

Newsfax, Turn 4

(start of 413 CE through the end of 416 CE)

Notes:

1. Map change - the Dnepr River is now the Boresthene.
2. You are encouraged to submit text and images for inclusion in the newsfax, which may satisfy your need for propaganda, creativity, or fun.
3. At the bottom of the newsfax is a rules hint, usually a choice nugget right from the GMs rulebook.

As is traditional, here is what I listened to while processing this turn. Pretend to care, or not.

- KUOM - www.radiok.org
- Gary Numan + Tubeway Army - *Replicas*
- Michala Petri and Kieth Jarrett - *Handel Sonatas*
- Enigma - *Le Roi est Mort, Vive le Roi*
- The Damned - *Anything*
- The Cramps - *Stay Sick*
- Offspring - *Smash*
- The B-52's - *Wild Planet*
- Pink Floyd - *Wish You Were Here*
- ZZ Top - *Deguello*
- OMD - *The Best of OMD*
- Sneaker Pimps - *Becoming X*
- Judas Priest - *Unleashed in the East*
- Frank Black and the Catholics - eponymous (Ivan and Leslie, listen to Back To Rome ...)
- Laurence Boulay - *François Couperin: Leçons de Ténèbres pour le Mercredi Saint etc.*
- Depeche Mode - *Violator*
- Killing Joke - *Brighter Than A Thousand Suns*
- Kitaro - *Tunhuang*

Generally eastward starting with ...

Central Asia

Hephthalite Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Ilginc, Khakhan of the Hunas

Diplomacy:

In his continuing effort to reform the Khanate into a proper empire, the Khan decided to give Dzungaria and Karluk, with the Silk Road city of Kuldja, their freedom. Kiliciler's sources were telling him the Juan-Juan were about to be on the move (see *Juan-Juan Khanate* below) and these provinces would good to liberate regardless of the route of the Hephthalite's long-time antagonists.

These imperial ambitions had long rankled the more traditionally-minded clan leaders. Their relative loss of power in the new provincial structure was perceived as a slap in the face. Further, the Khakhan was settling some tribes in new cities - cities, by the Sky God! - and buying land from a farmer kingdom instead of taking it by force. In the spiritual realm, others were upset by the establishment of a formal primacy for the worship of Tengri and the other Old Gods.

More and more it was seen by many that the Hephthalites were in danger of ending up like the Kushans: weak, lovers of foreign arts and gods, and eaters of bread. A few even whispered that Kiliciler planned to settle the clans on farms, with their fine horses used to pull a plow or run a water pump.

Before the Spring Equinox, before even the Dead God worshippers went on their annual insane bread-and-water diet, Buyukpencere decided to make his move. Somewhat less than half the *tumens* in the capitol had been placed under his command. A distant cousin of the Khakhan, he knew that he was the man who had to drag his people back from the precipice of "civilization" before Kiliciler destroyed them all.

Buyukpencere and his household men overwhelmed the Khakhan's guard, seized him, and dragged him before the court. There, in an act which would reverberate for years, the man who had pledged *anda* to Kiliciler suddenly beheaded the kneeling lord, held the head aloft and asked the gathering to proclaim him their new leader. After such a display, and some with red spattering their fur jackets, the khans declared their support for Buyukpencere and his program of neo-traditional rule.

Word spread quickly along the Silk Road. Before the equinox, the Balkash Khan, Fittcheen the Grey, declared he would take his small state out of the Hephthalite yurt, forming the White Turk Khanate from Balkash, Avar, and Turgay. The wily old nomad knew that now was not the time to be involved in a bloody civil war, and his people were grateful for this wise leadership.

Further, the imperial leader Akhkulili and the allied khans Baskale of Sogdiana, Qaboos of Quba City, and Sharadan of Gurgan decided to make the most of the situation and leave the imperial order.

Akhkulili was in Gurgan with a guard of a few hundred horse archers, ready to engage in another mission for Kiliciler when he learned of the death of his khan. Unfortunately for him, Khan Sharadan heard the news a bit earlier, and had Akhkulili arrested and kept in an old Parthian keep for possible later use.

Within a week Akhkulili's guard commander had arranged for dawn assault on the small fort. Caught by surprise, the gaolers still put up a stiff fight from a detached fortification. As he leaped into the saddle, the prisoner felt an arrow bite deep into his thigh. Letting out a yelp of pain, he nonetheless rode with his men into the desert wastes. There, among the rocks and shrubs, they hid out, raiding the occasional caravan for loot and news.

What they heard was not encouraging for Akhkulili's ambition to be the new khakhan. The revolt of Turkmen cut them off from the Khanate proper, while Otarsh (and Tashkent) and Singanakh (and Otrar), in addition to other splintering provinces and cities, showed the state to be in a precarious position. Recuperating from his wound, Akhkulili decided humble himself before Kiliciler's heir, Akshunwaz, who was similarly isolated in Khwarzim.

The Crown Prince was similarly put out by events, but was unable to come up with a plan for reaching the capitol in order to make his claim on the throne. Thus Akshunwaz surprised Akhkulili by welcoming him at his small impromptu court in Dashovuz. In the next few years their efforts at consolidating power resulted in the accession of the Khazakh clans (see *Khwarizm Hunas Khanate*

below).

Meanwhile, Khakhan Buyukpencere was trying to get the court to agree to his proposal to wed Kiliciler's only daughter, Umay. The tribal elders, however, steadfastly refused to allow the eight-year-old to be joined with the usurper. Buyukpencere had lost influence over these men since that fateful night, but had found substantial and surprising support among the local people. The Buddhists had no love for Kiliciler and while not approving of his methods did see his return to more tolerant religious policies as a good and welcome thing.

The Ilkhan was marching along the Silk Road at the head of a few thousand horse archers and some lancers. While he knew that this force was hopelessly inadequate against what Buyukpencere could bring to defend Bactra, he also knew from gossip in the ancient caravansarais and cities that the newly-minted Khakhan had yet to consolidate his power. Buyukpencere had apparently let his power go to his head, and midnight purges, feasts, and orgies were all rumored to be common in the capitol.

It was a hot August day when the banner of the Ilkhan was sighted from the watchtowers of Bactra. Agents of Buyukpencere had watched the small force for many days now, and the regicidal Khakhan had prepared well. Ilginc's scouts found the city gates open and unguarded. The Ilkhan sighed. This was an obvious ambush. Yet his hope, and that of his men, was that the sight of the particular braid in his horsetail standard indicating he represented the dead Khakhan would remind them all of their real allegiance.

Thus Ilginc rode at the head of his men, stopping just past the gatehouse. His standard bearer at his left hand, he motioned his men to silence. The city was eerily silent, for which he was happy.

In a clear voice which carried in the hot air, he said, "Since our ancestors left their home *nutuq* to make this place our new *ulusut*, we have ruled by hewing to the old ways. You all know that the *yasa* calls for duel as the way to resolve disputes when all else fails. Buyukpencere denied this to Kiliciler, butchering him like a kid."

Ilginc paused, letting those last words sink in. He continued, "Buyukpencere, I now call you to show these city-folk, these *ch'agua*, what their masters are made of, to restore honor to our people. If you are a man, come to the south gate caravansarai. I will wait."

With that he ordered his column to turn about and leave Bactra. Within the watch Buyukpencere and a small guard had appeared in the cleared wagon-park within the mud-brick walls of the caravansarai. The Khakhan looked ill-at-ease, and it was not obvious that he lead the contingent of officers. They in fact seemed instead to surround him at all times, to block routes of flight.

The Ilkhan mounted his horse and checked his equipment. The quivers hanging from his saddle were full of black-fletched arrows, but he knew they would be nearly useless in the limited space. More important was the sword in a sheath, the lance in his hand, and the ancient gilded handax on his saddle. This last had been handed down from the founder of his clan some 200 years in the past, taken, it was said, from a Sarmatian princess in battle.

His armor made a faint hissing sound of lamellae rubbing together as Ilginc rode to the center of the hard-packed dirt field. Buyukpencere then rode out, slowly. A man yelled, another replied, and soon the people lining the walls were bellowing and gesturing. The Khakhan quickly knocked an arrow and let fly while urging on his horse. But Ilginc's horse was already at a gallop just as the Khakhan's shaft recoiled from his shoulder. Surprised at Ilginc's tactics, Buyukpencere hastily stowed his bow and pulled the spear from the strap across his back.

But by then the Ilkhan's lance head was already a length away from his opponent, and in an eyeblink was protruding redly from the Khakhan's neck, having pierced the gorget. Ilginc was amazed at Tengri's great favor. He released the shaft, pulled in the reins, and grabbed the gilded ax. As Buyukpencere struggled vainly, Ilginc's left hand grabbed his helmet plume up, baring the neck. The handax swung and the Khakhan's head was held high for all to see.

A sudden roar from the crowd took Ilginc out of the battle. Looking at the faces of the officers who had ridden out with Buyukpencere, he knew they were now his *anda*.

White Turk Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Khan Fittcheen the Grey

Diplomacy:

The new khanate consists of Balkash, Avar, and Turgay. The Hephthalite Ilkhan, Ilginc, was able to talk his way out of Fittcheen's custody because of their long friendship. Ilginc lead his *minghans* out of Turgay and into history (see *Hephthalite Khanate*).

Khwarizm Hunas Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Akhkulili, Khakhan of the Hunas, Khan of Khwarzim

Diplomacy: Khazakh (NT)

The former Crown Prince of the Hephthalites finds his new domain more limited than he had once hoped (see *Hephthalite Khanate* above).

Steppe Shamanism

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Primate Religious Authority)

Bulang Sechen, High Shaman

Diplomacy: Chu (CH), Bactria (CH), Chu (CH), Sogdiana (CH), Ferghana (CH)

The Manicheans of Otarsh were singularly unimpressed with Bulang. Those who heard him and his message tended to leave quickly, while those few interested in hearing more always turned to one of the lesser priests for advice.

The chaos in the empire did not make life any easier for Bulang Sechen, and after a few years it appeared he might need show loyalty to both the crown prince and the usurper. How he might do that and maintain honor was an energizing topic among the shamans of the *esh* and lesser temples.

Kushan Empire

(Buddhist Civilized Open Empire)

Kapisa II, Kidarite Shao

Diplomacy:

While most of his courtiers viewed events to the north (see *Hephthalite Khanate*) with some alarm, Kapisa II was relaxed. He counseled them, "Troubled neighbors will leave home peaceful." A few agreed with this glib comment, but speculation continued.

Oghuz Turk Realm

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Khan Sonqur

Diplomacy: Uze (F), Kama Bulgar (FA), Chorasmia (A)

Looking out over the moving, milling, dusty mass, the Khan shook his head. The Hephthalite Khanate was tearing itself apart, war raged in Europe, and here hundreds of thousands of Juan-Juan Mongols and Turks trudged from peace near China to be nearer to the blaze of conflict. "Likes moths to a campfire," he said to himself, and his sword bearer turned to glance at him, then looked away. Sonqur was well-known to be a "thinker" - in a good way, all hastened to add.

The Khan left the Juan-Juan Khan in Nogai, wished him well, and moved to create tighter bonds within his own steppe federation. Perhaps some changes would be needed ...

Juan-Juan Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Anakai, Ilkhan and Regent for P'ulochen, Prince

Diplomacy: Urkel (A), Pechneg (FA), Altai (A), Beshbalik (A), Khalaka (A), Naiman (FA), Wusu (A), Zaysan (FA)

When the snows had melted in the passes, caravans of merchants, missionaries, and adventurers began arriving in Khocho on their annual route from both South to North and East to West. The first such train to arrive in the spring of 413 was surprised and dismayed to find that the rumors were indeed true, that the Juan-Juan had migrated, most of the tribes, to the Far West, into the sunset.

The call to transhumanance issued by the Ilkhan was by no means heeded in every yurt nominally loyal to the house of P'ulochen, the Khakhan-to-be. Somewhat fewer than half the clans gathered outside Khocho just before the meadows had begun to green. Significantly, the Eastern Turkish and Eastern Mongol Khanates had decided to urge their clansmen to load up the horses, wagons, and camels, again with mixed success. This meant that a power vacuum was created, and various local leaders eyed each other warily as the nomad federation disintegrated. Within a few years small raids became common, skirmishes became the stuff of legend, and some spoke longingly of the Juan-Juan hegemony.

Even Khocho was abandoned, the citizens gathering up their belongings to ride west. By the end of 416, only a few squatters could be found in the city, and a few clans had expanded their ranges into the under-grazed turf and forest of the vacated regions.

The young prince, aided by Ilkhan Anakai and by the "little khanum" Hara, lead his people from Altai into independent steppe lands. The huge horde cowed the clans of Tarbagitai, Saraba, and Ryatka into allowing passage, but these declined the offer to join the march westward. The Khan of Tarhain decided that he, for one, would not be pushed around, and waged a guerrilla war against the invaders. The response of the Ilkhan was swift and sure, and the grassy hills provided little refuge against the thousands of Juan-Juan warriors lead by the Gurkhan, Kutelburi. The locals were beaten into submission, but the delay forced the horde to winter among the Tarhain clans, a further aggression.

The Oghuz lands proved a happy respite, as the Turkish guides helped the Mongol-lead federation to cross their territory. The Alans of Urkel agreed heartily to join once they heard that the lands of Uldin would feel their hooves. A faint hope of vengeance against "the Hun" stirred a flame within them as their wagons trundled west.

Local peasants proved quite happy to lead the many khans from the east across the Volga, and waved pleasantly enough as the thousands continued on and departed their homelands. The various kings, khans, and shahs of Torki, Levedia, and Atelzuko were so intimidated by even a few Hun tax collectors that they never considered leaving for the west. The Hunnic officials, for their part, usually avoided meeting the horde by sudden hunting trips, or journeys to shop for horses far from the Juan-Juan route of march.

By the autumn of 416 the 200,000+ migrants crossed into Pechneg. The local khan was an ambitious sort, and decided to join the horde with his small army. Camped for the winter across the steppe up to the Black Sea coast, the Juan-Juan appearance caused a small exodus of Greek and Persian merchants from the port of Olbia - all of whom were replaced by traders who smelled opportunity for profit.

Eastern Mongolian Kingdom - *Juan-Juan Sub-Khanate*

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Component Nation)

Khan Juchin

Diplomacy: Wudah (FA)

He considered the power of the Toba, the craftiness of the Later Yen, and a Ts'in resurgence. Thus it was that Juchin called his clans to move. Unfortunately, only his own and those of the Wudah khan agreed to migrate (see *Juan-Juan Khanate*).

Eastern Turkish Kingdom - *Juan-Juan Sub-Khanate*

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Component Nation)

Khan Alptketin

Diplomacy: Ayaguz (FA), Henyitin (A), Tamarin (A)

More successful was Alptekin, and tens of thousands, with their herds and wagons, gathered at Khocho (see *Juan-Juan Khanate*).

Tu-Yu-Hu Kingdom of the Aza

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Khan Khri'brin

Diplomacy:

The Khan slept, rode, hunted, and generally ignored greater events.

China

Chinese Buddhism

(Chinese Buddhist Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Master Lo-Wang

Diplomacy:

Death stalked the followers of Master Lo-Wang. A few days prior to the Summer Solstice of 416 CE, the spirit of the immigrant from India who brought so much enlightenment to the Middle Kingdom passed on. The funerary services for Kumarajiva, who died at the age of 73, were attended by tens of thousands of pilgrims. His ashes were given to a eight priests who began a journey back to South Asia in appreciation.

A few months later Hui-Yuan died in his sleep at the age of 82. Whether from sorrow over his good friend Kumarajiva's death or simple advanced age, his loss also shook Master Lo-Wang.



Chinese Kingdom of Annam

(Daoist Civilized Open Empire)

King Ma Yueh

Diplomacy: Lingsi (EA)

Announcing his intention to join in the Nan-Chao community, Ma Yueh marries very young local princess as Han immigrants are settled in new villages. This goes smoothly, and about as soon as she is able the princess presents the king with a new daughter.

Construction begins on a road from Annam north. Clearing jungle and cutting through mountain passes makes for slow work.

General Ling-Su, meanwhile, leads thousands of Chinese refugees towards Nan-Chao. By the autumn of 413 they all had arrived at the gates of I-Chou, expecting to build a quarter of the city into their own, a new home in this faraway land. But by then the locals had become quite disenchanted with the Chinese and their snubbing of their women, most particularly the courtesan who had given the king two children. More important was the concept of colonization, repugnant to these independent-minded citizens.

As the handcarts of belongings pushed into the city, the local youths attempted to seize Ling-Su. He escaped these, and quickly ordered the settlers to run out. Once they were out, the gates were closed, the walls lined with armed men, and the city revolted. The very next day, the corpses of three Annamese agents were hung from the city walls having failed spectacularly to quell the unrest.

King Ma Yueh was not pleased with these developments. He was sure, however, that after some time to cool off he might once again succeed in wooing the city. Meanwhile, he sent Ling-Su to redeem himself by diplomacy in Lingsi. This he did, but in the midst of negotiations the General collapsed. Before nightfall of March 3, 414, he was dead, as sad end for a man of good family. The king wept bitterly that his old comrade-in-arms who had followed him so far would die in such a place.

Daoism Temples

(Daoist Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Ko Chao Fu, Ling Pao Master

Diplomacy: Chiang Hsia (MN), Chi (CH)

The Master announced to his acolytes and some officials that:

Letters were sent to all the pagan nomads who dwell beyond the Great Wall. For those of great minds, a message of warning emerged. For those who merely chew bone, the message was another stern example, that those who cultivate the soil are driven insane.

The Five Sacred Peaks are slowly crowned with special temple complexes. Construction begins on two more, that of Tai Shan in Funiu and Song Shan in Chinling, to join the first, the Temple of South Heng Shan in Ghang'De. By 416 these were finished, ahead of time and on budget. Ko Chao Fu is pleased with these concrete signs of devotion to the spirit of immortality.

This was quite a relief after the trouble with the temples serving peasants in the Later Yen Empire. The local priesthood resented the Master's attempts at extracting a portion of their donations for use by the central bureaucracy. Despite much pleading and many messages sent throughout that land no silver was collected.

The Master spent all of 415 and 416 engaged in various arcane and mystic rituals. In the event, all the sacrifices, fasting, and silences came to naught.

Missionary work in Kwangtung merely confused the locals, who were also annoyed to have the extra temple attendants pestering them. The pagans of Korat were far more welcoming.

Eastern Ts'in Dynasty

(Daoist Civilized Open Empire)

K'ung Ti, Emperor of China

Diplomacy: Koeuichou (A), Tsainan (FA), Shantung (EA), Funiu (C), Jiangxi (C)

The year 413 CE saw the Emperor make a procession through Tsainan and Shantung. Local nobles had been so traumatized by first the Southern Yen civil war, then the Later Yen occupation and withdrawal, that they had refused to make any statements or do anything even vaguely provocative. K'ung Ti had merely to appear at the head of his army in order to win their undying devotion. Marching soldiers were kissed by the more brazen young women as they marched by, children and their masters tossed rice onto the road ahead of the army, and families were happy to billet imperial troopers. Sadly, the land was so wasted, filled with burned-out or empty villages, that the flow of food and goods was mainly from the army to the natives and not the reverse. At least the annual land crab harvest on the Shantung coast was a good one.

Other efforts included the clearing of Kiang'si for rice cultivation and hog farming, the building of a new city in Tsainan, Jinan, on the Huang Ho, and the raising up of a hard road along the river from Jinan to Pienching. A bridge was put across the Yangtse from the capitol into Taiping, a wonder with sections that raise and lower to allow ships passage up and down river.

Daoist evangelism in Szechwan was intense and entirely ineffective. In contrast, the mission of Imperial Princes Gui and Zhou to the free city of Koeuichou was a notable success. The Duke of Koeuichou offered his daughter to the emperor in marriage, and joined the empire with his powerful city militia. And the Sung were sent silver and grain to alleviate their chronic problems.

The growing power of the Ts'in caused the minor lords of the border lands of Funiu, and the revolted Duke of Jianxi, decided to nominally accept K'ung Ti as their suzerain. Pleasantries aside, it was becoming clear that the Eastern Ts'in would be on the prowl soon, and that it would be wise to ride that tiger instead of becoming an easy meal.

But the problems of Prince Gui had no easy answers. For 12 full moons - nearly at the moment of fullness, according to court astronomers - he would awaken from sleep screaming. When calmed, Gui would report to his spritual advisor Master Sima Ce his visions of nearly-human talking puppets, metal firebirds zooming through the night sky, blossoming flames, and brave rescues. These dreams were all different, some with metal snakes carrying puppets inside, others with metal fish carrying people, and always with a strange foreign tongue spoken by what looked like demon-possessed barbarian dolls. None could understand or cure him of these spirit invasions, and they ended of their own accord in the Spring of 415.

Khanate of the Hsiung'nu

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Bulinger, Khan of the Hsiung'nu

Diplomacy:

The khan lost interest in greater affairs once more, and withdrew into such pursuits as falconry and drinking.

Korean Kingdom of Koguryo

(Chinese Buddhist Civilized Open Empire)

King Kwanggaet'o, the Great

Diplomacy: Bandao (T)

In a move of either hard politics (or great compassion), thousands of Emishi captives (or refugees) were given a city in which to settle, Pusan in Silla. They were a restive lot, none too happy about their home in a new city instead of the forests, fields, and streams of their native lands. But the port was by the sea, and they grudgingly moved in and set up housekeeping. The Emishi did not forget their roots, however, and neither did they forget seeing the ship of silks and silver sent to the Yamato on their arrival in Korea.

Well before sunrise, three men slipped into the bedroom of the Daoist priest in charge of Bandao through a hole cut into the wall of his simple hut earlier in the day. The recumbent figure on the mat was still, and the leader of the group stepped quickly forward, pulled a garrote from under his belt, and moved to wrap it around the neck of the holy man.

A light bright as the sun suddenly flashed in the room, and in an instant the old man was among them, his carved staff striking down, left, and up. None escaped, and the black-clad assailants were carried off by acolytes for "questioning" all the next day. The Daoist minority in the barbarian land rose up against Koguryo officials, merchants, and other symbols of royal authority - the men had confessed to being sent by Kwanggaet'o himself.

The Bandao khan, Silginik, angrily reduced his status in the Koguryo polity and marched his troops home to deal with the growing spate of raids and killings between rival communities. By 416 the land still smoldered, but overt violence had been quelled. Missionaries in Mantap found the locals more reticent to receive the message of the Buddha after this episode - the incongruity of the King's actions and faith was too much for many.

In the end, their reluctance was rendered irrelevant. The King himself led his army into Mantap, and in a brilliant campaign imposed the Buddhist order there by slaughtering the native army and beheading the local khan. Ashoka would have been proud, many noted with irony.

Later Liang Kingdom

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Lu Kuang, Emperor of China

Diplomacy: Yumen (EA), Bulinger (FA), Tangut (A), Hsia-Hsia (EA), Gaxun-Nur (NT), Lob Nor (FA), Tunhuang (A), Tarim (C Turfan), Suachu (NT Turfan)

Lu Kuang woke up one winter morning and realized that if he was going to really be emperor of what those worms called "All Under Heaven" he would need to get busy. Thus he set out to woo many neighboring clans and khans, with no small success. Further, his vassal Xiang Yu of Turfan was ordered to expand his domain.

This message from the Dao Master was received on a fine spring morning:

Lu Kuang, Emperor of China, Later Liang My coy fish have whispered of a perfumed, copper-eyed cat, with a long, flowing, white coat, who seeks to awaken the 3-headed Northern Dragon, to have him feast upon the flesh of the Hoa-tun of the 2 husbands. *-Ko Chao Fu*

The emperor shook his head after the message was read to him, and called for some more tasty beef ribs to gnaw on.

Later Ts'in Dynasty

(Buddhist Civilized Open Empire)

Shek Hsing, Emperor of China

Diplomacy:

After coming to a sense of peace with his relationship with the Later Yen, Yao Hsing "the One-Handed" died of liver failure on a warm late summer evening of 416. His heir, the nominal prisoner of the same Later Yen, took his post as emperor with as much ceremony as could be mustered, in the ancient imperial city of Chang'an. The situation of Shek Hsing was difficult, and inspired several notable poets to their reflections on the nature of the state and the people to ink and brush (see *Later Yen Dynasty* below).

(Hou) Later Yen Dynasty

(Daoist Civilized Open Empire)

Mu-jung Ch'uei, Emperor of China

Diplomacy: Later Ts'in (NT to itself viz Later Yen)

Few were surprised when Ch'uei announced war with the Toba Wei. Some along the Huang Ho were ecstatic, most especially when the river fleet of Bailao Qu'li "the Scythe" arrived in Loyang carrying grain and salt pork. They sailed on up river to Chang'an, where their reception was enthusiastic enough. The leadership in the city was, however, lead by Yao Hsing "the One-Handed" himself, who was not ever allowed to forget exactly how he had lost his right hand.

Nonetheless, the Later Ts'in emperor was pleased to see his brother and heir Shek Hsing well-fed and moving amiably among the Yen staff. With the Toba under assault by Mu-jung Ch'uei and his forces, clearly a convergence of interest existed. Further, the Later Ts'in state was as tenuous a secular entity as one might imagine. Thus after much discussion over many months Yao Hsing was convinced that, well, perhaps forgiveness was a good thing, and that his family integrating with a successful enterprise might please his ancestors.

While the Yen emperor awaited the arrival of a large mercenary army in Hopei, the Toba emperor was busily despoiling the Later Ts'in homeland of Shensi. We need not detail the sufferings here of the looted, the enslaved, the murdered, of the brave yet futile resistance. Suffice to say that by 414 thousands of bound Chinese were being lead north to work fields for the Toba. The lucky ones made it through the abandoned siege lines around Chang'an and into that ancient capitol to find refuge with their emperor and his tiny force. Even the soldiery committing the atrocities was not so happy, and cursed their leadership as cheap for keeping most of the booty for themselves.

Wasting no time was Prince Mu-Jung Shen'qu. Leading 14,000 horse across the border directly into the Toba capitol district of Yun province. Facing him was a newly-raised defense force of less than 3000 lancers under general Ts'ui Hao, which had quickly deployed to hold the passes around Wutai Shan.

By June these were being probed by Shen'qu's light horse across the mountains. Soon the main Yen army managed to flank one of the passes and force general Ts'ui back. Just as he was beginning to consider falling back into Tai, a messenger arrived at his tent with welcome news: Prince Lai-Hsiang's infantry and general Jy-Houng's cavalry were just arriving in the province. With these welcome reinforcements he ordered his troops to make selected counterattacks to hold up the enemy.

The Prince allowed Yen forces to advance all the way to the suburbs of **Tai**, and there faced them. His 25,000 men formed a line with thousands of armored Chinese crossbowmen, sword and shield men to guard them, and flanked these with heavy cavalry. The Yen prince Shen'qu smiled when he saw this deployment, and moments after lining up his all-horse army with flanks echeloned back ordered a charge aimed right at the Chinese in the center. With typical nomadic disdain for anyone foolish enough to put his honor on the line without a horse, he expected to sweep these infantry away and then roll up the interior flanks of the Toba line.

But the Chinese let loose volley after volley of crossbow bolts, dropping hundreds of armored horse as they came within range. This shooting made the Yen line ragged as it hit the infantry, who in turn had suffered little from sniping on the ends from horse archers. Armored lancers on armored horses surged into the recoiling ranks of Chinese foot, and a melee ensued, causing hundreds of casualties among these blighters.

Lai-Hsiang then sent his riders right and left, ordering his and Ts'ui's heavy cavalry to push back the thin line of enemy horse archers and fall upon the Yen flanks. The effect was horrific for the enemy, who were lanced, maced, and cut down from the rear while fighting emboldened Chinese to their front. Within the hour thousands of lamellar-suited nomads lay dead on the field, the rest pursued by the fresh Toba cavalry from the flanks and the guard which had been held in reserve. By the beginning of the winter the Yen army defending the other side of the mountain passes numbered around a third of those who had ventured through them on the attack.

In spite of this debacle, another Later Yen army pushed across the mountains through Junji Guan into Shan'si province. Mu-Jung Ch'uei himself lead a force of Yen and mercenary troops with the intention of taking Tai'Yuan. The garrison of Toba light troops was eventually chased from the hills and villages, and the Chinese foot began digging trenches around the enemy city.

Later in the spring of 415 the Later Yen emperor received news that his Toba Wei counterpart had arrived in the province with a large army and would be in his face within days. Mu-Jung Ch'uei ordered most of his force out from around the city and began deploying for battle near the village of **Yushe**.

He was too late. Within the hour the Toba Wei army was sighted on a ridge opposite the Yen command tents. Surprised and outnumbered two-to-one, Mu-Jung Ch'uei saw his army disintegrate as the enemy heavy horse charged into and through the siege lines, taking no prisoners and catching all who fled down the country lanes. The mercenary commander was cut down as he tried to organize his infantry into a square, and the Yen emperor barely got back across the mountains and back to his palace.

The Toba army continued home laden with enslaved Chinese and loot, plus the battlefield spoils from defeating the Yen who had the temerity to invade the unconquerable nomad lords. Toba Kuei ordered maps brought to his palace and consulted his advisors late into the night.

Sung Kingdom of China -*Tributary of the Eastern Ts'in Empire*

(Daoist Civilized Component Nation)

Ma Ch'in, Sung King

Diplomacy: Shentung (T), Loyang (A)

Ma Ch'in was happy to receive a subsidy from An Ti. The wagons arrived as the king and his staff were putting their army through its paces. Events to the north of the river did not bode well for the future and the Sung would be ready for whatever fate had in store.

In the event, no barbarian army threatened, so he took the opportunity to march his forces through Shentung and to the ancient capitol of Loyang. There he found the city in a precarious state. A Later Yen fleet had brought supplies to the hungry citizens and had shown Shek Hsing, the Later Ts'in crown prince, to be safe and in hand. This had emboldened the garrison commander to begin ignoring decrees from Chang'an and organize a local militia to work with his civilized Qiang to maintain order.

When offered a chance to join the Sung and come under the protection of the Eastern Ts'in Empire, the soldiery of Loyang wept for joy and demanded the Sung army be let in the city. In any event, the walls were mere rubble after decades of strife, city buildings all marked in one way or another by the dozens of occupiers they had housed. Unlike most of them, Ma Ch'in did not take the opportunity to announce his Mandate from Heaven to rule all China.

Toba Wei Empire

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Toba Kuei, Emperor of China

Diplomacy:

Within the same moon two attempts were made on Toba Kuei. One starred a sniper with a crossbow taking a shot through a tent flap. After a chase with horses, booby-traps, and a snowball fight, the assassin escaped into the wilderness. The other involved an old woman with a poisoned dagger - it was shown to be poisonous when she stiffened and collapsed after the emperor himself turned the knife on her. The emperor reflected that 413 was shaping up to be an interesting year.

More substantial assaults on the Toba state were to come, however (see (*Hou*) *Later Yen*).

Western Ts'in Empire

(Asiatic Pagan Civilized Open Empire)

Mu-lien, Emperor of China

Diplomacy:

Mu-lien, alarmed at events to the east, bestirred himself and began to arrange for the defense of his little empire. In the event, no army dared pass the border stones. The old emperor was relieved - this was becoming a rough neighborhood.

South East Asia

Cham Kingdom

(Hinduism Barbarian Open Empire)

King Bhadravarman, the Great

Diplomacy:

The king considered the poses of Shiva at great length.

Chen-La Kingdom

(Hinduism Civilized Open Empire)

King Pendravarman

Diplomacy: Nampung (A)

Given the successful defense of his realm, the king decided now would be a good time to take a proper wife. With the aid of general Mahendravarman, the barbarian king of Nampung agreed to both ally with the Chen-La of Land, and to seal the deal with his sister's hand in marriage.

Unfortunately, Pendravarman was to be once more called into battle (see *Khmer Kingdom of Funan* below).

Khmer Kingdom of Funan

(Hinduism Civilized Open Empire)

Korn Danh II, the Great, King of the Mountain

Diplomacy: Nakhon (F), Lampang (EA)

His reputation and the glory of his reign at stake, Korn Danh resolved to once more attack the Chen-La of Land (as the Han would say) and make it his own.

The campaign opened at sea. The fleets of Ligor king Gridha Sayee and Johor King Karmjit Muthupandi sailed to the mouths of the Mekong to interdict trade ships bound for Sresthapura. These Malay fleets had little effect, as the only ships engaged on these routes were long-accustomed to running pirate blockades between the Spice Islands and the negligible trade continued.

More important was the call of Saha Yaduveer for bandits, headhunters, and others beyond the pale to join the army and receive both amnesty and regular pay. And of course the chance for loot was not ignored by the thousands of ne'er-do-wells that showed up on the mustering fields in the spring. Their only uniform was a parrot feather armband, and they called themselves the "Tall Feathers." These companies advanced before the main army, scouted the flanks, and generally caused mischief among the Chen-La.

Moving north along the Mekong once more was the main army under the command of lord Var Dhara. The van was taken by Perak king Nghor Kheiu, who relished the opportunity of showing his prowess as his daughter Tarita was married to that no-neck Funan prince what's-his-name. He would let the empire know what Perak nobles were made of. More sanguine was the former pirate king of Andaman, Darsh "Silverfin" who was taking his vessels up the Mekong in support of the land troops. He knew that victory was not guaranteed, and had no taste for battle on a narrow strip of water.

As it happened, the "Silverfin" arrived too late to make a difference. The young king of Nampung did, however, hear from a wandering merchant of the invasion of his new brother-in-law's lands from Khmer, and mustered his small army to assist in the defense. Bands of "Tall Feathers" scoured the countryside, but were frequently thwarted by local people, their lack of knowledge of the landscape, and their own tendency to loot, rape, and burn as they moved.

Only a few days into Surin, near the town of **Mounlapamok**, the Funan army found the waiting Chen-La army, under the command of the Crown Prince Bhavavarman. The nearly 15,000 defenders anchored one flank on the Mekong, the other on a dense copse well-known to the local woodsmen. Facing them was almost twice their number of Khmer and their Malay allies.

In a light rain, the "Tall Feathers" tried to probe the front and rear of the enemy position, but were driven back by patches of marsh and by defending skirmishers. After nearly an hour of this, the rash young king from Nampung decided he had had enough, and ordered his warriors to charge along the riverbank where they were positioned. At the head of a dozen elephants and around 1500 tattooed and feathered men, he ran headlong into the very surprised Malays, who had expected their opponents to remain in a secure place.

So amazed were they, in fact, that king Nghor Kheiu ordered his men to fall back. Seeing the effect of this charge, Bhavavarman commanded his entire force to assault the enemy lines. The Funan troops put up a stiff resistance, but with their flank turned by the Nampung charge it was all that lord Var Dhara could do to organize a fighting withdrawal. Intensifying rain helped the invaders to slip back across the border with minimal losses.

After the battle, the Perak king decided that his honor had been laid low by Funan. On this flimsy pretext - said by most to be a cover for his own poor battlefield performance - he marched his remaining men and elephants back through the Isthmus of Kra and home. Princess Tarita spent an entire month in mourning over her father, sending even her husband the Crown Prince away. Further sorrow came when the beloved wife of Korn Danh, Queen Saru of Kedah, died in childbirth.

Kingdom of Tarumanegara

(Buddhist Seafaring Open Empire)

King Purnavarnam

Diplomacy: Makaram (A)

Sleepy Tarumanegara was awakened to the world by the actions of far-off Chandra Gupta II and others. Actions by the Malayu on Sumatra to allow more access to Indian agents, and the entry of other parts of that island to the Pallava kingdom alarmed many on Java.

King Purnavarnam ordered the town of Bekasi be enlarged into a real port city. Further, he sent agents to win friends in Makaram, who were also awakened by events in the region. The king and heir also decided that their days of carefree bachelorhood had to end, and each took wives from honorable families.

Malayu Kingdom

(Buddhist Seafaring Open Empire)

King Malangavarnam

Diplomacy: Malayu Kingdom (NT to itself re Sabara City for the Gupta Empire),

The King was quite interested to hear the new message from the faraway Chandra Gupta. Now the messenger urged he join the Empire via the Sabara City Raj Sang Nila Utama (see *Gupta Empire*). So he listened smiled, and said nice things. Sumatra was coming under the influence of foreign powers (see *Pallava*), and Malangavarnam could sense that now was the time to either choose sides or chart a neutral course.

Pyu Kingdom

(Buddhist Civilized Open Empire)

King Kyanzittha

Diplomacy:

The Pyu continued to improve their people, their nation, and their culture.

Japan



Emishi Lords

(Asiatic Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

King Ashitaka

Diplomacy:

Ashitaka considered his next moves, which were few in number. At least peace was at hand.

Yamato Japan

(Shinto Civilized Open Empire)

Nintoku, Kima of Wa

Diplomacy: Kwanto (F)

Victory over the Emishi and a peace with them began to take the taste of month-old rice cakes to Nintoku. The expense of maintaining a large army and wide domains came home to him, and in a late night *sake* session the Kima and his staff came up with a scheme. The essence of the plan was to give the king of Saga Mononobe Jutaro the loyalties of Yamaguchi and Kagoshima (such as they were). Some troops grumbled at lower pay, but few actually deserted.

Prince Ojin overcomes his angst at the loss of his wife to wed Minekawa Takako. Within a year she had given birth to a healthy baby girl. Finally, on a cold grey November morning Soga Tomomochi passed away after a short intense fever while on a mission to woo the Kwanto clans. His devotion so impressed them that they agreed to join the Yamato cause heart and soul.

Rumors from Court:

Nintoku councils Ojin on his campaign planning, temper and possible brutality. "Your complicated plans, with multiple troop movements and command changes, almost cost us your win at Edo." The King continues, "Keep maneuvers simple, and your trained troops will carry the day. Nihon men are good fighters because of your good leadership. You are a mighty warrior, but that is only a part of being King. Try to turn enemies into customers. No one can trade with a desert. To fight hard for victory, but not to dishonor that victory, is wisdom a King needs." Ojin sulked for a short while because the King lectured him on being a better Army leader, and then rebuked his behavior after the Edo victory. He took the lessons to heart about simplicity in maneuver warfare. In Kwanto, there are distractions from military duties and grief. Some

beautiful and grateful Kwanto maidens soothed his hurt over the loss of Nintoku's beloved Happy Flower. After two years commanding the Kwanto Province defenses against the renewed Emishi treat, Ojin marries comely young Minekawa Takako in the fall. The couple has warm winters under the blanket. Ojin believes an heir today keeps a DF away. Jingu's father was intent on marrying her off, and she was not without thoughts of romance. Her hopes were dashed after meeting the Korean prince and the Saga ruler. "They're so ugly." Jingu said. Her dad sighed and replied - "remember when I talked about inner beauty and setting standards too high?" Jingu nodded. Nintoku roared "This time pay attention!" Nintoku began to plan a secret wedding of Jingu and Mononobe Jutaro - the new Southern Mountains leader. Kazu goes on tour on the mainland. He starts in Silla, then moves through other provinces in Korea. His *shakuhachi* (trad. Japanese flute) playing earned him coins in market performances, and invites for private recitals. He likes to think his dashing looks and personality wins him fans, but his fans are excited only by his music. Kazu wanders the Korean area and areas northeast of Korea, looking for a wealthy princess or daughter of a tribal chief to appreciate his charm. He wanders a while looking, still blowing air kisses to himself when he sees his reflection in still ponds. Soon, though, the prince began to miss the mountains and seas of his island home, and set sail for Naniha.

Southern Mountains Clans - A Kingdom of Yamato Japan

(Shinto Barbarian Component Nation)

Mononobe Jutaro, king

Diplomacy:

The newly-minted king considered his realm, and smiled.

Western Europe

Alamanni

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Arbogast, Rex

Diplomacy: Saguntina (EA), Valentia (PT), Astigitanus (F), Baetica (F), Hauptland (HM), Carthago Nova (F)

The warm climate and educated people of his new kingdom pleased Arbogast, and his thoughts turned to his legacy. Thinking such thoughts, and walking with his swordbearer through the market in Corduba, he locked eyes with a dark-eyed woman, a widow by her dress, herding three small children. Bold in all things, he struck up a conversation in his rather vulgar Latin.

By the following spring she had provided him a new son, and was living in his palace. The bishop was of course scandalized, the locals either amused or outraged, and the women of his tribe were livid at the example he set. How are my tall daughters, they thought, with their pale hair and oddly-colored eyes to find worthy husbands here?

At the christening of his new son at the insistence of his mistress - which the bishop refused to perform himself - Arbogast announced that not only would the child have a name, but so would this province. Carthaginensis, an absurd name to Germanic ears, was henceforth to be Hauptland. The people within the church whooped in approval of the name for their new home. What attitude the Latins had was kept to themselves.

While the king enjoyed the pleasures of rule, Prince Otto and Galindus went to work. The first target was neighboring Saguntina, whose people agreed to recognize Arbogast as their king since they had recently left the Roman Empire and were realizing the exposure of their position. They would not provide their full support because Arbogast had as yet to submit to the will of God and accept baptism by the Holy Spirit.

Galindus ate chilled oranges with nobles, but Otto began to surround the landward side of Valentia, which still hewed to the imperial path. But the *praefect* Colloidius, on seeing the numerous fair-haired warriors encamped beyond the unwallled city, set out to negotiate with the Alamanni commanders. Within a week Otto was residing in the city, even though Colloidius was not one to act precipitously.

Astigitanus was not so easy, and the campaigning carried on into the winter of 413, followed by a hearty looting of the province and, in the spring of 414, the settling of the land by more barbarians. The looting did not, however, include more than a few Roman Christian churches, which the warriors held in high regard, even those who held to Wotan and his ilk.

The garrison commander of Carthago Nova refused to parley with Otto, and so the prince sent the messenger away and ordered several trenches dug. Just as mattocks were digging into the soil, a ballistae projectile came soaring from the city walls, landing near the surprised warriors. Near the midpoint (it had slipped) was the round and battered head of the same garrison commander. The gates of the city were thrown open to the Germans, and a wagonload of weapons and armor was lead out.

Newly-free Baetica resisted the Germanic invasion. The defenders were overwhelmed and slaughtered, the province looted and settled as before. The city of Gades, however, would prove quite a different story. It was well-fortified and the local commander was a veteran of the Frigidus and no friend to barbarians. Similarly, the city fathers had no wish to live next to German colonists. They knew that their city was as old or older than distant Roma, and that on the tip of a peninsula theirs was an easily defensible position. A regular siege was thus begun by the Alamanni in the heat of an Iberian August.

The Gades commander, Tertullian, had ordered a channel dug across the peninsula just within archery range of the walls. A clever idea, it nearly lead to disaster as the men guarding this project were attacked and wiped out. After this turn he was happy to let the Germans approach up the long spit of land and suffer under arrows and ballistae shot.

But as the weather cooled the Alamanni warriors began to get restless - and smelled better as well. Their prince was petitioned to press the siege, and by October he had relented. Unknown to them he had been searching for an adequate ram head, and had at last found one sturdy enough to the land walls of Gades. On All Saint's Day of 415 scores of small boats approached the city from the mouth of the nearby river, where they had been hidden in the rushes. Tertullian knew that this was a diversion, of course, but he ordered a few *numeri* of *sagittarii* to make a great show of defending against these boat-borne barbarians.

The garrison commander had meanwhile ordered most of his forces to take positions on the inner wall just inside the land gate. A small show was made of defending this gate, a risk he was willing to take. The Alamannic warriors finally sundered the giant wooden double doors with their metal-tipped tree trunk and surged through. Those following pushed ahead of warriors stalled just inside the walls at the sight of piled stones lined with Roman defenders.

When the space was filled with Germans, Tertullian gave the order. Under the plaza, dozens of ropes were yanked, pulling blocks from under vertical timbers unseen by the enemy. A thousand warriors tumbled into the suddenly sunken ground, some killed or injured on the sharpened stakes set to greet their fall, others wounded in the short fall itself, and the remainder confused and immobilized. A rain of arrows and stone now fell on the bewildered barbarians. Few made it out alive, and few survived to be taken prisoner. Waves of Germans charged the gates in an attempt to rescue their fellow, and hard fighting repulsed each assault.

By nightfall the Alamanni camp was filled with wounded men, the rest silent with fatigue and depression. For their leader, Prince Otto was not to be found in that camp at the base of the peninsula, and most assumed he had been killed in the initial breach of Gades' defenses. But the following day a messenger left the city under a flag of truce and announced that Otto yet lived, protected by his armor and trapped under rubble in the pit trap. The messenger, a haughty local youth in a bright imperial uniform, demanded the barbarians remove themselves from the vicinity within the day. Further, he demanded they send to their king for ransom if they wished to see Otto again.

He then turned on his heel and strode briskly back to the city. It was only then that they noticed that the youth had somehow dropped the seat of his embroidered trousers. A shout went up among the outraged Germans, but only a few arrows were sent his way as cooler heads doused the tempers of most.

So pleased were the citizens with this defense of their home that, despite extremely heavy losses, they chose Tertullian as their *comes* and became allies of the emperor in Mediolanum - whoever that might be. The oppressed and in some cases dispossessed Romans in Baetica were inspired by the severe beating handed to their German colonizers, and revolted widely. The unrest was put down with some difficulty, hundreds more warriors passing from this life.

Kingdom of the Alans - *Civitate Foederatae*

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Component Nation)

Xerxes, Shah

Diplomacy: Castra Regina (EA)

The Alans were happy to receive their old lands in Austria from the Vandals. Prince Arlon wooed the leaders of Castra Regina, but in the end was rebuffed from real friendship because he was not baptized.

Angles and Jutes

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

King Aethelred

Diplomacy:

The Angles were annoyed that the amber trade had fallen off, and considered making up the income by raiding the weakened Empire.

Asding Vandals - *Societas Imperii*

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Godegisel, Rex Vandalorum

Diplomacy:

Despite the entreaties of a Roman emissary, Godegisel decided instead to entertain his Siling Vandal guests (see *Siling Vandals*).

Burgundians

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Gundioc, King of the Burgundians

Diplomacy:

Waiting for the right moment, Gundioc at last struck into Maxima in 416. Campaigning across the river into the teeth of the Roman defensive line proved costly, but in the end the many palisades and forts were overcome and the province subdued.

Less fortunate was young Prince Eric the Bastard's mission to the Alans. Before he even had a chance to chat up the Shah, Eric and his mounted guard were surrounded and captured. He soon charmed his gaolers and has the run of the camp, but is not allowed to leave - not that he is terribly interested in returning home, as these Alans were found to be a lively bunch.



Classical Pagan Oracles

(Classical Pagan Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Hecate, Sibyl

Diplomacy: Sicilia (AB), Syracusae (CH), Amara (CH), Attica (MN), Thessalonica (CH), Korinthos (CH), Dalmatia (AB)

Looking at her map of the Empire, the Sibyl was not pleased. Chaos, destruction, and death spread in all directions. This did not particularly concern her. The source of this, however, was repugnant to all Jovian worshippers - barbarians.

Realizing that force must be met with force, Hecate ordered the raising of guard units for many temples from among the faithful. This call went out as the Bishop of Roma was similarly preaching for a Holy War, so few objections from the official faith were heard. Even an illiterate peasant knew that the Sibyl, while clearly not Christian, stood against barbarism and was therefore to be trusted in this regard. Her much-publicized financial support for the Western Empire helped.

In a further sign of militancy, dozens of priests, oracles, and temple workers were "tested" for loyalty and faithfulness. Some did not survive the ordeal, which in the end was cancelled when it became clear to Hecate that clerics and worshippers were using the effort as a method for executing vendettas.

Travelling to Sicilia (some said it was in order to escape the negative effects of the Faith Test) Hecate found many people eager to attend the refounding of temples in that province. Neapolis was hostile, and the local bishop fulminated against the rebuilding of the temple of Artemis - mainly because he wanted the site for a new church. Returning to Roma, she was disgusted to find the countryside littered with - of all things - Goths (see *Ostrogothic Kingdom*).

High Priestess Lydia proved remarkably successful in overcoming the local Church authorities. Revived temples in Dalmatia, Korinthos, and Thessalonica were mainly due to her efforts - and educational body art. These did not help her, however, when her few galleys were blown off course in the Ionian Sea. A few sacrifices and Neptune blew fair to send them on their way home, much to the rejoicing of the sailors.

Hecate was the rumor among the Christians that she had revived the cult of *Magna Mater* with the *taurobolium* and the creation of a *galli* priesthood. The ceremony occurred a bit too close to Lent for many non-Pagan Romans. A raid on 24 March 414 did not reveal anything of the sort, however.

Eire Kingdom of the Scots - *Societas Imperii*

(Keltic Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

High King Donald I

Diplomacy: Monapia (EA)

It used to be good to be the king, mused Donald the Elder. The singing. The drunken debauchery. The random and instant duels. He sighed and returned his attention to his courtiers, who were pleading the case of the Roman ambassador. The king really missed that slave, the Silurian lad Maewyn. Now there was a boy who could tell a story ...

Donald knew that his courtiers had all taken wives from the Aquitanian slave raid. Despite this, he realized that chaos was brewing in the wider world, and associating with what they called "civilization" had merit. Besides, he could always back out later, right?

Following the thread of "civilization", the king sent his son to Monapia, and as he knew would be the case the local lesser kings agreed to join the realm. Also, Midhe was filled with colonists, who felled many trees and plowed many fields. In a more outrageous move, he established a royal city, Dublin, in Midhe. Just as tongues were wagging that the old king had gone soft and "Roman," both he and his son were presented with infant sons by their wives.

British Roman Empire

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Marcus Traianus Marcellinus, Emperor

Diplomacy:

Noticing that revolts were breaking out all over Britannia, mostly caused by fear of barbarians and fear of the loss of Honorius' authority, the *magister militum per Britannias* decided that he had seen enough. Thus he was not surprised when his chief of centurions, optimates, tribunes, and other staff approached him with the offer of the Imperial purple.

Their rhetoric was convincing. By the time the legions of Britain arrived at Mediolanum, it was agreed that the army of Stilicho and that of Uldin would have beaten each other to a pulp. Neither would be in a condition to truly rule the Empire, and Marcus would march into the palace in triumph.

The citizens of Mercia, Britannia II, Atrebatia, and Venta were less interested in distant politics than in the reestablishment of order. Of course, the idea of locals gaining key influence at the imperial court added to the appeal of Marcus as their emperor. By the time the troops had arrived outside Venta they were allowed into the city by popular acclamation, and the old Legio II Augusta fortress was pleased to have someone to maintain their pay.

Many local merchant ships were just coming out of dry-dock for the summer, and Marcus' officers leaned on their owners - hard. The troops were quickly loaded, and within a week were disembarking at the port of Gesoriacum. Refreshed, the Britano-Roman Army marched through Menapia, Belgica II, and Parisii with no problems. The army wintered from November 414 in Lutetia, a small yet charming city.

The year 415 was spent crossing Lingonia, Maxima, and Alpes. These were joined to Marcus' growing empire, along with the cities of Augustodunum and Sequanorum. By late autumn his army was entering the despoiled province of Liguria, and for the first time the legionaries, equites, and others felt the cold touch of fear of the Hun.

Franks

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Clodius, Rex

Diplomacy: Belgica I (A)

For a barbarian king, Clodius was quite interested in numbers. To be more specific, numbers of *solidii* in his coffers. These were short, so he announced the monthly gifts would be reduced by one in four, leaving many of his warriors a bit confused as to what that meant. When he promised them loot, however, they cheered wildly. Also popular was his blockade of the Rhine to Roman Christian shipping.

"The Conversion of Clodius" translated by Todd Yoho, *One dark and stormy night while in his war tent, Clodius and Merovech were studying dispatches from all of their ministers. They were racking their brains for a way to make ends meet, and planning the next season's movements. Late into the night, a messenger barged in without announcement; always quick to anger Clodius' stare dripped venom. "This had better be important!" The messenger quickly went on to say that the Roman Christian Church had formed an armed body of men to protect their interests. Already not in the mood to hear trivial news that didn't affect him Clodius screamed "This is what you interrupt me for!?! News of a pathetic church army!" The wise beyond his years Merovech studied the messenger and said "Hold father, I believe there is more to his story than just that." The messenger had a thankful look in his eyes when he continued. "The army is to be headed by a man named Renoldus." That was all the man need say, Clodius looked away and Merovech dismissed the man. "When I was a young man I stood on the banks of the Rhine and looked into this mans eyes. I know him; he was a Centurion who served against my father. Now he is in charge of a Church army! We cannot allow this church to hold sway in our lands!" Merovech silently agreed. While the men quietly contemplated the news, a presence was felt by both. They turned to see a man that almost looked female stood in their midst. "Hale Clodius" the man said. "Who are you?" as his anger rose quite quickly. "Follow Me." was the reply. Both men looked to each other quizzically. "You will be the father of a great nation, but you must follow me or all will be lost." "I will ask again, who are you." This time it came out rather weak in comparison to the last time. Both men were starting to feel strangely in awe of the figure before them. "You don't have time to argue Clodius, the time is near to act. I will supply proof if that is what you need." At that the "man" waved his hand in Clodius' direction and before he could protest he fell silent. Merovech stood in shock and stared. "Is he" was all that could escape his throat. The figure replied "Yes my son he is dead" With that he waved his hand again and Clodius sputtered and choked. When his eyes opened, they were filled with terror. "Now do you believe in my power?" asked the figure. Finally Clodius came to his senses and quickly went to his knees to bow to the figure that had done the impossible. "Give me your message master" Mervoech appreciating the situation did the same. "All that I ask is that you follow me and all will be revealed in time." "I will master, I will" but when the men looked up the figure was gone.*

With a renewed vigor, Clodius and Merovech quickly set about revising their plans.

To that end Merovech set about capturing, sacking, and razing all the Roman Christian churches his warriors could find in Belgica I, while his father vented his barbaric fury on the Roman churches and as well the temples to Jupiter, Hermes, and that crowd that could be found in Germania I. Arian Churches (see *Arian Christian Church*) were not only left alone, but provided sites of worship to the Prince of Peace. Many making offerings of silver and prayer were thanking the Living God for their excellent fortune in having a wise king who shared his loot with them.

Clodius then returned home to Lorraine, found a wife, and to celebrate their marriage ordered a general sack of all Roman Church places of worship. The large numbers of peasants who followed the word from Roma were outraged, but most did nothing. By Christmas of 415 thousands of refugees fled into the now-free city of Trier and prayed for deliverance. The king was unconcerned, because at the winter solstice he was given a new son by his new wife, giving a lie to the grey hairs in his beard and his smooth pate.

Meanwhile, Merovech, having abused the local priesthood, sought the allegiance of the leaders of Belgica I. Of course this was hard work, but the offer of marriage into what was clearly the rising regional power tipped the scales and Merovech married Maria, grand-daughter of a *dux* on Easter Sunday of 416.

Frisians

(Arian Church Barbarian Open Empire)

King Jentze Wolfsen

Diplomacy:

The winter of 412 was a cold one. Too cold, sadly, for the widow of Prince Durc, who passed away from a cough though most said it was ennui over her widowhood - she was 23 years old.

After taking a wife (see *Saxon Kingdom*), Jentze announced that his head *thiufand*, Ernst Terpstra, would be Crown Prince and Heir. This measure was met with incredulity among the Saxons, who naturally felt slighted, and among many of the Frisian nobles who objected to the flaunting of tradition in the naming of heirs.

Unrest was to widespread, in fact, that the move across the Rhine was delayed for several years while Jentze and some priests worked to smooth ruffled feathers. The end result was that Ernst remained an army commander, and Jentze agreed to consider a Saxon as his Crown Prince. By February of 416 the Frisians were ready to make their move across the frozen Rhine into Germania II.

Ernst lead his warriors secretly across the river in a night move. They spent the spring assaulting strongpoints all along the coast, and by April Roman resistance had crumbled, though well over a thousand barbarians had been killed in combat. They then set about enslaving the people of Germania II.

This proved to be a mistake. The province was settled with an inordinate number of legionary veterans, and more importantly their sons and daughters. Faced with enslavement to a barbarian horde, the population rose up and formed a *pseudo-comitatensis* of 4000 men, including cavalry and hasty fortifications centered on the manor houses of retired centurions and officers.

The summer of 416 saw extremely heavy fighting, though with few actual combats. Badly outnumbered, the Roman commander Agorius - a devotee of Scipio the Elder - mainly kept his troops out of the field, preferring a war of raid and ambush. Though a few of his strongholds were stormed by Ernst, by the end of the summer the rebels had yet to be put down, and the Frisian had to admit that he was in no position to enslave the citizens of this new conquest. While able to extract some taxes, the warriors would need to remain in order to keep the province in hand.

~~Saxon Kingdom~~ - *Societas Imperii, Frisian Vassals*

(European Pagan Barbarian Component Nation)

Hengist, Rex Saxonum

Diplomacy:

With his daughter pledged in marriage to Jentze, King of the Frisians, Hengist decided it was time to merge the two nations. Therefore at the wedding ceremony, after the fire had been jumped, he made his announcement. In that environment, even doubters cheered heartily. By the following year the bride, Antje, had given birth to a healthy daughter. He was however a part of the turmoil which delayed the crossing of the Rhine, as he valued his *Societas Imperii* as well as his family ties.

Bringing a definite close to an age, Osburga, wife of Wig of Holstein and sister of Hengist, passed away in November of 416 of the flu at the age of 39.

Lombard Kingdom - *Societas Imperii*

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Autharii, Rex Lombardorum

Diplomacy:

The Lombards took their duty to the Empire seriously, marching against the Quadi (see *Quadi Clans*). In other news, Autharii took the opportunity to aggrandize more power into his own hands, to the general approval of the *thiufands* of the kingdom. Finally, a son was born to the king and queen, with yet more rejoicing.

Pictish Tribes

(Keltic Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Talorg Mac Aniel, King of the Cruithni

Diplomacy:

The king gritted his teeth and pounded that wall with his fist. Repeatedly. Hrothgar and his men would not be coming. So be it. Talorg would do what he could with what he had. If Innocent was calling these Christians to battle barbarians, he would be happy to return the favor.

The monastery of Whithorn was attacked by over a thousand horse and foot, sacked, and burned. Many martyrs for the Faith were made that day. This force, lead by the king himself, destroyed the churches in Strathclyde as well. The troops were well-pleased with their share of the loot, and all hailed Talorg as a wise and just ruler. Well, most hailed him.

Quadi Clans - *Vassal of the Hun Empire*

(Arian Christian Barbarian Component Nation)

King Vitalianus

Diplomacy: Pannonia I (PT)

As the Huns had at last declared the siege of Mediolanum ended (see *Empire of the Huns*) King

Vitalianus took his warriors home, as ordered. And they were eager to do so. A combined army of Lombards and Siling Vandals had crossed the Carpathus Mons into Slovakia, the Quadi homeland. Naturally, Vitalianus was glad to be relieved of his duty to Uldin and leave the mess around Mediolanum for Slovakia.

Various delays meant that the host was able to cross the Danube only by the spring of 415. There they found the Lombards in possession of their lands and herds. A few locals were rounded up, and informed Vitalianus that there were nearly twice as many Lombards as Quadi warriors, but that they had no horse.

Marching to **Leugaricio**, a Lombard army finally opposed the 11,000 Quadi warriors a week past Easter. The Lombard leadership was Prince Aistulf and the newly-promoted *thiufadus* Wacho, who arrayed their men across the road in traditional fashion, a line of glinting spiked shield bosses dotting the row of round shields. To left and right swarmed lesser warriors, most with bows or javelins.

The seasoned Quadi warriors lined up similarly, their corps thinned to match the enemy frontage, a few cavalry on the wings and a thousand *contus*-armed horsemen in reserve. These advanced on the Lombards across the newly-planted fields outside the former Roman outpost. Not to be outdone, the Lombards advanced as well, shouting as they came, light troops thrust forward on the flanks like the horns of a bull.

Vitalianus nodded, and his Sarmatian-style cavalry swung out from the rear, across a field, heading for the Lombard archers on the right wing. Unfortunately for them they did not notice the low swale before the archers, who had loosely formed up on the high ground to one side. The bottom of the declivity was still moist, the ground muddy, and the charge of the Quadi horse broke up before it could catch the bowmen. These continued to pour arrows into the cavalry milling about before them. Some *contophoroi* reached the top of the low rise, only to be surrounded and dragged from their saddles.

A column of warriors was detached to aid the cavalry, who were by now falling back. This column was in turn attacked by the nearest Lombard body, armed with spears, axes, and a few swords. A confused melee ensued, and Vitalianus decided to have his army fall back. About a thousand of his men had been lost by the time the force fell back across the Danube, harassed by the mass of Lombard peasant archers all the way. All told both sides had about equal casualties, but these were more telling on the Quadi because of their smaller initial force.

Thus the Quadi decided to fall upon the hapless citizens of Pannonia I, who had so recently agreed to shelter under the Roman parasol. They could only hope the Quadi made as pleasant masters as the Suevi had been. For his part Vitalianus was biding his time - and was not happy to do so. In Slovakia were thousands of clans under the heel of the Lombards, and he promised his warriors a reunion with their families (see *Empire of the Huns*).

After Uldin drove the Lombards from Slovakia, King Vitalianus pledged his eternal loyalty to the Hun cause.



Roman Christian Church

(Roman Christian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Innocent, Bishop of Rome

Diplomacy: Alpes Cottiae (UN), Strathclyde (UN), Valentia (UN), Arretium (CH), Alpes Cottiae (AB), Tolosa (CH), Arvernia (CH), Tarbellia (CH), Edetania (CH), Pannonia I (CH), Carnuntum (AB), Aquincum (CH), Lugdunum (CH), Parisii (CH), Lutetia (CH), Gesoriacum (AB), Connaught (CH), Mumha (CH), Midhe (CH), Gwynned (CH), Britannia I (CH), Lorraine (AB), Westphalia (CH), Swabia (CH)

Many plans were laid by the Church in the present crisis, and clerics were sent far and wide to preach, found, and organize. Unfortunately, the elderly Galen passed away during Lent of 413, his wisdom removed from the upcoming struggle. Also lost was a veteran of the Council of Aquileia, Bassian, Bishop of Lodi.

Scores of local priests and bishops throughout the empire were set to work aiding provincial authorities in maintaining control. This was fairly successful, and staved off a total collapse of imperial influence. But a great number of provinces fell away, though most cities hewed to the message from Mediolanum - or more accurately from Roma. Beyond this, gold and silver from Innocent's fisc were used on behalf of Honorius and his successors (see *Western Roman Empire*).

Taking the next step, Innocent preached this missive during his celebration of Epiphany in 413 AD:

The Holy Father and all religious leaders have been outraged by the murderous actions by the Huns, Ostrogoths and Suevi tribes and their allies against the religious faithful and their holy sites. After fervent prayer and much discussion, the unfortunate decision was reached to call upon all Christian people to take up arms against the wanton agents of Satan. The Holy Father agonized privately at the extreme nature of such a response, but felt that the actions were utterly necessary, as the fate of all Christendom is threatened by the wretched foes. The slaughter was made more unimaginable because the traditions of the church have always instructed her followers to nurture the spirit and leave politics to temporal leaders. The outrageous slaughter of innocents has left the Holy Father with no other choice but to call God's faithful to take up arms and smite the madmen who ride with the agents of apocalypse.

On a parallel track, the Holy Father has instructed his bishops to seek out those among the agents of darkness who may yet hear the call of the Lord, beg His mercy and forgiveness, and receive conversion to the Holy Church of Rome.

The response was enthusiastic, if ultimately futile (see *Holy Empire of Rome*).

Siling Vandals

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Gaiseric, Rex

Diplomacy:

Adventure called to the Silingi, who moved to help the Lombards in Slovakia before moving on to more action along the Roman northern *limes*.

Having secured Slovakia, the Vandals left their Lombard friends and marched into the high lands of Austria. This was liberated and turned over to the Alans, and the army next headed for Bohemia. This land had been abandoned by the Suevi, who had cleverly decamped for the clement Roman province of Venetia. The few people there were quickly subdued, and the administration of the land - such as it was - handed over to the Lombards.

Hunneric, the Prince, marched his cavalry to the gathered horde of Asding Vandals, seeking to join the two peoples. In the spring of 416 he was wed to Thudigunda, a niece of Queen Heletradana. The Asdingi are now quite friendly with the Silingi.

Suevi Kingdom

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

King Agnar

Diplomacy: Bohemia (UN), Pannonia I (UN)

The warriors of the Suevi federation were kept busy these years. Actions by Agnar - always on the defensive - helped decide the fates of the Hun realm and the Western Roman leadership (see *Western Roman Empire*). In the midst of this conflict sons were born to the King and his heir, making up in part for the strife raging across Venetia.

Western Roman Empire

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Marcus Traianus Marcellinus, Augustus

Diplomacy: Pannonia I (C), Flaminia (OC), Germania II (FA), others

The city of Mediolanum was surrounded by a vast barbarian horde. Roman arms had been bested once more, on Roman soil. And the Emperor himself was ordering a great restructuring and migration of citizens to deal with the crisis at hand.

Out in the provinces panic was the order of the day, and *praefecti* and other local officials were hard-pressed to perform the usual functions of taxation, the recruiting of *tirones* for the army, adjudication of disputes and criminal proceedings, and so on. In some places, such as Hippo Regius, nascent anti-imperialist feeling erupted into riots running up and down the narrow streets, yet were suppressed. In others, such as Neapolis, local power brokers decided that their interests demanded provincial independence - unless and until someone arose from the ashes of the present situation to protect them from the Hun and the Goth.

Generally the city folk were less likely than country folk to make a move towards local control. The former were aware of their dependence on trade, both within the empire and with distant places, and were more easily controlled by the *comitatensis* and other garrisons. The latter had become more dependent on local landowners, who often resented taxation and used their farmworkers as ready

auxiliaries to the now-common household troops.

The empire would have collapsed utterly were it not for the Church. The Bishop of Rome, Innocent, knew that his organization was all that remained to provide governance in the far reaches of the empire. Local priests and bishops were urged to aid imperial agents wherever they could, to oppose a fractured empire as they would oppose heresy, and to lend their monks to aid in clerical work of another sort.

Generally this move was a success. In a few places the episcopate was either willingly or forcibly co-opted by the powerful into allowing a province, such as Histria, to go its own way. But generally the word of the Christian priest was respected, aided in some cases by the few openly-practicing Pagan temple priests. These were alarmed at the prospect of the empire's demise, as holy to devotees of Jupiter as to those of the Christ Jesus, though of course for wildly different reasons. This convergence of views led to a minor flourishing of ecumenical feeling.

More important was the letter from the Bishop of Rome read throughout the Empire near the end of January of 413 BCE (see *Roman Christian Church* below). The despair, fear, and dread felt by most citizens from Britannia to Panonnia was provided a positive focus. Thousands travelled by any means possible, in the end by galley or grainship to Aquileia. The leader of the contingent of "crusaders" from Gaul, the hitherto obscure tribune Claudius Dardanus, rose to command of the 15,000 Holy Warriors by dint of negotiation, status, and charm. Which is to say that he convinced the other regional corps leaders to work together and, better yet, under his aegis.

While the Holy Spirit was bringing the imperial army and the citizen army together, a different sort of spirit embued the court huddled in Mediolanum. The impending execution of Flavius Heraclianus for treason weighed heavily on the city; most heavily of course on his wife Pulcheria, torn between loyalty to her brother, Honorius, and her husband. She needed help, and knew whom to approach.

"Like husband like wife, is that it?"

Pulcheria sighed. "That would be easy for you. Turn me in, like a two-for-one deal in the market?" Sarus chuckled. "OK, I'm in. And I have an idea how to make everyone happy ..."

Honorius waited by the postern gate. So far all of his schemes to save Mediolanum were working fairly well. If the Empire lauded him as a savior, that would be a great bonus, but mainly he hoped he would be getting out of the place alive. But, he reflected, if I froze to death out here. Where was Sarus? Ah.

A small group of figures was approaching from out of the pre-dawn fog, Palatina, by their swagger. Good, thought Honorius. Then I can get back to the nice warm palace and that stack of decrees to sign. Hmm, have to settle some disputes between members of the vigintivirate of the city ... Good Lord!

The guardsmen quickly moved to either side of the Emperor, then held him by his arms while another quickly covered his mouth with a cloth. Honorius was bound foot and arm, eyes locked on Sarus' until he was carried down a narrow street under the dim pearly sky. While understandably outraged and terrified, the Emperor was not sure whether the priest walking ahead of the soldiers was an omen of favor or ill fate.

When it was announced some days later that the Emperor had successfully escaped the blockade of the city, an unexpected tumult erupted in the city. The *auxilia* were surrounded in the palace by a huge mob of youths who screamed for the accession of Olympius. As quaestor he had been managing the petty disputes of the capitol for several years, and was well-known among the plebes for his fairness.

But the hapless Olympius was quickly arrested by agents of the army raised to the purple, Heraclianus, and held in the palace. Under torture he implicated Sarus as his accomplice, and Sarus was in turn questioned harshly. He quickly confessed to having conspired to use the mob against Heraclianus, and Olympius was released. Sarus, protesting his innocence, was dragged before the court along with his wife, Galla Placidia. The two made an eloquent argument, but Heraclianus was not convinced and ordered the two executed on the very next noon. Later that night a struggle between Sarus' devotees and the gaolers led to the death of Sarus and the wounding of his wife. She, however, was spirited away in the midst of the confusion, carried off with broken several ribs courtesy of a nasty spill down a staircase.

Only later was it realized that the local *Praetorian praefect*, Jovius, was behind the unrest. He however was not within reach of imperial authorities, in one of the city quarters in open revolt. From a basement apartment Jovius sent messengers seeing to the next phase of his plan. A well-planned riot erupted requiring most of the palace guard to restrain the mob. A score of men garbed for palace duty made their way into the complex, seeking Heraclianus. Pulcheria's own agents told her of the trap planned for her husband, and she holed up in a suite of rooms.

The *auxilia* would only recognize the legitimacy of Flavius Heraclianus and his connections with the Theodosian line, while the plebes rallied behind Jovius, though fear of the Hun and the Legion held their leaders back from declaring him emperor. For a day and a night a standoff ensued, until Pulcheria smuggled herself out of the compound to negotiate with Jovius and his supporters. While not above holding Pulcheria hostage, Jovius knew that the citizens would not stand for such behavior.

After two frantic days that saw a minor looting of imperial treasures and scores of plebes slain in futile assaults on the Palatina, an "arrangement" was reached. Heraclianus would be "Augustus" and Jovius "Caesar," reviving the dual rulership of Diocletian. It remained to be seen whether this scheme would be any more successful than the original.

As if the Fates were not done punishing Honorius, he learned in March of 414 of the death of his wife, Maria, of a stomach ailment. This turned the deposed emperor yet more bitter, and from his ascetics cell somewhere in Africa he smirked and chortled at news of events from Italiae.

Once the siege was lifted in late summer of 414 (see *Empire of the Huns*) a great festival was held - a rather somber affair in reality, as the devastation wrought on the suburbs of Mediolanum was brought into sharper focus. Heraclianus began enforcing imperial rule further abroad but found that revolted regions were quite pleased to be out from under Roman taxation. Lacking substantial military forces - he could call on only a few thousand *auxilia* and an *ala* of equites of various grades - the emperor contented himself with issuing decrees and communicating with loyal provincial leaders.

The Suevi were quietly thanked for keeping Stilicho at bay (see *Holy Empire of Rome*) so well, though of course Heraclianus would scarcely allow himself to be seen lighting a candle for them in his chapel. Clearly, his rule was tenuous, and many hoped for some army to appear to defend the capitol from the Goths and others who had settled in the home lands.

Thus it was with fear and loathing that Heraclianus contemplated the approach of the British legions under Marcus (see *British Roman Empire*). Here was a truly Roman army, unopposed, capable of taking Mediolanum by siege. And in fact this army crossed the Alpine passes as soon as the snow had thinned sufficiently in 416. Despite the efforts of Heraclianus' agents to suppress this news, and to cow those who might plot against him, the general mood in the city was one of happy expectation. Fear of another siege by barbarian or Roman was stronger than any love of the emperor.

Marcus Traianus Marcellinus, Emperor of Rome, rode towards the capitol at the head of a *numerus* of *Sarmatae contrariorum miliaria* having encamped his army some miles away. Rumors of bad water around the city were taken seriously. Marcus was clad in imperial red and had chosen a red draco standard for his guard. His agents within the city had assured him that a bold show with a small force would win the day more effectively than any amount of entrenching.

This proved to be the case. Riding up to the north gate he spied a small group on horseback awaiting him on the road. Marcus' guard commander, Uterius, called for a halt as the emperor sat in the saddle, waiting in the welcome spring sunshine. At last the group from the city walked their horses up, dismounted, and went down on one knee in the thin mud which covered the unmaintained road.

Marcus regarded them a moment, then noted a bundle their leader held under one arm. "You there with the bag," he barked out. "Rise and present me with whatever favor you have." The lancers stiffened, ready for any sign of deception, and several had arrows knocked to their Hun-style bows. Even their horses, comfortable in the chill under their silvery scales, stood at parade attitude. The rather tall and gaunt man stepped up to Marcus and offered him the sack. "Open it," commanded Marcus, and the bearded officer carefully unwrapped the package. A rustle passed through the men of the *numerus* as they recognized the head of Heraclianus from the depictions on some of the more well-struck *denarii* and *miliarenses* they had seen in the markets during their march through Gaul. Marcus only smiled, saying, "That will do, then. That will do."

As a footnote, several in the senatorial classes supported Jovius, and so he was kept on as Caesar. Olympius had his supporters as well, and was restored to an official post. Conditions in Aquitania declined to the point that unrest and general brigandage had driven enough peasants from the land that much of it was fallow, growing shrubs and small trees. Some of these *plebes* had taken to sea as pirates merely to survive, and found it to be a profitable, if dangerous, occupation. Intercepting tin shipments and payments became so efficient that more trade was shifted to the route through the Pillars of Herakles from the route up the Loire valley.

After Marcus' army had passed, the Burgundians crossed the Rhine in 416 and took Maxima. The new emperor sighed, contemplating the multitude of barbarians setting up shop in the empire. At least there was some good news, as a few provinces rejoined the empire of their own volition.

Holy Empire of Rome

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Flavius Stilicho Augustus

Diplomacy: Pannonia II (EA), Sirmium (EA), Histria (EA), Pola (F) Savia (T), Aquincum (EA), Aquileia (F)

News of the chaos in Mediolanum reached Stilicho with his orders from Honorius. These seemed to him irrelevant given the changed circumstance. The imperial prince then considered that his family was with him behind the walls of Aquileia, and that he now had as good a claim to the title *Augustus* as anyone. No, his claim was superior, and he would press it.

There was the issue of the thousands of Germans settled in Venetia, reinforced by a very large Hun army under their Prince Ruas, a canny leader. While wondering at his next move, the first boatload of crusaders disembarked at the port. Stilicho had of course received the call to Holy War from Innocent, and had dutifully passed this on to his officers. Besieged in Aquileia by the very target of the war, they needed no prodding to greater effort.

By the middle of the summer, over ten thousand troops in varying states of organization, arms, and attitude were squeezed into the port city. Every night the cathedral was packed with a mob of leaders of the various contingents, arguing, laughing, and generally attempting to sort out their roles. Rapidly rising to the top of the pack was Firmicus Mavortius, a charismatic Gallo-Roman from Massilia. He was chosen to lead negotiations with Stilicho.

As presented by Firmicus, the makeshift Holy Army would be attacking the Suevi and Huns before the month was out. Stilicho and his army was invited to come along. Naturally, the putative Emperor was furious, arguing that the enemy had reportedly fortified their new villages throughout Venetia, probably still outnumbered them, and that in any case Stilicho would be in charge of any operations.

Firmicus waited patiently. At last, when the barbarian fury in Stilicho's voice had stilled, he said, "As I said, we will be attacking. With your men our total force would be doubled. With the favor of God we will then prevail." With that the newly-minted *magister militum* left Stilicho's newly-minted court.

Stilicho did not sleep that night. While he could sit here in Aquileia for a very long time, he knew that the machinations in Mediolanum, and the movement of the legions Britannia meant that in order to press his claim it was essential for some action to take place soon. But though marching out with the Holy Warriors would nearly double the size of his army, he knew that would only match the size of the barbarian host. Attacking a defending enemy without having any real advantage was not likely to turn out well.

By dawn he had decided both that he needed sleep and that joining with Firmicus' forces was the only way forward.

Thus it was that on July 5 of 413 CE the federated army marched out from Aquileia, legionary standards seen in the same mob as banners bearing various Christian symbols - fish, anchors, and so on. Deploying before the city, the army did not move for three days, during which no enemy showed. Firmicus then demanded they find the enemy and exterminate him, and Stilicho reluctantly acceded.

The host marched up to **Concordia** intent on taking the place despite its Suevi palisade and garrison. The emperor rapidly assented to Firmicus' management of this engagement. Two weeks of assaults did not produce results, despite the vast mismatch in size between the defending German force and the crusader mass. The city itself had fallen fairly early on, but a citadel was yet strongly held by the Suevi. Stilicho had not been idle, sending out reinforced foraging and scouting parties. By the end of the fortnight he was beginning to worry - none of these had returned.

At dawn the next day, a centurion of *auxilia* reported that a large number of enemy had been sighted beyond a canal about five miles away. News of this spread through the army, and Firmicus' men as a body began to march in that direction. Stilicho sent couriers to order a halt, but to no avail. Sighing, he left a small holding force with the baggage in Concordia and followed the crusaders.

By early evening the canal had been reached. Firmicus managed to convince his staff to order a halt at the water's edge - he was fired with holy zeal, but he was not a fool to cross in the face of the enemy. Some thousands of what appeared to be Suevi stood in line of battle about a half mile from the canal.

The two armies faced each other for nearly an hour before a shout arose from the Roman rear rankers. They had spotted a troop of *equites sagitarii* racing for them down a low hill. A few minutes later, a line of Hun light horse stretching across the horizon appeared in hot pursuit. Stilicho swore and ordered his cavalry reserve to turn about to face this new threat, and more of his own horse archers to attempt to skirmish with the Huns, to slow them down. With his back to a canal and his rear exposed to enemy horse archers, he was not feeling optimistic. Consulting a map, he realized that crossing the

canal would provide them the quickest route back to Aquileia - them being his Roman regulars, to whom he owed everything.

As the sun sank in the west, he ordered his large engineer legion and a mounted guard to head downstream a bit and to dig a tributary of this canal perpendicular to it, and fast. By the time night had fallen that flank of the army was covered by a screen of infantry behind a small moat. This helped preserve some of the army from periodic probes by Suevi youths with javelins and swords from across the canal, and more seriously from Hun parties. Near midnight a major attack by Hun heavy cavalry just at moonrise slew hundreds of crusaders, but were beaten back.

Again, Stilicho was busy. Thousands of his infantry managed to float or swim down the canal, which was lowered by the summer heat. The engineers also created a ford across the canal for later use, essentially under the noses of the Suevi who as Germans were notoriously poor at posting vedettes. At sunrise the Huns attacked down the slope, the Suevi, lead by Prince Korga, charged for the canal. At this moment Stilicho sent his horse across the canal at the ford, causing the Gunther the Burgundian to hold back his Alan and Hun mercenaries to guard that flank. But rather than attacking, the Roman *equites*, many with infantry riding double, took off south at a rapid rate. Gunther, recovering from his surprise, gave chase but was unable to catch them. This gap in the Suevi line allowed more Roman infantry columns to cross and attempt to escape.

Prince Ruas had, meanwhile, ordered his 5000 Gothic heavy cavalry to charge the front of the Firmicus' troops on the other flank. Some units held, but many fled or dissolved into chaos at the prospect of contact with the enemy, and a vast melee followed. Hun nobles with lance and bow then attacked in support, supported by veteran horse archers.

In a nutshell, it was a vast slaughter. Nearly all the crusaders were shot down or run through, and thousands of Holy Empire of Rome regulars were killed as well. Allobichus, *magister officiorum*, had retired to the train in Concordia and held out for some days before a German warband finally hacked its way in. Firmicus Mavortius died in the front ranks to a Gothic lance, and Fulvius Thalassius, *dux Dalmatia*, died a heroic death in combat with Hrothgar the German mercenary commander.

Stilicho made it back to Aquileia with a sizable fraction of his army and not a few of the crusaders, less than half its original size. Back in Liguria the scene was less promising for the barbarian cause. Huns, Goths, and Germans were all anxious to put an end to this siege of Mediolanum and get on with the looting and pillaging (see *Empire of the Huns*).

By the late summer of 414 reports began to arrive from his agents in Venetia that Prince Ruas was taking his powerful Hunnic force south to molest the rest of Italiae. Stilicho suspected a trap, and waited within the walls. After the narrow escape from Concordia, few of his subordinates were willing to gainsay his caution in dealing with the barbarians. Instead, he spent the Fall touring Histria, Pola, Savia, Aquincum, Pannonia II, and Sirmium seeking support from the locals.

This proved both successful and wise, as the Quadi were operating in the area just then (see *Quadi Clans*). So as soon as the weather had improved in 415, the army of the Holy Empire of Rome marched forth from Aquileia to take the battle to the Suevi, to liberate the Empire, and incidentally put Stilicho in Mediolanum before Marcus arrived with his legions of Britannia.

Unfortunately for Stilicho, the Suevi king Agnar returned to Venetia from the lines around Mediolanum with over 5000 veteran warriors just after the Hun Prince Ruas left the province. Agnar learned of the impending Roman attack, and placed Hrothgar the Sell-Sword in charge of his armies. The Roman commander, however, had no intention of repeating the disaster at Concordia. His plan was to raid, to probe, a war of surprises, feints, and rapid assaults.

Thus all Venetia was a battlefield as each army broke into smaller forces for what was one step above guerrilla warfare. The Germans could rely on their settled clans for support, while the oppressed Roman peasantry usually supported Stilicho. By summer it was clear that neither side had the upper hand. A raid by a body of Alan mercenaries on the Holy Empire main camp on June 29 gave Stilicho a nasty arrow wound in the thigh, and his army slowly withdrew back into Aquileia.

Little had been gained in the Roman adventure, though the campaigning by Stilicho was certainly brilliant. Losses had been heavy, and all he had to show was a captured Suevi *thiufand*. "Great," thought the new emperor, "another one for my collection of barbarian nobles." For indeed he was holding in Aquileia the heirs to the Ostrogothic and Quadi thrones, plus this new Suevi leader.

Ostrogothic Kingdom

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

King Ardabur

Diplomacy: Taifali (UN), Tuscia (F), Latium (F)

Ariaric II called up all the men and boys he could see for duty around Mediolanum. Later, the tribes headed south (see *Empire of the Huns*) without the Taifali to find a new home.

Dalmatia - *Civitate Foederatae*

(Roman Christian Civilized Component Nation)

Polyanthus, Dux Dalmatia

Diplomacy:

The death of Fulvius Thalassius plunged the still-loyal provinces into chaos. Polyanthus returned from Aquileia apparently covered in glory and rapidly repaired the situation.

Kingdom of Roman Damnonia

(Classical Pagan Civilized Open Empire)

Volusian, Dux Damnonia

Diplomacy:

As the empire disintegrated, Volusian saw his chance for real power and declared an independent duchy. The Silurian provinces revolted immediately but were suppressed by the powerful garrisons. Further strife was on the way when a few hundred armed citizens demanded the legion respond to the call of the Bishop of Rome to Holy War. Volusian was well-known to be a follower of the Old Gods, and had no intention of removing his protection from Britain. After making sacrifices to Minerva and Mars, he lead his men into the streets of Isca and arrested the would-be crusaders.

This did not go smoothly. After a running battle over several days, however, the holy warriors were all either driven off, slain, or enslaved. The port city suffered only partial burning and looting.

Kingdom of Roman Gallaecia

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Carpus, Rex Gallaecia

Diplomacy:

Carpus returned home to visit the families of his dead troops - a big job given that all were lost at the Battle of Concordia (see *Western Roman Empire*). In revolt from the government in Mediolanum, the *dux* now felt rather unprotected in the dangerous new world. Crusading commander Paulus stayed in Aquileia.

Gallic Kingdom of Lemovicia

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Appolonius, Rex Lemovicia

Diplomacy:

His army lost, Appolonius returned to Gaul. The leader of the Lemovicia holy warriors, Memmius Cella, decided to stick it out in Aquileia, eager for another chance for Eternal Glory. Worried at the progress of barbarians everywhere, Appolonius decided to declare his little realm a kingdom, and saw to its defense as best he could.

~~Sardinia et Corsica~~ - *Civitate Foederatae*

(Roman Christian Civilized Component Nation)

Hector, Dux Sardinia et Corsica

Diplomacy:

The *Civitate Foederatae* dissolved into factions too numerous to mention. Hector was wounded in a riot and retired to his estate with a small private militia - one of many.

North Africa

Berber Kingdom of Tingitania

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Flavius Juba, Rex Tingitaniae

Diplomacy: Tingitania (HM), Zirid (FA), Maghrib (C)

Juba and the local *praefectus* reached an arrangement, and the *comes Tingitaniae* declared himself *rex Tingitaniae*. The citizens of Zirid, so recently having decided to remain on the Mediterranean rather than join the mad sub-Saharan adventure of the Moors, did agree that joining the remaining local power would be "prudent at this time." The tribes of Maghrib agreed to let Juba add "Lord of Maghrib" to his titles and not worry about their smacking him for it. The cities were generally unimpressed with Juba, and pleased to be rid of Roman tax collectors.

Donatist Christian Church

(Donatist Christian Church Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Archbishop Emeritus

Diplomacy:

The authority of the Emeritus continued to erode. This of course only made the faithful more zealous.

Moorish Kingdom

(African Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Sheik Abdul Al-Kasurga, Son of the Sirocco, Pathfinder of the Tribes

Diplomacy: Jenne (F), Jenne-Jeno (F), Ghana (AW), Adawara (UN)

The hooves of the Moorish cavalry flashed in the late morning sun. Ahead were the warriors of Jenne, outnumbered and outclassed but brave nonetheless. Their valor, however, was for naught. As those horses closed on the fewer than 3000 defenders, who had anchored their line on a small mud-walled town, the Jenne cavalry fled the field, the infantry swarmed and slaughtered, and the cause lost. By sunset only 41 Berbers had been lost.

In the next months Jenne-Jeno was also taken with little trouble (to the Moors), and any locals there and in Jenne who could be caught were captured were enslaved and marched off to tend fields and build aqueducts on land once theirs. The vacant farms, towns, and city were settled by Berbers. Fleeing locals taxed the resources of Adawara and Ghana. The king of Ghana was outraged at their treatment and vowed to avenge them, but the lords of Adawara were more circumspect, feeding the refugees but otherwise taking note that the "Roman Demons," as the Moors had become known, were so far undefeated.

Taifali Tribes

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

King Vallia

Diplomacy: Flaminia (F)

Eventually the sheer boredom of the Siege of Mediolanum was too much for these free-wheeling Goths (see *Empire of the Huns*).

Kingdom of the Red Huns

(Asiatic Roman Christian Nomadic Open Empire)

Octar, King

Diplomacy: Samnium (PT), Campania (P), Neapolis (FA)

Octar lead his clans and affiliated Sarmaticized Goths south (see *Empire of the Huns*. While his original plan was to flee to Roma in order to protect the Church and to be secure from Uldin's wrath, he had to contend with the expectations of his men. Thus the plan was altered to one of punishment of regions rebelling from the Roman Empire, which conveniently took him far from the other Huns.

But life had changed for Octar. The words of that Roman agent, Zenobius, had changed his attitude perceptibly. Encouraging his family to join him, Octar had submitted to baptism in secret on All Saint's Eve of 412 CE. One by one his brothers and sister joined with him. The work of the Holy Spirit and/or enlightened self-interest took the family to the conclusion that support for Uldin was not the correct path. The call of Innocent for Holy War solidified his belief.

Zenobius, however, had one more act to perform in his own play to bring the Word to the new king. For Octar was on close to despair when his younger brother Modares was felled by a runaway ox-cart in the street of some nameless Latin town. The Hun watched helplessly as his sibling bled out his life in the dust. Zenobius knelt, prayed, and the man rose from the ground. All hailed this miraculous recovery and Octar was sold.

He was however still a Hun. Moving his small yet potent army south into Italiae was aimed at keeping his still-pagan army happy. And of course Octar was not yet above a bit of looting himself ...

Before the local Hun administration - in a state of chaos just then - could warn Aemilia, the army of Octar pushed down the Roman road into Flaminia. There, attended to by the Bishop of Ravenna, the army was consecrated as a Holy Army, and took the name "Red Huns" for the Blood of Christ. Naturally, the warriors gathered cheered the name, interpreting it as the blood of their enemies. Octar, crowned their King by that Bishop, was not about to disabuse them of that notion.

In the rebellious province of Samnium news of the approach of the Huns was not received so well. Their magnates shut themselves up in the cities and manor houses and feared the worst. After a few of these had been sacked, a party of leading citizens - *praefecti* and similar - approached Octar. A vast amount of gold, silver, and jewelry was to be turned over in exchange for their acquiescence to his

rule. The new king smiled broadly at this, and gave half the loot to his men.

Crossing the Appenines into Campania the Huns faced a different reception. A local army arose as they approached Neapolis - and was easily swept away, fleeing militia hunted down by efficient horse archers until only a few remained to tell the tale. Here a real looting took place, though holy places were made off-limits by Octar and his brother Prince Modares. Within a week the city of Neapolis was in sight.

While lacking the impressive walls of Mediolanum or Ravenna, it was nonetheless a well-defended port city. Octar sighed, then sent for a priest to act as negotiator and interpreter. Turpilio had "retired" here and was leading the alert and attentive garrison. Billeted in the surrounding towns, the Red Huns found the local food to be quite nice and the people pleasant though wary. Turpilio, who had taken the title *comes Neapoli* with his limited literacy, by spring of 414 had agreed to accept Octar as king. As a condition of the alliance, the Hun forces were baptized, though of course most had little understanding of what this meant. Yet more obscure was Turpilio styling himself *comes Scythicus*.

Gepids - *Brothers of the Ostrogoths*

(European Pagan Barbarian Component Nation)

King Hellebich, Chief of the Gepids

Diplomacy: Alpes Cottiae (F)

After the end of the siege of Mediolanum, Hellebich lead his people across the mountains to the promised land of Alpes Cottiae. The warriors and families settled here among the depopulated farms and fertile coasts, some learning new fishing skills.

Eastern Europe

Arian Christian Church

(Arian Christian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Vandalarius, Pontifex ipseque Primas Gothicus et Germanicus

Diplomacy: Moesia II (CH)

The Frankish king, Clodius, submitted to the authority of the Church and was baptized on Easter Sunday of 413 by Bishop Cethegus. Few objected to the conversion of the Frankish nation. Cethegus passed on at the age of 59 in 416 after falling on some steps wet with spring rain and fracturing his hip.

Empire of the Huns

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Uldin the Hun, Khakhan

Diplomacy: Quadi Clans (F), Abasgia (UN), Iberia (UN), Khazar (UN), Taman (UN), Panticipaeum (UN), Levedia (UN), Polovotsy (UN), Atelzuko (UN), Carpathia (UN)

The sounds of shouting awoke the Khakhan. A seasoned conspirer and hunter, he knew instantly that his best move was to grab his clothing and weapons. He rushed out of the tent trailed by two very large Turks, face lit by flames from several tents. A lesser khan approached, and Uldin learned that a raid from Mediolanum had burned nearly all the pay records and, more important, killed fifteen scribes who had understood the details of those records and the administration of a far-flung empire.

The scale of the disaster was only apparent the following day. Without these experts and records, imperial governance collapsed. Nobody knew just whom to assign to what task, and when, and who the Hun agents were in the distant provinces.

Thus it was that as the Western Roman Empire was bursting at the seams, so too was that of the Huns. The various mercenaries remained with Uldin in his camp, but that was to be expected. Above the Caucasus Abasgia, Iberia, and Khazar fell away. Taman and its city, plus Levedia and Polovotsy on the Maeotian Sea slaughtered their Hun officials, or as was more usually the case simply ignored them, though the key region of Patzinak stayed loyal - or frightened. Atelzuko no longer obeyed Uldin. Carpathia revolted, but the subject Slavs and others were still too intimidated by the ferocity of the Hun to dare leave the empire.

Distressing as these developments were, there were positive developments. Uldin took great pleasure in ransoming back to their families nearly two thousand captives taken in the ransacking of the Po river valley. But these were small, if numerous, joys. More sorrows were to come.

The morning of February 14 was crisp and clear, unlike the mind of the Khakhan. A late night of Roman wine and Roman women had left his mind a dim fog and his breath liable to act as a weapon in its own right. So it was with dazed shock that he heard from his Ilkhan that thousands of Huns from those clans loyal to Octar had left the army two days earlier (it had been quite a party) and was heading south. Rumor had it that Octar was fed up with waiting outside the city and was heading south to loot and pillage.

Uldin was not fooled by this talk. He knew Octar to be a sober (more so than the Khakhan ...) and reflective man, unusual traits in a Mongol. The Khakhan had trusted Octar, and knew that just the prospect of a bit of fun was not enough to cause him to betray his *anda*. Further, there was the clue that he had left the mercenaries under his command behind, with orders to join up with Prince Balimber. He sighed and realized that he would need to wait for more news (see *Red Huns*) from that front. The loss of most of the Hun administrative apparatus meant that he had to give most of the orders himself, and Uldin dared not leave the siege of the Roman capitol to those lack-wit Goths in order to punish Octar.

In the following month the weather turned miserable. Rain, wet snow, and consistently cloudy weather dispirited the troops but did not break their morale. More wearing were the continuing rumors that Octar was having great fun in the warm and willing south, while they were stuck in these fetid camps. Then there were other rumors that they had turned Christian and were marching to defend Roma on behalf of Innocent, others about demonic possession, and so on. The fact that the few citizens of Mediolanum who had been captured looked exceedingly well-fed did not augur well in the eyes of Goth and Hun alike.

As the weather warmed, the health of the army seemed to decline. Then a few men died. Idle talk about Octar turned to animated discussions featuring words like "curse," "plague," "demon," and the like. A few more deaths featuring symptoms of blindness, pain, hallucinations, and a variety of horrible sufferings began to raise panic among the warriors. Within a week the besiegers were in chaos, effectively ending the cordon of the city. Thousands of warriors were laid up with fevers, diarrhea, and other unsavory ailments. Fear of contagion caused many chieftains to move their men away from the encampments of diseased troops.

By October this was all too much for the Taifali, whose King Vallia decided to declare victory - was not Honorius reportedly dead? - and march to their next task as per orders. More or less ...

The Via Aemilia was clear as the Taifali marched on Verona. Vallia was disappointed to see a set of recently-constructed defenses at the city gates, and his advisors suggested they move along. Entering Flaminia they found it lightly defended, and with some wisdom decided to settle there, not looting but rather farming and ranching.

The loss of the Taifali was balanced by the great victory at Concordia (see *Western Roman Empire*), and this helped to cheer Uldin as he spent the winter trying to get his army back to the lines of circumvallation about Mediolanum, and to convince Gothic, Hun, and German troops to reoccupy their camps of the year previous. However every time one warband would move back illness would strike within days and they would be obliged to pull back.

The spring of 414 saw Uldin attempting to isolate Mediolanum with a thin circle of camps over twelve miles from the city. While this did not really constitute a full blockade, it did prevent substantial supplies getting in, and communications were effectively disrupted with the rest of the Roman provinces. But by the end of the summer it was clear that the rest of the Hun staff would no longer stand for this waiting in Liguria. Uldin was forced to accede to their demands, and on August 16 of 414 held a conclave of the khans, kings, and thiufans, at which he announced that he declared the Siege of Mediolanum to be at an end, and turned them loose immediately on Liguria.

This move was wildly popular, and Liguria was the body on which the barbarian host vented nearly two years of frustration and anger. So violent was the pillaging that thousands of refugees filtered in to Mediolanum with stories of flight, horror, and atrocity.

The barbarian host divided. The Khakhan and his heir moved across the Appenines into Alpes Cottiae, closely followed by Ariaric II, the Ostrogothic king, and his ally Hellebich, Chief of the Gepids. Prince Ruas headed down the coast from Venetia into Flaminia.

For his part, Uldin lead a large force down the road to Dertona, which was sacked and burned, and once across the mountain passes in the spring of 415 spread out to loot the Mediterranean littoral. Roman Christian churches were shown no particular attention - they were taken with the rest. Thousands fled to relative safety behind the walls of Genua, which was hard-pressed to feed all the new citizens. Some of those who did not escape, most especially the various magnates and *equites* with lands, were taken along by Uldin. A minor revolt was quashed within the month, and elderly Huns were set up in villages to collect taxes and regulate affairs.

As this was taking place, the Ostrogothic host entered Alpes Cottiae with a rather different agenda. After allowing their families to rest a bit on the shore, Ariaric moved his warriors with Uldin along the coast towards Tuscia. And suddenly he pulled up his horse, clutched his chest, jerked, fell from the saddle and rolled down the slope and off one of the famously high cliffs into the sea. A dozen men lost their lives trying to recover the body, but only a few scraps of Ariaric's clothing could be found on the rocks far below.

Within a week the *thiufand* Ardabur claimed the throne for himself, and pressed his case to all within earshot. For Ariaric, while a great leader, had left his brother and heir Athanaric in Aquileia, and Athanaric's young wife Tamora, the Taifali princess, remained with the army, childless. Eriulf remained loyal to Athanaric, and challenged Ardabur to combat.

The feud between the two leaders and their entourages was short - Ardabur and his men charge immediately, *contos* levelled, and either killed or disabled the dozen or so men on the opposite side of the field within minutes. The following day Tamara was found dead of a stab wound through the heart. While some were outraged, and many murmured, Ardabur was acclaimed as king on April 1, 415. He named two of his clan as his lieutenants, and announced that the tribes would continue on with their

plan to settle in Tuscia and Latium, which they did behind the wave of a Hunnic advance.

Meanwhile on the Adriatic coast, Prince Ruas and his horde left Venetia for Flaminia. There he spent most of 415 meeting with the Taifalis, attempting to convince them to rejoin the Hunnic federation. But by time the winds off the sea turned cold he could see that a more long-term effort would be needed. It was while deciding whether to proceed down the coast into the lands of the Red Huns that the prince received a courier from the Quadi, requesting aid from their Hun masters in evicting the Lombard army from Slovakia and to liberate their families. News had also come of a new challenge, a horde from the east called the Juan-Juan arriving in imperial lands on the Black Sea.

Thus it was that Prince Ruas' force and that of Khakhan Uldin turned about and headed north in the spring of 416. Moving through Aemilia and Venetia, this large force met the Quadi licking their wounds in Pannonia I. King Vitalianus was exceedingly pleased to meet the Hun leadership, and after a short feast in their honor marched with them across the frontier and into Slovakia.

Defending Lombards were first incredulous, then angry, then terrified at the prospect of facing the entire Hun army. Crown Prince Aistulf managed to convince his tactical aid Wacho that, no, we can't take these guys. It did not take many words to get the Lombard warbands to immediately flee for the safety of the Vandal frontier. The fighting retreat of Germanic infantry against tens of thousands of horse archers and mercenaries was a pathetic coda in the history of the world.

In the end, only a few men survived the onslaught of the Huns to tell the tale, and the Lombard army essentially ceased to exist. From Slovakia, Uldin collected reports from the east and pondered his next move.

Orthodox Christian Church

(Orthodox Christian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Patriarch John Chrysostom

Diplomacy:

Gregory of Antioch was killed when a small earthquake collapsed the small mud brick hermit hut in which he was passing the Lenten season.

Rugian Tribes - *Brothers of the Asding Vandals*

(Arian Christian Barbarian Component Nation)

King Nevitta

Diplomacy:

The Rugians, while thankful to not be under the trampling hoof of the Hun, were nonetheless a bit miffed at missing the adventure in Italiae.

Slavic Tribes - *Tributaries of the Huns*

(Slavic Pagan Barbarian Component Nation)

King Bole

Diplomacy:

The Slavs kept their heads down and made sure the payments to their Hun overlords were never tardy.



Eastern Roman Empire

(Orthodox Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Arcadius, Imperator

Diplomacy: Edessa (A), Attica (F), Faiyum (A)

The trouble began when Gratian Augustulus, the son of Arcadius and Aelia Eudoxia, caught a fever. Within days he was coughing up blood and was susceptible to the slightest wound. The six-year-old turned pale, complained of pain constantly, and his belly began to swell. By November of 412 he was in horrible condition, dying on the 17th.

Citizens in Constantinople immediately went into mourning. Some few took measures such as self-flagellation, wearing masks of emperors as derived from pagan practice, and women covering their faces and hair. At court, suspicion of poison was in the air, though doctors announced the little boy had died of natural causes. Others blamed a curse on the family for taking in the Visigoths. Still more in the senatorial and knightly classes saw the inaction of Arcadius to help the Western Empire and wondered what malady afflicted the imperial administration.

Talk of poison was most prevalent among various factions among the lower classes, who always assumed the worst about their betters. Taking advantage of this were several courtiers who were under investigation for corruption. Thus when these were rounded up in the morning of 15 March 413 CE, the evening saw rioting centered on the quarter which had been occupied by the Goths before their massacre in 400 CE.

The militia responded, as well as some units of *scolae* and *auxilia palatina*, to put down the mob. The following days saw running street battles, neighborhood blockades, and a decay in law and order generally. On 18 March a fire began in a tannery and spread quickly. Before it was doused - or more properly speaking was smothered in a late heavy snowfall - hundreds of people had died and many buildings were destroyed. Many citizens were arrested and executed, and the blaze of popular anger died with them.

To keep these ingrates well-fed enough, grain was imported from Sudan, and arrangements were made with the Monophysite clergy to use the produce of fields which had been donated to them.

Athaulf, the *magister officiorum* and King of the Visigoths, was placed in command of many new *alae* of cataphractoï and told to march them to Bishop Eutropius Cypriotis. When these arrived by the early autumn of 413, the bishop showed Athaulf orders to turn over command of all his heavy horse *and* re-equipped Gothic legionaries and engineers to Eutropius. The leader of the Visigoths was livid and left immediately for his camp. For the rest of the week Athaulf sent away all emissaries from the bishop. Finally, he ordered his non-Gothic cataphracts to march to Eutropius and join his command, with his "compliments." In the end, the bishop backed down and allowed the *magister officiorum* to retain his position over what had become after a fashion his *boukellarioi*.

Middle East

Ghassanid Arab Kingdom

(Monophysite Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

King John the Fair, Theodotos

Diplomacy: Bostra (T)

Never one to enjoy sitting down with a cozy stack of reports to read and documents to sign, John turned downright taciturn when his wife Serena was rendered bedridden after a failed childbirth in 415. None were surprised when she expired at the age of 27 on Christmas Day of the same year after the king returned from a mission to Bostra. Heartbroken, he took to living in a small hut in the desert above the city. After a year of this he returned to court. His courtiers were relieved at the prospect of avoiding a long climb in order to set before their king seals, paper, and wax.

Kingdom of Yemen

(Judaism Civilized Open Empire)

King Ishmael ibn Yahsub

Diplomacy: Socotra (FA), Madina (UN)

The king was not happy. His realm had expanded, which was pleasing. Yet he had too few scribes to record palm orchards, spice fields, and other taxable resources. Socotra declined to send its fleet out on a permanent basis. And the death of the Madina sharif lead to that region abandoning Yemen altogether.

Lakhmid Arab Kingdom

(Monophysite Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Sheikh Amr al-Qays

Diplomacy:

The Crown Prince, Imru al-Qays, was apparently a busy man. Over these years his wife spent more time "great with child" than not. The sound of little feet rose from a pitter-patter to a thunderous din.

Monophysite Christian Church

(Monophysite Christian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Patriarch Luke

Diplomacy: Faiyum (CA), Coele Syria (MN), Rhodes (CH), Psidia (CH), Bostra (CH), Meshan (CH), Sawad (CH)

After substantial wrangling, and over the strenuous objections of John Chrysostom, Arcadius named Grandmaster Parthimus the *Praefectatus of Alexandria*. This means that he is in large part responsible for keeping the peace in the fractious city tied at least as much to India and Britain as to Constantinople. To back him up hundreds of men were enlisted and drilled in the Roman fashion.

Further success was found in arid Madina, where scores of missionaries scoured the land searching for the unsaved. Their attitude and dress meant the pairs of men in white robes carrying bibles were well-received and proved effective. Persarmenia and Axum received the benefits of Church largesse.

On the other hand, the attempt to found a cathedral in Lydia by Bishop Bertimus sank into a mire of local politics and theological disputes with remnant Pelagians. Dorian in far Khirghiz had his run of luck come to an end when the nomad princes tired of his preaching. A minor khan and his clan grabbed him one midnight and tied him to a post in the middle of the steppe. Left for days, he began to have visions, one of which was of an angel with a sword cutting him free. This turned out to be a minor khanum whom he had baptized. She and her clan had tracked him down and freed him, though his wounds were severe.

Patriarch Theophylact was dining with some nobles at the celebration of the consecration of a new Cathedral in Faiyum. The feast had been blessed and the leader of millions of faithful was wolfing down his cooked fish when he suddenly went rigid, his face turned color, and he collapsed. Before anything could be done to help him he had expired due to a fish bone caught in his throat. A younger man might have survived, but at 52 he was already considered "wizened" to his people.

After a short conclave in Alexandria, Theophylact's favorite, Luke, was anointed as the new Patriarch.

East Africa

Axumite Empire

(Monophysite Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Emperor Tewodros Ella Asgad

Diplomacy: Avalites (EA)

Prince Menelik was not happy he had attended this particular baptism. In most cases he was happy to see to these ceremonial duties. The anointed in this case, however, was the woman to whom he would be wed within the week. The Christian name she took was Elizabeth, which was nice enough, except that during the sacrament he and the remainder of the congregation had the opportunity of meeting the Blemmye princess for the first time.

When asked later whether his future wife pleased him, all Menelik could say was that "she smiled enthusiastically." The prince sighed and considered that the pomp and power sometimes came with a price.

The emperor at least was pleased with the match. Later developments (see *Nobades Kingdom*) would seem to have rendered any political advantages moot, but Tewodros took a look view, and smiled at news from the north. King Satifal was now family, and so was kept as a well-treated prisoner, though many wondered aloud at just what message was sent in this by the Nobades. Some considered it a mark of their superiority, others a sign of peaceful intentions.

More obviously pleasing were reports of great success by missionaries to Djibuti, though increasing Indian influence to the south were a cause for a few late night discussions with his courtiers. To counter this development, ties with the trade city of Avalites were strengthened.

Blemmye Tribes

(African Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

King Satifal "the Great"

Diplomacy:

The death of royal heir Balan in late 412 was not a good omen for the coming year. His son Ephisal became the heir, but to what became the question (see *Nobades Kingdom*).

Nobades Kingdom

(African Pagan Civilized Open Empire)

King Phillipus Silko, Basileus

Diplomacy: Kasu (EA)

In a bid to help out the Eastern Romans and build friendly relations a large number of camels laden with grain headed north. More changes including the rise of a literate nobility in the kingdom kept life in the realm interesting.

Not interesting enough for Movad, however. A large force under the Crown Prince, Phillipus Silko, and General Dunkas entered Beja unopposed in 413 and reached the Red Sea coast by February. Disgusted at the lack of defense of his realm, the Beja king switched his fealty to Movad, and became a general for the Nobades invaders. Moving up the shore the force turned inland after questioning some local fishermen, and reached the village of **Salaleh** at the edge of the desert. The army "reprovisioned" much to the annoyance of the residents.

The following day, the mood among the villagers had mysteriously improved. Suspicious, Dunkas sent out some camel scouts who returned within the watch to say that a large force was heading for them, and would arrive before nightfall. Rather than panic, Silko retired to his quarters in what had been the headman's villa. He called for Dunkas, and soon orders were issued right and left.

Nobades warriors on camels, some 1500 of them, headed out beyond the irrigated fields and over a dune. Meanwhile, several hundred engineers were detached to round up all the villagers and herd them away from the likely battlefield in order to maintain secrecy. Then archers and spearmen were concealed in the village, cavalry in the oasis shrubery, and a thin line of infantry near the village.

The Blemmye king, Satifal, approached Salaleh with his scouts. He noted a line of spearmen facing him across the road, some men on camels and horses to either side. This should be a walkover, he thought, and sent a runner to the army. The barbarians took some time forming a line of battle about a half mile from the village, but eventually were advancing on the mud-brick buildings as the sun approached the horizon.

With the first volley of arrows from his archers the invader's line broke into a run - away from Satifal's troops. The fled with some speed into the oasis greenery, and the king's heir Balan lead a pursuit with the cavalry reserve while the remainder of the Blemmye army cheered and quick-marched for the town, hoping for some light looting.

They were very suprised at the ambush which awaited them in the village square, and Balan's horse was charged by Nobades cavalry concealed at the edge of the oasis. The remainder of Satifal's men were charged from behind a dune by the concealed warriors on camels. Disorganization and surprise caused a panic in the Blemmye force, and despite strenuous orders from Satifal - including an incident where he lanced one of his own warriors - it disintegrated and was pursued into the deep desert. While thousands of the local warriors were slain during the chase, far more died in the desolate rocks and dunes in the heat of the next day.

Surrounded, Satifal and his guard fought on as darkness quickly fell in the dry air. The king was wounded by a javelin in his right arm and called for a truce. He was taken prisoner along with Balan, who later died in an escape attempt. The Nobades army then marched on what passed for the Blemmye capitol and captured the royal family.

The processional into Kerma was something to behold, as each warrior tramped through the gates bedecked in captured gold chains, silks, and trailing at least one slave. Treated with more respect were the Blemmye royalty, who were allowed to ride on asses. Movad was greatly pleased with his heir and his general, and lavished titles and gifts on them both. To cement his relationship with the Axumites to his south, and to pique his sense of irony, the fallen king Satifal was sent under guard to Axum, with Movad's complements.

After a few years of joy and general discussion of the dispensation of their subject nation, Movad became ill with a seizure that paralyzed his left leg and arm. Another sudden attack on February 4 of 415 CE slew the mighty king, and a full month of mourning followed. Prince Phillipus worked hard to avoid any dissent, and became king shortly thereafter. The child of Movad II became heir, though that status was not guaranteed forever.

Persia

Orthodox Zoroastrian Church

(Orthodox Zoroastrian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Narses-Kartir, Mobedhanmobed

Diplomacy: Nisibis (AB), Mand (CA), Nihawand (MN), Mosul (MN)

The Mobed Namirog was dispatched to the imperial province, Mesopotamia, to enforce a strict adherence to the *gathas* and *yashts* among the unbelievers. Sadly, the tightly-knit communities of Jews and Christians were entirely unimpressed.

The Church was otherwise quite busy expanding its influence throughout the remainder of the empire. This prompted Narses-Kartir to famously exclaim at every public event, "Shato-manau vahishto-urvano," (*With the mind in joy and the soul in bliss*) summing up the attitude of nearly all of the faithful.

Kingdom of Persarmenia - Sasanian Persian Satrapy

(Monophysite Christian Barbarian Component Nation)

King Mazdak, Satrap

Diplomacy:

Armenia, popular? Mazdak was pleasantly surprised at the largesse spread in Urmia and its hinterlands by Christians and Zoroastrians. Small reservoirs were built, streets paved, and many other projects undertaken for the benefit of his subjects. His reign was credited with this boon, and he was not about to deny it.



Sasanian Persian Empire

(Orthodox Zoroastrian Civilized Open Empire)

Yazdigerd I, Shahanshah of Persia

Diplomacy: Balasagan (UN)

With the help of the Mobedhanmobed Ctesiphon grew to exceed Constantinople in size - given the unrest there this was not a surprise (see *Eastern Roman Empire*). Yet more *asvaran* were armed in the latest fashion as Persia awaited blows from East and West that never came.

Several palace eunuchs confessed under "intense" questioning to being Roman agents, but one courtier muttered that under such techniques they would probably confess to fathering a dozen sons. More gentle methods lead to the conversion of many in Dura and Osrhoene.

The asvaran to the Lakhmids, Dariush, passed away in his sleep at 46 after a banquet in Hira. Leftover goat meat was fed to a slave, who rather than dying a horrible death seemed quite happy to be feasting on such fine fare. Less happy were the nobles of Balasagan when in the autumn of 415 their shah died in a tragic hunting accident. This weakened the pro-Sasanian to the point that the new shah had to cut his ties to Yazdigerd's court. The shahanshah was not pleased, but was known to be a patient man.

The court poet Anaphalact penned this bit of prose on hearing of events in far Turan:

*The captains of Rome are beginning to mutter "Oh Great," they do say "here comes yet another"
Or could it be Cestiphon has made a blunder? Between the two rivers will you stop to plunder?*

The shahanshah was greatly pleased, and gifted the man with a golden laurel diadem and a silver plate with Yazdigerd emblazoned in the center.

South Asia

Lambakanna Sinhala - A Kingdom of Chera

(Buddhist Seafaring Component Nation)

King Suravatha

Diplomacy:

While not entirely his fault, the death of *kumaramatya* Ravith in the spring of 414 did not help the cause of Suravatha in winning back the fickle city of Kalyani (see *Pandya Kingdom* below). The

court began to feel squeezed between Chera and Pandya, and were not entirely pleased with this development. Grain shipped from the fields of Chera was appreciated, however, offsetting the fact that royal control now only includes the city of Anuradhapura and Sri Lanka itself.

Buddhist Stupas

(Buddhist Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Master Rugendra

Diplomacy:

The endless wheel continued to hold the attention of most priests.

Chera Kingdom

(Hinduism Seafaring Open Empire)

Gaman, Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy: Seylan (A)

Those meddling Pandyans (and their dog ...) must be stopped, thought Gaman. And yet a war would be fruitless. Thus it was that Lord Ichaa spent his days at the court of the Seylan *rajas*, in the end convincing them to hew to Chera rather than Pandya - or even their former masters Sri Lanka.

Efforts in Kalyani were not fated to meet with success (see *Pandya Kingdom* below).

Pandya Kingdom

(Jainism Seafaring Open Empire)

Jatavarman, Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy: Kalyani (A)

Auspicious was the birth of a son to Jatavarman, who announced three days of festival in his honor. Emboldened by this sign and advice from his court *acharya*, the ruler of this tiny kingdom sent forth his fleet under Banabhatta to Kalyani. His mission was to win over the ruler there and stave off the growing Chera supremacy in the region. Accompanying him was prince Maravarman, hoping to find a bride from the legendary city.

Thus it came to pass that the court of Govinda, the rather grandiosely titled *yuvaraja* of Kalyani saw parties from Chera and Pandya engaged in what might charitably be termed "lively" discussions of politics, religion, and loyalty. By late 414 it appeared that the arguments from Banabhatta were the more convincing. Also apparent was the growing hostility between the several thousand troops from either side who were wandering the streets of this cosmopolitan city. Several minor incidents, usually involving the connivance of an alluring *ganika*, had threatened to erupt into riots, staved off only by discipline imposed by leaders on both sides.

When at last Govinda announced he would join with the court of Jatavarman the mood on the docks turned ugly. Only by the presence of the *yuvaraja* and his small guard was open warfare avoided. The Cheran troops retired to their fortress, Panadura, up the coast, there to ponder their next move.

As a token to the locals, the marriage between a daughter of Govinda and Maravarman took place in Kalyani. One ill-omen occurred when, as the *Svetambara acharya* chanted the marriage vows the fire near the altar was blown out by a sudden wind. A quick-thinking courtier relit the flame, but the couple decided to spend the next few days in purification.

Sailing home with his new bride, Maravarman was swept overboard by a freak wave, though one crewman said the brave prince went down battling a *timingara*. Thus was his wife a widow, and many were her tears at her fate.



Empire of the Guptas

(Hinduism Civilized Open Empire)

Kamara Gupta, maharajadhiraja

Diplomacy: Pryaga (F), Dasarna (F), Nadavaria (F), Opane (A), Sarapion (A), Malayu Kingdom (NT to itself re Sabara City for the Gupta Empire), Palembang (F to Sabara City)

His review of the Northwest Frontier completed, the Great Lord returned along the Grand Trunk before turning south to tour Dasarna, so recently settled by pensioned soldiers of his campaign against the Western Sakas. While in Dasarna he graces the princes of that land with many fine gifts and an opportunity for greater integration with the Empire through direct imperial control.

Prince Kamara Gupta again saw to the oversight of the Empire. Watching his son Prince Skanda running and laughing as the boy chased a his Priyamvada and Harina through the courtyard, and was in turn chased back across by the girls and several of their attendants, he sighed wistfully for the simple pleasures of youth. "Your time is coming soon boy, best enjoy it while you can," he thought to himself. "What would you do if you caught one of those girls without your sister around I wonder? Time to find you a bride I think. Just as your sisters Sakuntala and Anasuya will soon be married it is time to think about the future."

This future arrived sooner than any had thought, for Chandra Gupta II, quickly called "the Great" by his countrymen, succumbed to a rapid fever in the cool evening of November 24, 415 CE, at the age of 56. The eleven days of his funerary rites, including the lighting of his pyre, were met with weeping among the common folk across the land, and none dared consider challenging the right of his heir Kamara to the throne.

On the very day his remains were placed in a jar, Sakuntala gave birth to a boy and a girl to her husband, the Nadavaria Raj, thus cementing ties to the empire. Kamara named his young son Skanda as his heir, and no relative rose to object. Also married was Anasuya Gupta, to Subhas Tharoor

making him a prince. Many snickered at the match - he was literally old enough to be her father - but the couple seemed genuinely happy and her father, Kamara, was pleased.

The Raj of Edrosia died of an unknown infection in 416 as the winter solstice approached. Rumor had it that some strange African disease, curse, or malaise had been brought back with him, but no real evidence was brought forth. His son was happy to remain within the empire in its grief. A fleet sailed from Edrosia to blockade the rebel city of Kalliana, but to no avail (see *Vakataka* below). And a new road was carved from the capitol to Pravarapura was another indication of Gupta support for their close neighbor and ally. That road, however, could not help the emperor in his attempts to convert the capitol's Jains, who held yet more closely to their creeds.

Babasaheb Ambedkar had an exciting time in the Palk Strait, when odd currents and strange calms kept progress to a snail's pace. His small fleet had to put in at Sopattinam, where Babasaheb inadvertently insulted the local harbor master so severely that the sailors were only ashore for two days. At sea for a few more weeks, they managed to find a haven at Machilipatnam. Naturally, tales of sea monsters and other horrors of the waves were the talk of the quays for months. The senior commander was glad to arrive safely in Tamralipti, thinking not for the first time that he was getting a bit old for this. Regardless, he was at Chandra's side to the last.

Abhayadatta of Pattala took his fleet to Opane in far Africa. Finally meeting that reknowned beauty the Kandake of Opane, he endeavored to gain her allegiance. After much hard bargaining she agreed to join with him to improve their already strong trade ties with a military component. He also met success with the King of Sarapion, a rough mud-walled town filled with people from all over the region, including outcasts and exiles from India, Rome, Arabia, and beyond.

Well-pleased with himself, Abhayadatta set sail for home. After a few days at sea his ships were assaulted at dawn by a large pirate fleet. After a hard battle lasting the entire day the brigands were driven off, but nearly all the marines were lost and many of his small ships had been captured or burned. They turned about, put in at Sarapion for supplies and rest, and put to sea once more. Arriving back in Pattala, King Abhayadatta made offerings at the temple to Manimekhala, and lead a mourning procession winding down the narrow lanes of his city.

From Sabara City sailed Raj Sang Nila Utama to woo the Malayu Raj to the Gupta cause. In their discussions the Malayu Raj was convinced of many advantages to being affiliated with the Guptas through their vassal, Sang Nila Utama. Of course he was not entirely swayed, and the Sabara Raj made for Palembang. These tribes were quite happy to be a part of some large distant empire that could counter the influence of the Malayu king.

His cousin a caravan master, Kalidasa may have penned this now-lost gem in early 414 CE:

*Where are you heading oh mobile young one? Where are you going you wandering Juan-Juan?
The grass on the wide steppe grows short where you linger. Once you move on farmers give you
the finger.*

*The captains of Rome are beginning to mutter "Oh Great," they do say "here comes yet another"
Or could it be Ctesiphon has made a blunder? Between the two rivers will you stop to plunder?*

*Down south all the hindi from high caste to low are grateful for mountains well covered in snow.
We know that some day our cousins will visit, and when they arrive we won't answer "Who is it?"*

Hinduism

(Hinduism Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Virasenadeva

Diplomacy: Kanauj (CH), Ahicchatra (CH), Indabara (CH), Tarain (CH), Arjunayana (CH), Gujerat (CH), Barygaza (CH), Pryaga (CH), Assam (CH), Dahala (CH), Pravaraपुरा (CH), Kalinga (CH), Vengi (CH), Muziris (CH)

In yet another indication that strict observances are best, the emissary Prakesh was nearly lost at sea when his ship was stuck on an uncharted reef in the Palk Strait. Shounaka took his begging bowl to Guar and Palas but met with little success, and the brahman Shuka was met with cold glances until he reached the far south.

The holy centers at Chandela and Varanasi were, on the other hand, very receptive to the many learned *gurus* who lectured and preached there. This contingent was lead by the illustrious Virasenadeva, highly respected by his fellow scholars.

Jain Sects

(Jainism Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Visvasena, Acharya

Diplomacy:

The death of Siddhasena was handled smoothly, and Visvasena was anointed as the new Acharya of the Jains. His spirit was clearly with them when Chandra Gupta sponsored Hindu efforts to convert Jains in the capitol district (see *Gupta Empire*).

Kingdom of Nepal - *Gupta Tributary*

(Buddhist Barbarian Component Nation)

Biscotti Licchavi, Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy: Dhera-Dun (FA), Himachal (FA), Sikkim (FA)

The Nepalese were happy to receive wagons of grain from the south, and the *rajadhiraja* blessed his overlord for that. Less auspicious was the killing of the raj of Dhera-Dun. This ally of the Licchavis was assassinated in a coup before the snows had melted in 413. His successor noted the many advantages of ties to the mighty Gupta and agreed to continue a similar relationship.

Driven by a vision, Crown Prince Vis'vadeva organized an elephant hunt in 413. Many were dubious at the prospect of a hunt lead by a pre-pubescent lad, but others knew of his ties to the other world and purified themselves before embarking. For several months the party searched the lowlands, losing one person to a tiger and several to fevers. One hot moonlit evening, the boy's personal guard captain arose to find him missing. Fearing a tiger had dragged him away, he roused a few men and rushed off along the presumed trail with spears and swords. A few minutes brought them to a clearing, where they pulled up in amazement. An elephant so large that the word scarcely seemed adequate to describe it stood in the moonlight. Astride the neck of the beast was the young prince, leaning over and speaking into its ear.

Biscotti was astonished at what his son had achieved, and a special garden was constructed for the animal. Spontaneous temples sprang up nearly overnight along the outer wall of the park. Within months the queen, Pima, announced her pregnancy, and over the next years she gave to the dynasty three children.

Pallava Kingdom

(Hinduism Seafaring Open Empire)

Mahendravarma I, Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy: Chola (F), Utara (PT), Aceh (P)

"Bloody Guptas!" grumbled Mahendravarma. His chamberlain sighed at this, which he had heard nearly every day of his long life, under two masters. But this morning was different - he would make a concrete suggestion.

And so it was that a fleet was sent to the island of Sumatra in a bid to counter growing Gupta influence in the *Suvernadvipa*. Utara and Aceh were conquered with little difficulty, establishing a Pallavan toehold in the region. As a result of this subdual of the locals and Gupta and other work in the region, pirate dens were cleared out all along the shores of the Malacca Strait, much cheered in capitols from Chera to Korea. The Riouw Sea pirates remained very active and thus trade was not much improved.

Vakataka Kingdom

(Hinduism Civilized Open Empire)

Prabhavati Gupta, Regent

Diplomacy: Vatsagulma (F), Pratihsthana (F), Satava (F)

The Regent was livid over the continued resistance of Kalliana to her entreaties and, now, armies. The Edrosian fleet sent by her father, Chandra, took up post outside the harbor of that rebel city, and her general, Varijchopra, was ordered to take the walls at all costs. She also announced the elevation of Sathiyadevanrao as a prince, deposing her half-sister Kalaiamudha Gupta was his new bride. The new prince, the *raja* of Satava, had to wait until his betrothed had completed several tricky diplomatic missions, with stunning success in each case.

Meanwhile Varijchopra marched his forces into Nasik and after only a week ordered an assault of the poorly-defended city. The citizens were not about to submit, and the struggle on the ramparts, gates, and surrounding villages was fierce. The general directed the action from his howdah, making him an excellent target for a sortie party of archers. He was felled by a shaft through the shoulder and caught by his swordbearer. The *mahout* skillfully moved the beast out of the line of combat and Varijchopra was taken to his tent and healer.

With their commander out of commission the siege lapsed and substantial supplies were brought into the city by land, much to the consternation of the Edrosian sailors hovering off the coast. This was brought to an end in 416 when Sathiyadevanrao appeared in Varijchopra's camp with fresh troops and a fresh attitude. A regular siege was instituted, and by the end of the year the defenders were clearly suffering from the near-constant archery, sapping, and occasional ill-planned sorties.

Back at court confusion reigned over the issue of royal succession. The ambassador from the Gupta court thought it was time for Divakarasena to take the reins of power into his young hands. Prabhavati, however, was loath to give up the regency, and most of the *rajas* and court officers agreed that the youth was in need of more training before taking up such a difficult post. The Gupta agent fumed at this lack of coordination but was powerless to push his agenda.

Rules Hint of the Turn

As your reward for reading this far in the newsfax here is a useful rules hint. The other goal is to let all of you know what the players who are also LOTE GMs know.

Diplomacy and You

Previous hints have indicated how to expend AP and gp in order to boost the odds that a diplomatic mission will succeed. Here is an outline of other considerations. Note that the HC (Have Children) action is also ruled by many of the same considerations.

1. Sending along additional leaders will provide a bonus of half their combined DP ratings.
2. Otherwise, the largest single bonus to be had is for dynastic marriage. Offering the king or heir is worth a lot, a prince is worth less. Note that the GM will try to keep track of genealogies, meaning that there could be unintended consequences down the road.
3. A plus for every 20gp, above and beyond the usual gp bonus received.
4. Depending on culture type (Nomadic, etc.) there is a negative for certain terrain types.
5. If the nation already controls a city in the region, or vice versa, there is a bonus.
6. The intel operation Support Diplomacy can add a variable bonus, but if it fails will give a small negative to the effort.
7. Going after property of another nation means that the control status of the other nation must be reduced to Uncontrolled before it may then start to increase.
8. DP of other leaders is possible, and attacks his or her Loyalty rating.
9. As in most things, the more different or distant the DP target is from your nation, the harder it will be to win their loyalty.

Hope this helps. Please see prior turns' newsfaxes for more hints.