Carthian

Individualists, Collectivists and the Middle of the Road: a comparison and contrast

Carthians as a Whole:
Carthians overall believe that kindred social systems should modernize to include broader bases of power than traditional structure.¹

Carthians want to succeed themselves more than they want others to fail.²

Four elements for Carthians: Carthians are modern, secular explorers of mortal ideas,³ and that they come from and influence all walks of life.⁴

Carthians question their direction. “There is one question that almost every Carthian vampire asks himself on a regular basis: is the covenant performing its intended function?”⁵ The answer depends on what the individual Carthian believes the function of the covenant to be, which is related to their Conspiracy, position, mission and stance.

The four beliefs that all Carthians have in common - because if you do not have these, then you are just not part of the Movement, per canon⁶ - are:

- Tolerance within reason
- Collective action⁷
- Individual rights
- The duty to be a complete being

The Conspiracies differentiate themselves based on whether they give precedence to Collection action (Collectivists), Individual rights (Individualists) or balance the two (Middle of the Road).

¹ Carthians, p. 12
² Ibid
³ As per the Vivacity section on Carthians, p. 48, it is common for Carthian PC’s to receive situational bonuses to Humanity checks at the presiding ST’s discretion based on their frequent contact with humans, unlike other Covenants that maintain either minimal human contact or think of humans as lesser beings, functionaries or sheep.
⁴ Carthians, pp. 13-14
⁵ Carthians, p. 25
⁶ Carthians, pp. 30-31
⁷ Note that, per both p. 31 and p. 53, individuals can be ejected from the Carthian Movement. To support this setting element, the rules must reflect that to be Carthian, one must belong to a local Movement group. If ejected and not accepted as part of another Carthian group, the PC is ejected from the Covenant. Local groups may be pressured to eject unpopular members and/or not accept members ejected from other local groups but if at least one local group of Carthians accepts the individual, (s)he remains a Carthian.
Position and mission:
All Carthians have a position and mission. “Position is what you believe and that’s important. But it’s hollow without mission. Mission is what you do.”\(^8\) Whether your PC works towards his mission alone or with a group for the overall good of the Movement is linked to his Conspiracy - Individualists for the former method, Collectivists for the latter.

Stance:
Activist vs. Progressive. “Instead of a mass, violent uprising of the type the activists favor, progressives pursue small, additive changes that build up over time.”\(^9\) For your character, consider if you favor evolution or revolution.

Individualist vs. Collectivist vs. other Covenants:
The disagreements between Individualists and Collectivists are minor compared to the Carthians differences with more traditional covenants since those covenants expect a very hierarchical “I know better than you, so do as I say.” mindset. If other PC’s of more traditional covenants are acting egalitarian, then they are deviating from canon and should favor the Movement and expect censure from their superiors. (For example, see the outlawing of Carthian slang by Invictus princes, p. 49.) “Acceptance and promotion of the secular modernist message of the Movement, with its compelling “power-to-the-people” base are the most obvious marks of a true Carthian, whether he declares himself or not.”\(^10\)

The Myrmidon:
As the most important position in the Movement,\(^11\) the Conspiracy of the Myrmidon affects Carthians in the city. Each Myrmidon is likely to try to shape negotiations to a fair result but what the Myrmidon considers “fair” will be related to her belief about the primacy of individual rights vis-à-vis collective action.

**Individualists**
Structure:
Typical Clan roles (see Carthians, pp. 55-62)
- Auspex, Investigation and Academics (pp. 55-56)
- Obfuscate, Celerity, Stealth and Larceny (pp. 59-60)
- Protean, Animalism, Athletics and Survival (pp. 60-61)

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\(^8\) Carthians, p. 34

\(^9\) Carthians, p. 39

\(^10\) Carthians, p. 52. The section goes on to describe how another kindred would typically come to the Carthian view: “Sooner or later, usually provoked by a perceived injustice, she begins to consider how populism could apply to her own covenant. She might begin to believe that a Bishop should listen to and learn from his own flock just as much as he preaches to them, or that her Ordo Dracul instructors are withholding information from her unfairly and that she should be free to learn as she chooses. An Invictus neonate might note that his Guild Meister would benefit from the modern tools employed by mortal craftsmen and wonder why the Meister is so resistant to the suggestion.”

\(^11\) Carthians, p. 62
Advancement:
Individualists rarely attain high position of Status within the Carthian Movement. While there are many Individualists, they are handicapped by their inability to make large changes that draw attention and accolades as a “solo.” Unless the solo has unique, very valuable abilities, most will cap out at Carthian Status 2 to 3.

The rare exception - a high Status Individualist - is a long shot. Such an Individualist has succeeded at a massive task that benefited the Movement as a whole with minimal assistance and that garners respect. However, 19 out of 20 times those attempts to do big things with minimal assistance fail. The Individualist, undeterred, keeps trying but the odds are against him.

Solipsists and other Cultists of Self are almost always Individualists. If one cannot be sure about the existence of others, one cannot base one’s unlife on acting with them.

Bodhisatcracy are typically Individualists, more devoted to their enlightenment than to the collective good of the Movement.

Sabotage artists are Individualists but may fake other Conspiracies. They are uncommon in the global Chronicle because our social game relies on players interacting to have fun. Playing a PC that tries to make group actions a waste of time usually produces frustration for the player (as group actions continue to succeed) or for other players (as their actions repeatedly fail). Consult with your Storyteller about the overall good of the game before bringing in a sabotage artist PC.

Norms/Ideals:
Most Individualist of the Carthian forms of government: Communal Democracy. The ability to be as involved, or as uninvolved, as one chooses suits the Individualist well. In communal democracy, “All citizens should have equal opportunity to influence the policy of the Movement, but those who do not wish to sacrifice their time and energy to the governing of the domain should be free to withdraw themselves from electoral decisions. Kindred should be empowered to participate without obligation and they should benefit from peaceful and prosperous co-existence.”

RP Guidelines:
Maintain a clear focus on your primary goal. Consider each gathering a chance to advance your personal mission in some way. Enter each game with an idea of some result that would benefit your overall goal and have an idea of how to advance that result. For optimal challenge, ensure that the result you want will not sit well with at least one other PC.

Focus on your personal mission with minimal reliance on the Carthians as a whole. Be prepared to ask for little from your fellows because you will typically offer them little. You are a “solo”, doing your own thing and asking mainly to be left alone to pursue your own goals without restriction or external demands. You are smart enough to know that this will never entirely be the case but you seek to keep demands on you to a minimum, which means being ready to work alone.

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12 Carthians, p. 129
13 Carthians, p. 96
14 Carthians, p. 128
Build for a well-rounded character. As an Individualist, you cannot expect others to help you since you plan to offer little help in return. Your sheet will typically have many one-dot skills necessary for night-to-night life, such as Computers, Academics, Stealth, Survival (rural) or Streetwise (urban), and Drive, even if those are unrelated to your primary goal.

Relationship with Acolytes:
Smart Individualists have learned that those who follow the Crone feel a need for tribulation and suffering. As an Individualist, you can offer them little (and will offer them less) compared to a Collectivist group or a more traditionally organized coterie from another covenant. The fact that you offer little may be an attraction for Acolytes who see helping you as a net loss and a tribulation. You have learned to leverage that to carefully offer enough to be worthwhile, but not so much as to make the unlife of your Acolyte ally too easy.

Collectivists
Structure:
Typical Clan roles (see Carthians, pp. 55-62)
- Dominate, Intimidate and Persuasion (pp. 56-7)
- Majesty, Performance and Subterfuge (pp. 57-8)
- Nightmare, Intimidation and Crafts (pp. 58-9)
- Vigor, Resilience, Brawl and Weaponry (pp. 61-2)

Collectivists trade purity of vision for effectiveness. “To Collectivists, the core of their Requiems is large-scale political accomplishment.” but “The inevitable weakness to collectivizing individuals is a dilution of purpose.”

“True-blue Collectivists seemingly make up a minority of the covenant of the covenant but almost every real Collectivist has a position of some authority or at least an official title, rank, duty or responsibility. They’re not always liked or even respected but they are always connected.” Collectivists work together to create effects, resulting in a rise in Status. Almost all Status 4 or 5 Carthians are Collectivist.

The AOA are broadly Collectivist, working as a whole for a purpose they see as benefiting the Movement, all kindred and all humans. Despite their small size (the AOA group of four to five mentioned on p. 148 is about as large as an AOA group can get without being discovered and destroyed), the AOA thinks in a Collectivist mindset. Subtle AOA members do not firebomb - they use a variety of creative methods to discourage other kindred from buying Merits based on humans, such as Allies, Contacts, Herd, Retainers and Staff.

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15 Carthians, p. 108
16 Carthians, p. 130
17 Ibid
18 Carthians, p. 130
Norms/Ideals:
“What the Movement demands is that you do your part, that you help others do their part and that you mean it. Or if you don’t mean it, at least put up a good façade.”  

Most Collectivist Carthian government style: Pure Democracy. Collectivists favor the opportunity to act together. While they are aware that the Invictus’ fealty chains can create a strong voting bloc to oppose their initiatives under Pure Democracy, some canny Collectivists use that danger to keep local Carthians unified.

RP Guidelines
Give much, expect much. Collectivists see themselves as pragmatic in that the only way to make real change is by working together as a Movement. Their cooperation expectations extend well beyond a coterie. They are willing to give much and expect much in return. They often create structures, personally keeping a “tally sheet” of what they have done for the Movement relative to what others have offered. Some groups of Collectivists even formalize these tallies and use them to advance in Status.

Collectivists often disdain Individualists as impractical, thinking that “solos, by pledging themselves fixedly to the purest form of their beliefs, by settling for nothing less than 100 percent, wind up with zero when they could have gotten 30%, or 50% or 95%. But rather than roll up their sleeves and get dirty and compromise, they’d rather stay unstained — and impotent.”

Specialize. Collectivists rely on others, and your play and sheet should reflect that concept. This does not mean to over-specialize to the point that the PC cannot take care of life on a nightly basis without a team - basic activities like feeding, finding shelter and so on cannot be ignored. Beyond that, though, feel free to have notable gaps in capability and play those gaps to your character’s detriment to create interesting challenges of either getting help or trying to do something alone lacking both desire and training to handle it without help.

Be open and ask for help. “A common Carthian precept is “The fear of showing weakness is, itself, a debilitating weakness.” As a Collectivist, admit to your brethren when you goof, know that the Movement doesn’t punish mistakes the way other covenants do and work with other Carthians to recover. It’s often easier to correct if admitted early rather than trying to cover up a problem that then only grows. In return, don’t punish or degrade your fellow Carthians when they make mistakes; simply help them fix the problem and learn from the mistake for next time.

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19 Carthians, p. 86

20 Carthians, p. 107

21 Carthians, pp. 129-130

22 Carthians, p. 39

23 Carthians, pp. 129-130

24 Carthians, p. 31
**Middle of the Road**

**Structure:**
Middle of the Road, as a “non-Conspiracy”, has no structure.

The Oppositionists\(^{25}\) are typically Middle of the Road, preferring to operate as a team with internal goals (in an Individualist way comparable to a Bodhisatcracy), but also offer their skills to the Movement as a whole in exchange for other Carthians protecting their freedom to enjoy their activities.

**Norms/Ideals:** Middle of the Road characters are defined by an absence rather than the presence of norms and ideals. They are middle of the road simply because they are neither Individualists nor Collectivists.

**RP Guidelines:**
Middle of the Road is likely the easiest position to play on a case-by-case, seen as a more pragmatic response to the Danse Macabre than the more rigid ideologies of Individualism or Collectivism. It lacks a unifying precept, though, which can result in inconsistency over time.

\(^{25}\) Carthians, p. 149