, no doubt offering to act as interpreter; the Compagnie des Vents du Sud was obviously present, with members of the Lames de l'Aube as escort. The Mystics of the Eclipse were hoping to obtain seats by discussing with the high council, surely in exchange for services... There were people of good family there from the lands of the Comte de Crussol, from the citadel of Gicon or even from the town of Taberne.



Hamilcar couldn't suppress a feeling of pride as he contemplated the scene before him. The dreams he had nurtured had become reality, and now individuals from all corners of the Duchy of Braganza were volunteering to set sail into the unknown. Hamilcar and Bois Maury knew that the journey would be difficult and that there might not be anything. They were already dreading the reefs off the coast of Braganca, and the few sailors who had ventured there claimed to have sailed for days without being able to get out. Bois Maury and Hamilcar were careful not to mention the stories of how the reefs changed shape and place, and thus became a curse. **Captain Alaric**, who had been appointed to the command, looked glum and didn't share the prevailing enthusiasm. He was busy preparing the ship and its cargo.

As Hamilcar stood on the afterdeck of L'Haruspice, excitement mingled with a hint of curiosity. Among the multitude of volunteers crowding the quayside, he wondered what was driving them to embark on this uncertain adventure. Perhaps some were seeking fame and recognition, hoping to etch their names in the annals of history. They aspired to be pioneers who would lay new foundations for a new duchy, ready to sacrifice everything to leave their mark on history. Others, no doubt, were driven by an insatiable desire for discovery. They thirsted for new lands, unknown cultures and encounters. They were explorers at heart, ready to abandon all comforts to witness the wonder of the unknown. With a smile mixed with humility and determination, Hamilcar turned to his crew and realized that, whatever their deepest motives, they were all united by the same desire to explore, to surpass themselves and to usher in a new era. Together, they were ready to face mysteries and challenges, weaving the threads of a common destiny.

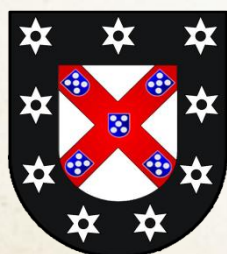
He looked up at the infinite sky, feeling a shiver of excitement run through his entire being. Captain Alaric set the sails, and the Haruspice was finally on its way out of the port of Braganca, on the first day of the year 1023.





Rare painting of the Galleon L'Haruspice on departure from Bragança

Donated by the de Villar-Macedo family



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