

Newsfax, Turn 5

(start of 417 CE through the end of 420 CE)

Notes:

1. You are encouraged to submit text and images for inclusion in the newsfax, which may satisfy your need for propaganda, creativity, or fun.
2. 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
- Alien Sex Fiend - *Acid Bath*
- The Ventures - *Wild Again*
- Moby - *Animal Rights*
- Sahara Hotnights - *Jennie Bomb*
- Angry Samoans - *Back from Samoa*
- Underworld - *A Hundred Days Off*
- Interpol - *Turn on the Bright Lights*
- True Sounds of Liberty - *Beneath the Shadows*
- Joyce Anderson - *Right Where I Should Be*
- X - *Under the Big Black Sun*
- Frank Black - eponymous
- Collins, Cray, and Copeland - *Showdown*
- Throwing Muses - *University*
- UB40 - *Labour of Love*
- Lush - *Gala*
- Marcel Cellier et al. - *Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares*
- Def Leppard - *Pyromania*
- Dead Kennedys - *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables*

Generally eastward starting with ...

Central Asia

Hephthalite Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Ilginc, Khakhan of the Hunas

Diplomacy: Boqara (UN), Bactria (UN), Bactra (UN), Kara-Khitan (UN), Maracanda (UN)

In the dark of the night, it filled the mind of Ilginc that, indeed, his nation was in danger from these bread-eaters and dung-sloppers who crawled at his feet. Not danger in the sense a snow leopard presents, but danger as a mud bog might hold.

Thus it was that he ordered scrolls bundled, furniture knocked down, and wagons built - or confiscated. When the mud had dried the Hephthalites took to the road en masse, this time rolling eastward to Issyk-Kul. Clans which had settled in Bactria, Bactra, Kara-Khitan, and Maracanda left

what had become their homes to the applause of parents and the whines of their children, who had come to appreciate the joys of literature, theater, and solid walls. Boqara was let go in order to simplify governance. By the end of 417 over 100,000 Hephthalites were encamped in Issyk-Kul, their new home.

Surely Tengri had smiled upon them, for their ancient foes the Juan-Juan and allies were on their scent, and a timely transhumance saved many Hephthalites from enslavement or slaughter (see *Juan-Juan Khanate*). Ilginc smiled grimly at the travails of his clan-enemy.

The populations of the cities and villages in Bactria and Kara-Khitān declared national holidays, made offerings at reopened temples and churches, and generally rejoiced. The many persecutions by the Hephthalites were announced in the streets, written down, and even engraved in stone. Those few who had benefitted under nomadic rule quietly slipped out of town and fled to Sogdiana or other friendly lands.

White Turk Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Khan Fittcheen the Grey

Diplomacy: Kyzl-Kum (F to Turgay)

The Ilkhan was taken aback when Fittcheen told the khan of the Turgay, Umulk, to win over Kyzl-Kum for himself. The young khan dutifully treated with the (few) nobles there, travelling between desert camps in the heat-blasted and cold-stilled wastelands. Fittcheen's heart was as desolate when his grand-daughter Bushir died in childbirth in 419.

Khwarizm Hunas Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Akhshunwaz, Khakhan of the Hunas, Khan of Khwarizm

Diplomacy:

Akhshunwaz and his leadership watched the Turks march through their tiny realm and dreamed dreams. Then the Juan-Juan came calling in their hundreds of thousands, and the Khakhan began to feel as important as his title and lineage might sustain.

Steppe Shamanism

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Primate Religious Authority)

Zugeer Sechen, High Shaman

Diplomacy: Issyk-Kul (CH), Ferghana (AB), Sogdiana (AB), Khwarizm (CH), Kashgar (CH)

With an ambitious course set before him, Bulang Sechen set out with his supporters for Issyk-Kul. On the very first night he succumbed to a cough he had acquired some weeks before, and died on February 17. The organization he had founded rapidly coalesced around a new leader, Zugeer, who hails from the White Turk royal clan. And so they continued on after placing the irascible Bulang in a kurgan and sacrificing a dozen horses.

Over the next four years the High Shaman spread the word in the countryside, establishing many new shaman. The movements of the Juan-Juan and Hephthalites were no barrier to the spread of an inherently itinerate priesthood. Even the ancient trade city of Kashgar hosted a number of converts, much to the consternation of the Buddhist monastics.

Kushan Empire

(Buddhist Civilized Open Empire)

Koungas, Kidarite Shao

Diplomacy:

Despite warfare all around them the Kushans remained at peace. Yet struggle came to them early, as the Cough spread across the land. The first notables to be victims were the shah of Kapisi - quickly replaced by his son - and Kapisa himself - also smoothly succeeded. The realm continued to prosper.

Oghuz Turk Realm

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Khan Sonqur

Diplomacy: Ghuzz (UN), Nogai (UN), Parishkhwargar (FA), Abarshahr (PT), Otrar (FA), Tabolsk (FA), Khurasan (PT), Nishapur (P)

Deals made and sacrifices offered, the khan decides that the future lay in the rich lands to the south, in Iran-shahr. The tribes of Chorasmia, Kama Bulgar, Kazan, Ob, Uze, and - somewhat surprisingly - Otrar and Tabolsk saddle up. The Ghuzz and Nogai clans see this as a sellout of their ideals, denounce the khan as a closet mud digger, and leave the realm (see *Sasanian Persia*).

En route most tribes give the khan's army a pass through their lands, but those of Kyzl-Kum object and a month is wasted chasing the locals about the rocky wastes. In Khwarizm the Hephthalite heir decides it prudent to hide in Dashovuz until the Turks pass. By 420 the tribes of Otrar and Tabolsk are so well-pleased with the migration that they decide Sonqur deserves their *anda* - and a share of the loot. The fact that many of the Royal Tribe now worshipped the Dead God under the Patriarch of Alexandria did not diminish their enthusiasm for striking against the Zoroastrian menace (see *Monophysite Christian Church*).

Juan-Juan Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Anakai, Ilkhan and Regent for P'ulochen, Prince

Diplomacy: Ghuzz (A), Eastern Turks (F), Khwarizm Hunas (T to themselves viz Juan-Juan)

Unrest in the Hephthalite realm caused quite a stir among the campfires of the royal Juan-Juan *ayil* in Pechneg. The gurkhans came to Anakai with a proposal for a detour, and he agreed that the greater glory and honor of the Juan-Juan required an effort be made. The Pechneg khan agreed to come as well.

Thus it was that the Spring of 417 saw the clans retracing some of their route, marching, riding, and rolling towards the rising sun: towards the lands and cities of the Hephthalites. The mighty host was delayed at the Boresthenes by the Alans of Levedia, who were inadvertently insulted by the tarkhan. A month was wasted in removing the obstacle, in the course of which a couple of hundred horsemen were lost but replaced by defectors.

By Spring of 418 Anakin's men were looting Torki. The local Alans objected and engaged in a harassing campaign against the invaders. There was not much booty to be had, and the Juan-Juan left the region disappointed. By the Winter of 419 the horde was encamped among the Ghuzz, who had left the Oghuz Turks over the issue of migration to Persia. Anakin arranged the marriage of a Ghuzz princess to Crown Prince P'ulochen, an alliance between them was thus sealed, and the Ghuzz agreed to migrate south. Further, gurkhan Kutelburi was wed to the Princess Hara, bringing him into the royal lineage. At the same wedding ceremony Princess Shara was married off to the loyal Khan of the

Eastern Turks, Alptekin. All the steppe could feel the love ...

Further travel took them all into the lands of the exiled Hephthalite khakhan, Akhshunwaz. Tribal enmity aside, the khakhan saw that his chances of regaining the wider Hephthalite patrimony might well rest on the shoulders of his clan-enemy. Tengri wore the mask of a trickster at times, warning men to seize opportunity as a hawk might seize a mouse. And so the court at Dashovuz entertained the leaders of the horde and warmed to their message while they encamped in his *irgun* to the end of 420.

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

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Component Nation)

Khan Juchin

Diplomacy:

Juchin fathered a child on the march (see *Juan-Juan Khanate*).

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

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Component Nation)

Khan Alptekin

Diplomacy:

The Juan-Juan princess Shara married the much older Alptekin as the horde marched (see *Juan-Juan Khanate*). She took an interest in falconry and thus managed to avoid her khan and pregnancy quite handily.

Tu-Yu-Hu Kingdom of the Aza

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Khan Khri'brin

Diplomacy:

The tiny kingdom celebrated that late-life son of Khri'brin and his wife.

China

Chinese Buddhism

(Chinese Buddhist Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Master Lo-Wang

Diplomacy:

The message continued to spread throughout the world.



Chinese Kingdom of Annam

(Daoist Civilized Open Empire)

King Ma Yueh

Diplomacy: Lingsi (F), Yu-lin (A)

Between the rich province of Nan Chao and the coastal lands of Annam lay the wilds of Korat. Ma Yueh decided that in order to improve his hold over the inland provinces colonists would be sent from Annam into the deep valleys to found new villages and provide sons for the army. Despite the hold of

Han culture over Korat the independent-minded folk revolted, massacring one small settlement and terrifying the remainder. The army was brought in and quickly re-established control, and the colonization proceeded.

Construction of a road into the troubled province of Korat continued at a leisurely pace. Trade with the Eastern Ts'in was re-opened, though the king was enraged by a scroll from a low-level bureaucrat thanking him for paying tribute to the empire. Anger turned to sorrow when Queen Xi-xia died in childbirth, losing the infant son as well. Popular with the people, many of them privately offering incense to her spirit.

Daoism Temples

(Daoist Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Ko Chao Fu, Ling Pao Master

Diplomacy: Chiang Hsia (CA), Chi (AB), P'ing (CH), Liao-Tung (CH)

At the Southern Temple of Heng Shan hundreds of small shops were set up outside the gates to serve the ever-growing number of pilgrims to this center of healing, learning, and magic. By 420 it was widely recognized as one of the premier market sites in all the Middle Kingdom, and the Daoists generally were praised for their foresight. Thus the priesthood agreed to support the new Temple of Hua Shan begun in the mountains of Lanchou under the supervision of bishop Mao Tze Tsu.

The Ling Pao Master authorized more silver spent in Szechwan to the benefit of poor farmers, raising the standard of living substantially. Missionaries in Korat and Kwangtung were busy and generally successful.

And finally this gem:

A man from the state of Chu was crossing a river. In the boat, his sword fell into the water. Immediately he made a mark on the boat. "This is where my sword fell off," he said. When the boat stopped moving, he went into the water to look for his sword at the place where he had marked the boat.

-Wisdom from the desk of Ko Chao Fu.

Eastern Ts'in Dynasty

(Daoist Civilized Open Empire)

K'ung Ti, Emperor of China

Diplomacy: Tsingtao (F), Chekiang (F), Shantung (F), Tsainan (F), Koeuichou (F), Hwai (NT)

As refugees streamed across the Huang Ho into Shantung, the city of Tsingtao was being laid out in the same province. At the same time two broad roads were lead to that new city, raising it a city of imperial rank despite its small size. The locals were suitably impressed and Shantung reintegrated with the Middle Kingdom under the guidance of Lord Ts'ao, who had impressed them with his culinary skills and especially a chicken dish.

Ignoring the turmoil to the north, K'ung Ti once more lead his army in the opposite direction. The Duke of Chekiang was repaid for his treachery when tens of thousands of imperial troops marched into his domain, siezed him, and secured the land for the empire and thousands of carpetbaggers. During a small cholera outbreak the famous general Cheng Du fell ill and died, but not before putting his *memoires* to paper, especially how he managed the colonization of this province, and his heroic role in the ill-fated coup.

The brutal treatment of Chekiang made an impression on the leaders of Wu city, who were also pleased that the imperial prince would consent to have the daughter of their most famous merchant as his bride. Thus Zhang Ti was wed in 419 to the very young Lady Mi. Similarly, Tsainan entered fully into the empire as Prince Zhou Ti found a bride therein.

Less cheerful news came from the city of Koeuichou, where the Duke choked on a chicken bone and died on 21 July of 419, only 39 years old. The new Duke considered the strategic situation viz the Toba Wei and joined the empire as well. Finally, the Count of Hwai decided that it was time to acknowledge the young emperor as well.

Khanate of the Hsiung'nu

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Bulinger, Khan of the Hsiung'nu

Diplomacy:

Prince Sanglant was slain one hot summer night in 417 by a lover of his favorite concubine, and both conspirators were quickly put to a slow death by uncle Bulinger. The succession was thrown into confusion, with the Khan unwilling to name an heir.

Korean Kingdom of Koguryo

(Chinese Buddhist Civilized Open Empire)

King Kwanggaet'o, the Great

Diplomacy:

Wishing to purify his land of the worst of Daoist excesses, and having been provoked intolerably, Kwanggaet'o decided to create a lasting solution in Bandao. Thus Bandao was "visited" by the king's army which then set about packing up all the Buddhists and sending them off. The locals assumed the worst and began a bitter struggle to keep their land. This raged through 417 and 418, but in the end the king was victorious and the province was expunged of Buddhists.

Age finally caught up with the king, who passed away on March 25 of 420. The crown prince, Changsu, took over the reins of government with no trouble, and a great hope that the "purification" program of Kwanggaet'o continued.

Later Liang Kingdom

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Lu Ssu, Emperor of China

Diplomacy: Turfan (NT), Tunhuang (NT), Hsi-Hai (NT), Gurvan (C), Dzamin Uud (T), Bulinger (A), Tangut (F), Turfan (T), Ayaguz (FA to Tangut), Uigur (FA to Tangut)

The mighty emperor of all China allowed several ancient cities more autonomy, for which he was much praised there. He then toured the steppe and desert attempting to win the trust of their minor khans. The whirlwind tour met with small success until he arrived in Dzamin Uud and went hawking with the local khan's clan. On a beautiful day in June of 419 he was racing across the land, chasing a gazelle, when his horse fell into a ravine. Lu Kuang broke many bones and died the following day, and honorable death for a steppe warrior of 53.

After some commotion involving knives and a live burial, the son Lu Ssu took command of the clans. Gathering the army he decided to remain at home to keep a close eye and heavy hand on his fellows. The khan of the Tangut, Ta K'ang, was busy in 417 and 418 adding to his sub-khanate from former Juan-Juan lands. Whether the new Emperor can maintain his hold over the vast lands of the Later

Liang was an open topic in *gers* across the steppe.

Later Ts'in Dynasty

(Buddhist Civilized Open Empire)

Shek Hsing, Emperor of China

Diplomacy:

The Later Ts'in dynasty dissolved in a frenzy of apathy and fear (see *Sung China*). Few mourned the demise of this particular petty barbarian realm.

(Hou) Later Yen Dynasty

(Daoist Civilized Open Empire)

Mu-jung Ch'uei, Emperor of China

Diplomacy:

The inevitable retribution from the Toba Wei arrived in May of 417 (see *Toba Wei Empire* below). It was swift and quite thorough.

Meanwhile Prince Yeke travelled up the Great River to Chang'an to treat with the remnants of the Later Yen. Compared with the efforts of the Sung king, however, the lad was accorded little credibility and the diplomatic effort failed. Despite his performance his same-age brother Yaba was made a prince as well. In these dire times the clan needed all able-bodied men to serve.

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

(Daoist Civilized Component Nation)

Ma Ch'in, Sung King

Diplomacy: Shensi (P), Chang'an (T)

With the north in chaos and the emperor engaged elsewhere, Ma Ch'in resolved to teach the insolent barbarians something about conquest. Namely to strike while the enemy is distracted. And so the army was mustered and set out in March of 417 for Shensi, the homeland of the Later Ts'in "Empire."

Approaching up the river resistance was minimal and the Toba garrison was swept aside.

Unfortunately general Chen Yinke died on campaign of an intestinal infection. His friend Bhut-ti, Captain of the Loyang Guard, mourned him piteously.

Despite attempts by royal agent to portray the campaign in Shensi as one of liberation, the locals were having none of it. After their treatment at the hands of the Toba they were in no mood for armies or soldiers of any stripe. Ma Ch'in shrugged and began treating with the Later Ts'in emperor Shek Hsing. In another sad turn, December saw Shek Hsing pass away from a colic, and the Later Ts'in dissolved entirely. The notables and scribes of the ancient capitol considered the Toba threat and decided to pay tribute to the Sung and come under their protection.

Toba Wei Empire

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Toba Kuei, Emperor of China

Diplomacy:

With the destruction of the Later Ts'in, Toba Kuei turned his attention next to the Later Yen. Not content with having repelled their assault several years past, he ordered the *tumens* mustered and marched at their head past high Wutai Shan and into Bao Ding in May of 417. The 80,000 warriors, including thousands of Chinese soldiers, swept over the landscape just behind Mu-Jung Ch'uei, the

Later Yen emperor, who had travelled to Lu'an mere weeks earlier.

Left to defend the entire frontier with the main army, Mu-jung Shen-qu heard the first reports from the frontier with dread. The 10,000 Qiang horse and various fortified towns were no match for the combined might of the Toba and was swept from the field wherever resistance occurred. Mu-Jung took an arrow in the chest after the lamellae of his cuirass had been ripped off by an enemy mace during a cavalry charge and managed to escape into Chung-shan. He could only watch from a sickbed on the parapets as the horde marched to the east. Before the winter of 417 had set in the barbarians had captured Yen and began a thorough looting and enslavement of the province. Thousands were captured, thousands fled across the Huang Ho into Shantung, hoping for refugee within the "real" empire.

While ravaging the countryside Prince Lai Hsiang let his guard down and was slain by an assassin seeking revenge for the death of his sister. The attacker escaped the guards by leaping between rooftops in the village and then diving into a river. The horde buried the prince in a kurgan built during the late summer of 419 - built with slave labor. A number of horses were sacrificed as well as slaves to accompany the spirit of Lai Hsiang in the next world.

This bad news came on the heels of word that Bao' ding had been liberated by a small force under the Later Yen emperor, leaving the Toba cut off from their homes. No messages made it home by land, and communications up the river were blocked by the fleet of Bailao "the Scythe" Qu Li. Toba Kuei's Han advisors fretted, but the emperor only chuckled. What do nomads care for "front" or "rear" when the four winds blow free as a horse can run?

Western Ts'in Empire

(Asiatic Pagan Civilized Open Empire)

Chow Lu, Emperor of China

Diplomacy:

The sole emperor of all China saw that in his dangerous neighborhood his administration was woefully inadequate, and ordered more of the literate Han hired to help run the nation. The inheritance of the Confucian system quickly infiltrated into court, and the scribes and bureaucrats gained power and influence at the expense of the Turkic-speaking barbarian overlords.

Many of these *noyans* felt disenfranchised and several plots were discussed and then ignored as pointless. In Lanchou, however, the local people were outraged at the attitudes revealed by the Turk ruling class. It was one thing to be ruled, and quite another to have no hope of advancement, and the small bourgeoisie in the valleys of Lanchou rose up and in the Spring of 417 evicted the barbarians.

Naturally, Mu-lien was not pleased. The army was mustered and after a short campaign in Lanchou - during which the temple under construction was left alone - the rebels surrendered by late 417.

Another bit of trouble caught up with the empire in November of 419, when news from the east seems to have been too much for the elderly emperor, and his heart gave out on the first day of December. The first snow of the year fell that same day, a good omen for his successor Chow Lu.

South East Asia

Cham Kingdom

(Hinduism Barbarian Open Empire)

King Samudravarman

Diplomacy:

The king recovered from his despondency, married, and was blessed with a baby girl. Anti-piracy activity under the command of Lord Xuan Manh Dang, though only a few ships were taken.

All seemed well, when a plague swept the land in December of 420. Fever, sores, and death was the sword that claimed Bhadravarman, his wife, Crown Prince Khac Ba Hoang, and Lord Xuan Manh Dang, along with a cast of thousands. The people cried out in fear that anarchy would sweep the land and the papayas would grow bitter. But a conclave of nobles chose a distant cousin of Bhadravarman to rule, and the citizens rejoiced to the extent possible.

Chen-La Kingdom

(Hinduism Civilized Open Empire)

King Pendravarman

Diplomacy:

Resting on the laurels of their past military glory, Chen-La tended to its affairs.

Khmer Kingdom of Funan

(Hinduism Civilized Open Empire)

Korn Danh II, the Great, King of the Mountain

Diplomacy: Perak (A)

A monument to the might of Korn Danh was raised, a mile-long bridge across the venerated Mekong at Kampong Cham. The king further declared his intention of building a road to connect Tonle Nagara with Vyadhapura, to general acclaim.

Choppy waters and shifting winds kept Crown Prince Norodom Huoth and his fleet up against the coast of the Malacca Strait for two moons before they were able to continue on to Perak. Years spent at the court of the *raja* produced a treaty and a princess for Korn Danh.

Kingdom of Tarumanegara

(Buddhist Seafaring Open Empire)

Purnavarnam, Raja

Diplomacy: Makaram (F)

There was much rejoicing when two sons were added to the Royal Family. Sadly, Crown Prince Mulawarman died in the wilds of Makaram while on a hunting expedition with the local *raja* on 3 January of 419. He was splashing through a swamp after one of the local deer when a Beaked Sea Snake showed its white-and-green self to him. Despite frantic efforts to get away he was bitten and passed away quickly afterwards.

Malayadvipa - Gupta Tributary

(Buddhist Seafaring Component Nation)

Sripanasan, Regent for Crown Prince Varanavendra

Diplomacy: Sabara (A)

Under the tutelage of the Gupta agent, Sripanasan conducted a census and found that, well, he did not

have nearly enough tax collectors. To help with this, the city of Palembang was founded by the sea. Sang Nila Utama worked hard to gain the trust of the lords of the Sabara island hinterland, and largely succeeded.

Pyu Kingdom

(Buddhist Civilized Open Empire)

King Kyanzittha

Diplomacy: Burma (EA)

The kingdom was peaceful, though tongues were set to wagging by the accession of little Kyanzi to Crown Prince. All agreed that the lad, too young to marry, was likeable enough if rather grim of demeanor. But Prince Nagarjunakonda was rumored to be either upset at losing his status, or relieved at not having to worry about higher politics, depending on the source. In any case the uncle of the king raised no objections or armies.

Kyanzittha worked to improve irrigation in Ava and subsidized growth in Sri Ksetra, to general approval.

Japan



Emishi Lords

(Asiatic Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

King Ashitaka

Diplomacy:

Individual clans and families filtered back into Akita, replanting in the fertile valleys.

Yamato Japan

(Shinto Civilized Open Empire)

Nintoku, Kima of Wa

Diplomacy:

Another daughter was born of Crown Prince Ojin and his stout wife Minekawa Takako.

Southern Mountains Clans - A Kingdom of Yamato Japan

(Shinto Barbarian Component Nation)

Mononobe Jutaro, king

Diplomacy:

The newly-minted king decided to go fishing, and became reknowned for his prowess at supplying the court with fresh tuna, no small feat.

Western Europe

Alamanni

(Roman Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Arbogast, Rex

Diplomacy: Saguntina (F)

With his uncle Otto moldering in a cell in Gades, Arbogast decided to make peace with the Romans and to in fact accept the authority and theology of the Roman Christian Church under the bishop of Roma. The Roman Church further smoothed the transition by funding great aqueducts, roads, and other projects in Hauptland to make it within a few years a very prosperous home for the Germans.

The change in official faith made the leadership in Saguntina more happy with the German immigrants, and accepted them as legitimately in the greater Latin family. No actual treaty between the Alamanni and the Empire existed, however.

By 420 it was clear the Alamanni had held to peace with the Empire. His jailors in Gades thus freed Otto, who travelled to his nephew's court in Corduba that summer. Before August had ended Otto was dead, and many suspected Arbogast of poisoning him. Others noted that the prince had not looked well when he had been delivered from his captivity, and may only have lasted so long as he did to spite his captors.

Kingdom of the Alans

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Xerxes, Shah

Diplomacy:

The imprisoned Burgundian prince, Eric the Bastard, listened closely as the Alan noblemen discussed issues of policy with him. As a literal captive audience, he had nothing else to do, and the food was good. By 420 he was allowed to walk unfettered, though always shadowed with a guard. He had even won the affections of a young widow, and they spent many days together, often tilling her fields. One stormy Spring morning Eric's guard woke his charge and was initially shocked that the man seemed to fall apart onto the floor.

Then the guard yelled for help. It was too late, as Eric and the widow had fled into the forest. Xerxes was furious, especially as the Burgundian had helped the Alans against the Huns (see *Empire of the Huns*), and was set to wed his young cousin. The shah did smile later in the year to hear about his former prisoner's deeds outside the walls of Roma (see *Ostrogothic Kingdom*). He was sure that his annoyance was nothing as to the fury Uldin would be feeling at the news. And the Burgundian had at least made Xerxes see the light and leave the Roman tent, a tent whose fabric had let in too many harsh breezes, over the objections and bribes of Timotheus, the Roman *comes rerum privatarum*.

Angles and Jutes

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

King Aethelred

Diplomacy:

The men of the north heard with interest the songs of conquest from the Empire. Young men were stirred, some few to the point of taking ship and hiring on under *thiufands* of some repute.

Asding Vandals - *Hun Vassals*

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Godegisel, Rex Vandalorum

Diplomacy:

After due consideration - mainly of what exactly a well-trained horse archer could do to an apple with archery at the gallop - the king decided that it was not a good idea to have Uldin as an enemy. Further, the birth of several children to Godegisel and Heletradana brightened the court, an event some compared to the offspring of Jacob and Sarah.

Burgundians

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Gundioc, King of the Burgundians

Diplomacy:

Gundioc seemed content to rest on his laurels, while work gangs maintained the Roman *via* which cut across Maxima. Some said he had gone soft - but not to his face. Others suspected the wayward Eric was on a mission for the king, though most dismissed them as paranoid ravers.



Classical Pagan Oracles

(Classical Pagan Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Hecate, Sibyl

Diplomacy: Raetia II (UN), Latium (CH)

Through her temples, Hecate declared that all fit Romans had the duty to take up arms against Goths to drive them out of Italy. This message fell, however, on deaf or absent ears. The Bishop of Roma had already made this call and his was answered by many non-Christians. The ill-fated army slaughtered under the leadership of Stilicho did not inspire other men to throw their lives away.

Eire Kingdom of the Scots - *Societas Imperii*

(Keltic Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

High King Donald I

Diplomacy: Mumha (T)

The Scots were busy and peaceful. Ulster saw thousands of farmers settle in hundreds of thorpes and villages, while many warriors set aside their javelins and shields to take up the quill and scroll. The city of Dublin was named the new capitol, and Donald took up residence there much of the year.

Franks

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Clodius, Rex

Diplomacy: Trier (C)

The Prince, Merovech, spent most his time in Trier, chatting up the local *praefecti* and others. In the end they agreed to at least nominally agree that, yes, as the Franks controlled the surrounding lands the citizens would allow Clodius to say he ruled there. Their main goal was simply to get rid of Merovech, who was nothing if not persistent. Also annoying was the railing of Wotanists, Arian Christians, and Roman Christians against each other.

Frisians

(Arian Church Barbarian Open Empire)

King Jentze Wolfsen

Diplomacy:

Happy news at court from Hengist and his wife - a son and identical twin daughters - was about the most exciting thing to come from across the Rhine since the Frisian army entered Germania II some years earlier. Jentze considered the need for four Gospels, and the Arian priests attempted to explain it to the confused ruler.

Lombard Kingdom - *Societas Imperii*

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Autharii, Rex Lombardorum

Diplomacy:

In the Summer of 420 Wences, Prince of Volhynia, fresh from his victory over the Siling Vandal garrison of Bochnia (see *Empire of the Huns*), marched his men into Silesia at the behest of Uldin. What need he fear from yet another petty king when he had the Khakhan to back him up? The people of Silesia were in charge of their own defense, and proved quite up to the task of throwing Wences out on his ear. Thus rebuffed and with the loss of a few hundred warriors the invaders fled all the way home.

Pictish Tribes

(Keltic Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Talorg Mac Aniel, King of the Cruithni

Diplomacy: Anglia (FA), Flavia (FA)

From hundreds of miles and across the sea they came, a rough bunch drawn by the promise of generous pay and perhaps a bit of looting on the side. The lure of exotic Britain was a further draw for some of the more thoughtful - but not many.

In the Spring of 417 thousands of Picts were joined by Alans, Germans, Roman deserters, and (most terrible of all) Huns and were lead against the *limes* by the very young Prince Sean MacAniel. Heir to the throne of the Cruithni, he inspired many, even the mercenaries, by analogies to Alexander of Macedon in his youth. A clever ruse gained a team of Alans entry into one of the gate houses along the wall near **Luguwallium**, where the garrison was either slain or chased off. The remainder of the army of over 10,000 queued through.

Rather more than half had filed past the fortifications when the Roman ambush was sprung. Thousands of legionary frontier veterans quickly recaptured the gate house and sealed it while more *alae* and *cohors* concealed in the town of **Luguvallium** stormed out and assaulted the milling mass of Picts and Continentals. These were quickly slaughtered while those beyond the wall attempted to come to their rescue. When all hope for the invaders seemed lost, the gate reopened and rescuers charged through, creating a "beachhead" on Roman soil.

They found, however, that there were few compatriots to rescue, and the attackers were once more the attacked. Knots of men broke through, only to be hunted down by local *numerus* and others. Before the new moon all had been either slain or captured. As the Roman commander Libanius Musonianus wrote in his report to Mediolanum, "'N' is for no survivors." Sean himself had a harrowing ordeal, wounded in the calf by an arrow, and stole a curragh and rowed it home along the coastline. Despite the terrible loss he and his few retainers were welcomed as heroes by the people.

The mission of Padrig down the coast had mixed results. Maxima Caesarea was less than receptive to his offers of alliance while the neighboring province was being invaded by Picts. In the beautiful South the Picts seemed less a threat than a lifeline, and Padrig was greeted with optimism. On his return he was greeted warmly by the king, but others wondered aloud, asking him how many Romans he had slain.

Quadi Clans - *Vassal of the Hun Empire*

(Arian Christian Barbarian Component Nation)

King

Diplomacy:

Many trials plagued the Quadi, but their faith in Uldin proved justified as he once more saved them (see *Empire of the Huns*). Torpor in Aquileia led to the continued detention of Prince Gabinus, and he eventually expired just before Christmas Eve of 419.



Roman Christian Church

(Roman Christian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Zosimus, Bishop of Roma

Diplomacy: Slovakia (UN), Latium (CH), Alpes Cottiae (CH), Pannonia I (UN), Tuscia (AB), Tarraco (AB), Saguntina (CH), Toletum (CH), Venetia (CH), Liguria (CH), Ulster (CH), Connaught (AB), Mumha (AB), Midhe (AB), Atrebatia (CH), Mercia (AB), Franconia (CH)

Once more did Innocent make a call for worshippers to rise up against the barbarians. His message read out in each parish was:

The Holy Father and all religious leaders continues the call for Holy War against the Huns, Ostrogoths and their allies. The Agents of Satan will not relent until they have been vanquished by the armies of all Christian nations. Pope Innocent calls all the faithful to redouble their efforts and follow the Holy call to arms against the enemies of the Church.

But by the spring of 417 it was clear that the faithful were suffering from "crusade fatigue" and wished to see whether the professionals could handle matters. Some hundreds showed up in Aquileia, but most of these later died of a fever. The failure of the Goths to take Roma (see *Ostrogothic Kingdom*) appeared to confirm the verdict of the laity that the time for renewed struggle was not yet at hand. Innocent was not pleased. Worse still was news that Huns and their henchmen were actively persecuting Roman priests and worshippers wherever they could be found.

While in 401 the influential Augustine of Hippo wrote that "Nothing is so powerful in drawing the spirit of a man downwards as the caresses of a woman," and in 385 the marrying of priests had been technically outlawed though honored mainly in the breach (so to speak), Innocent had given his blessing on the union of Paulus, Bishop of Neapolis, and Tamora, Queen of the Ostrogoths. Some inside and outside Roma were scandalized, but the heir of Peter realized that while he may be a rock at the foundation of the Holy Church, yet that rock was set in the sandy soil of a barbarian occupation. The Lord had given men sense, Innocent proclaimed after a harangue from several theologians, and they had best use it in times such as these.

He spent much of his time attempting to preach surreptitiously to the Gothic people outside Roma. Success was extremely limited, but the Grace of God sustained him by assuring he was not turned over to the Ostrogothic leadership for certain martyrdom. Disturbed at his lack of significant effect he decided to make for Tuscia.

While meeting with parish leaders in a village outside Arretium on June 6 of 420 he was seized in the night by several dozen Gothic warriors of the garrison and hauled before the local warlord. In a fit of annoyance Kasimir, a Slav by birth, ordered the bishop to duel with him to prove the stronger faith. The old priest was given a heavy sword and a circle formed about the contestants, Goths jostling each other and joking about the inadvisability of betting at all in this case. The two men set upon each other, and some said that a faint glow surrounded Innocent, while young Kasimir's skin appeared to shine like burnished steel. Striking with amazing speed for such an old man the two exchanged blows first in the guesting room of the villa, then out in the courtyard. Amazingly, Kasimir suddenly threw his long horseman's blade into the sky and knelt, head down. Innocent beheaded the man with a two-handed stroke, but as he rose up the priest was surprised to see a handspan of the barbarian blade projecting from the cloth of his sweat-dampened chest.

The body of Kasimir was carried away by a shaman and several guards, while the stunned Goths allowed Innocent's body to be removed to Arretium, where a vigil is yet held before his sarcophagus. At the news a short conclave was held in Mediolanum and Zosimus was named the new head of the Western Church. The gathering also considered the nature of Innocent's martyrdom but were unable to arrive at a consensus on just what it might mean.

In Roma, as if to mirror the turmoil outside the walls (see *Ostrogothic Kingdom*) several theological camps came to literal blows in the hot summer of 418. The Pelagians saw themselves in ascendance with the accession of a nominal Briton to the Purple, and published their views on Grace and Sin throughout the Empire. Friends of Jerome and Augustine, however, railed against their views. On a hot July night a gang of Pelagians set upon one Constantius, leaving him dead on the street. A series of thunderstorms cooled things off, but the theological debate roiled on just below the level of the forum. The death of Jerome in the following year lowered the complexity of the discourse without

lessening its intensity.

All news was not however grim. Elsewhere, the resourceful Bishop Ninian was ordered to continue his efforts to bring the Word of the Lord to the pagan tribes of Britannia and Hibernia. The new Bishop Porphyrius is a convert from the Frankish tribes and has been ordered to his homeland to spread the Light of Christ among those peoples. Bishop Timothy received ordination in Latium and was moved by a vision of the Holy Spirit speaking to all of faithful throughout the realm with a message of vigilance and salvation. And after many moons of confrontation, by late 420 the Corps Helvetica traded good-natured jibes with the Goths and others outside Roma, and in a few cases the bored warriors on either side engaged in Olympian javelin, running, and other contests.

Perhaps the best news to reach holy offices was the acceptance of the authority of the Bishop of Roma by the Alamanni, the Red Huns, and (as one might expect) the Holy Empire of Rome. While no crusading warriors were called, then, it was true that some thousands were added to the Armies of the Faithful.

Siling Vandals

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Gaiseric, Rex

Diplomacy: Moravia (OC)

News for the Vandals went from bad to worse, and the hope of leading a federation of barbarians changed to the hope of survival (see *Empire of the Huns*).

Suevi Kingdom

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

King Agnar

Diplomacy:

Agnar leaned into the broadside swell as the trireme raced across the harbor of Ravenna. The high sun lent a bit of warmth, but the freedom of the sea provided more, and the king thought that the pirate's life held charms at least as grand as one might find in the sack of great cities.

And speaking of which, with his tribes holding the *via* and these pirates the watery road, he had hopes that the ancient Imperial city would succumb to his "charms" ere long. Thus in the Spring of 418 the Suevi tightened their grip on Ravenna, and the people began to regard the illiterate brigands encamped before the walls as something more than fashion victims.

But not much more than that. For the small pirate fleet was not large enough to successfully blockade the port, nor indeed to even provide more than entertainment for the daring captains who would smuggle goods into the city at night, during fogs, and occasionally in broad daylight.

Most of this effort was aimed at impressing the Taifali, to whom the now-Prince Gunther the Burgundian had been sent on Epiphany Sunday of 417. His mission was to incorporate those Goths into the Suevi realm. Realizing that the attempt to blockade Ravenna was about to become an embarrassment, Agnar cleverly left the army and went personally to woo Vallia.

By the summer of 420 the Taifali were sufficiently impressed to agree that the very young Constantia, daughter of Prince Dubius, would wed Gunther at harvest time. The celebratory party the following evening proved too much for the perigrinating Burgundian, who collapsed in a fit of apoplexy - and good wine - and expired at the age of 48. The prospective bride was secretly relieved: at 12 years she was not yet ready for any aspect of marriage, with the possible exception of light housekeeping. This

chain of events made the Taifali, odd folk that they were, yet more enamored of the Suevi, and a union of some sort seemed inevitable.



Western Roman Empire

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Marcus Traianus Marcellinus, Augustus

Diplomacy: Alans (UN), Calpe (FA), Maxima Caesarea (C)

Marcus Augustus was relatively pleased, and barbarians were the reason. The Alamanni had decided to arrive at a treaty with the Empire, the Goths were in disarray, and the Huns had turned their attentions elsewhere. How long this would last he knew not, but he was certain to enjoy it while it did.

Sempronius, the new *praefectus praetorio Galliarum*, escorted the Imperial Princess Galla Placidia to be the bride of Tertullian of Gades, who thus became Flavius Tertullianus Gaditanus. He then worked on the local warlord in Calpe at the Gates of Herakles, winning his allegiance in part to face the only recently trustworthy Alamanni, in part out of sympathy when Sempronius fell from a parapet to his death in 419. Libanius Musonianus, *magister militum per Gallias*, travelled to the frontier eastern end of Hadrian's Wall. No sooner than he had arrived at some initial arrangements with the local commanders to return to the fold than news arrived from the western end of a massive invasion (see *Pictish Tribes*).

The young wife of the former Emperor Honorius died in 418. Most claimed Maria succumbed to a broken heart at their separation. Johannes, *praepositus sacri cubiculi*, was hectoring one of his agents when he suddenly collapsed dead on the spot in 420.

A fire in Mediolanum was found to be arson by foreign agents, who were not caught but their target was apparently a government office. Imperial support for maintenance of irrigation canals and subsidies to farmers had long been denied the province of Germania Rauracenses, and as a result the once-profitable plains lapsed into scrub and scattered trees. Roads in Baetica, Hauptland, and most embarrassing of all, Latium all degraded due to lack of corvee labor and pilfering of stones for housing and pigpens. Independent Lusitania reverted to arid Iberian grassland.

Another indication of the decline of the *Pax Romanum* was the report of a pirate raid on a tin shipment crossing the Gulf of Lyons. Survivors claimed their attackers were Germans of some flavor - most rowers were dark-haired, and most of the boarders were blonds. Further news was the fact that the pirate trade in Aquitania had become substantial enough to cause the tiny city of Andegavum on the banks of the Liger to expand its port facilities in order to handle the demand, which the local bishop even blessed.

Holy Empire of Rome

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Flavius Stilicho Augustus

Diplomacy:

A team of foreign agents broke into the jail in the palace at Aquileia one foggy December day in 420. Several guards reported being tied up and questioned about the Quadi prince, and left when convinced he had died the previous year.

All mourned the untimely death of Eucherius, only son of Stilicho. But in what may be a rather odd sign of Holy Grace the month after the August 419 death of the *flavius* saw the birth to his mistress twin boys, and the birth to the mistress of Stilicho another set of twin sons. The bishop of Aquileia chose to overlook the provenance of these children and declared a special feast day.

Ostrogothic Kingdom

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Tamora, Queen Mother and Regent

Diplomacy:

It was hot, a heat seemingly designed to punish Northerners for their temerity in sitting outside the walls of Roma. Ardabur knew that the garrison must be suffering, with the mouth of the Tiber blocked by the small fleet the Goths had raised by pressganging the smaller ports into producing scores of biremes and by confiscating anything they could lay hands on and filling the diverse craft with warriors. On land his army had encamped across all the *Via* leading into the city. And he knew his men should have been happy with the loot from the dozens of temples and churches ransacked in the spring.

And yet he was uneasy on his throne. The Goths were by nature a restless people and sitting outside the walls of a rich city was not their idea of a good time. The rites of Spring had been brutal enough to whet the warriors' appetites, and this hunger had become a caged wolf, ready to spring out at the first opportunity for release. Further, an unusual illness had stricken many of the warriors and their families, rendering them more than usually nervous, and several of his staff had been laid up from failed poisoning attempts.

Not even the wedding of Ardabur and Tamora, the Taifali princess and former wife of his brother and heir Athanaric, had lifted his mood. She had been convinced to renounce her vows to her husband, assumed to have perished in the dungeon of distant Aquileia, and marry the king on a fine April day. Even the news she had brought to him in secret, that she was with child, cheered him little.

For he knew what his nobles said. Some claimed Ardabur had stolen Tamora from his own brother, others spoke in hushed words of hiring on with a mercenary band, or the Frisians, or even the Romans. All this driven by heat and boredom.

So it was not surprising that the king found himself battling an assailant in his bedroom in the confiscated villa the court had taken for itself. Rolling on the floor with the man he yelled as loudly as he could. In the end a guard appeared in time to split the skull of the assassin over the corpse of his king.

As news raced from encampment to encampment of the death of Ardabur the warriors for the most part lapsed into a sullen silence. No leader had emerged to declare a new policy, and the discovery that the assassin was a fellow Goth and distant cousin of the king quickly defused the immediate rage against the hated Romans. Living with the Latins had in fact made the barbarians more appreciative of

good food, good water, and a good roof, taking some of the edge off their disdain for all things Roman.

Within a week Theodoric, the newly-made fleet commander, and Theodahad, the late king's shieldman, were attempting to seize control of the reins of power. A bold mid-day snatching of the latter by men of the former ended the struggle within days. Theodahad knelt and vowed loyalty to a new figure who had been raised to lead the people, Queen Tamora.

She had not mourned her husband long, and quickly made known her possible status as the Queen Mother of the heir. Tamora was a clever woman, handsome rather than beautiful but with the ability to make all heads turn - male and female - when she walked into a gathering. Most fortunate was the fact that Ostrogoths regarded the Taifali accent as an enchantment of itself. Thus it was that Theodoric declared his loyalty to her as Regent and the kingdom escaped a violent dissolution.

By the time cooling breezes arrived in the autumn the blockade of Roma had broken down almost entirely. Rather than halting all shipments into the city, the warriors had devolved in their duties to merely exacting hefty tolls from convoys at sea and on land. Knowing her position to yet be precarious Tamora allowed this to continue. Theodoric was the man most people regarded as the "real" *thiufand*, but the well-informed realized that with him relegated to the fleet the Queen Mother held the control of the army and kingdom closely, and met frequently with a small committee of priest-led Latins, keeping their concerns in mind.

It was with relief and honest joy that the nation learned that Tamora had delivered a boy, son of Ardabur, on December 25th. Latin subjects of the Ostrogoths were either dismayed at the date of birth, declaring the arrival of the Anti-Christ and thronging the many secret churches, elated by the hope this was a sign of their deliverance, or a smile at the mysterious ways of the gods/God.

At the end of the following year came news of the arrival of a large host of mercenaries hired by Uldin to assist his vassals the Ostrogoths in the taking of the old imperial capitol. Alans under their warleader Geraldin marched with some Hun horse archers, accompanied by the veteran mercenary Hrothgar and his Germans and Roman deserters. They had marched through Pannonia I looting churches as they went. A bonus was the capture of the missionary Roman priest Irenaeus, who was dragged along and looked after by the Latins in the army. This march had been anticipated, grain and housing set up for the ten to twenty thousand soldiers long ago.

But the mercenaries were confused, for they had expected that their long march from Slovakia would be ended in blood, fire, and treasure in a siege of Roma. Instead they found the countryside to be at peace and talk of war a distant echo. The Ostrogoths seemingly had no use for them - so they went to the beach. The mercenaries realized they were being paid to in this case do nothing, and they seemed happy at the turn of events. The Queen Mother encouraged this and gave bonuses to officers from her apparently bottomless purse.

The old *thiufand* Hrothgar was not, however, pleased. No war meant no loot, and he spent much of 419 establishing ties to certain Gothic commanders who were similarly ambitious. Their plans to overthrow the Queen Mother were maturing into 420 when word of the plotting reached Paulus, the priest who had been representing the Latins of the province. He wisely went to Tamora, and together they arranged for a counter coup to take place. Their most important confederate was Eric the Burgundian, who had arrived after Lent after a long and eventful journey from his captivity in the north. With only a wagon, 12 men, three horses, and his Alan lady he had come to join Hrothgar's forces. Eric rapidly rose to prominence and had maneuvered to become one of the top commanders in the mercenary army.

On May 14 of 420 the countercoup was sprung. Eric took the opportunity to slay Hrothgar in a duel, while Paulus and Tamora were pleased at the chance to purge the Goth leadership of disloyal men. By the end of the day the Ostrogoths were treated to a shock no less violent than the death of Ardabur years before. For Paulus was in reality a Roman official, the *comes sacrarum largitionum*, as well as being a bishop of the Roman Christian Church. Yet more jarring was the news that Tamora was to marry this man, accepting baptism for herself alone.

To say that an uproar ensued would be appropriate. The Queen Mother had, however, planned for opposition and a series of short personal meetings and the presentation of select captive offspring "visiting the court" toned down the more rebellious elements. For his part, Paulus met with local guilds and priests to reassure them of his devotion to their cause. While it was unusual for a bishop to marry, the greater obstacle in many minds was that a Roman of senatorial rank would join with a barbarian widow, albeit a queen. Tamora was baptized and married to the bishop before a crowd of Goths in a wood on Saint Matthew's day, and as well Theodoric and Theodahad accepted baptism as a show of loyalty to the new order rather than as a serious spiritual act.

Eric met with similar success, and by the end of 420 was leading some German mercenaries, living in a villa, conferring with his Alan lady, and enjoying the company of a variety of concubines. Few questioned the arrangements, for in these rootless times any semblance of a court was impressive. Given the unusual arrangements in Latium few were even put out on learning that Eric the Burgundian had decided to work for the Emperor and renounce his contract with the Khakhan. The Roman deserter force of a thousand under his command balked at the prospect of working for a man who legally could have them executed and for a system they abhorred, and struck their tents in favor of a location near the villa of Geraldin, the commander of the hired Alans and Huns. No mercenary knew just for whom he would be working the following campaign season, and so collegiality would be high until then.

The end of 420 saw an uneasy standoff in Latium. Ostrogothic policy was pulled in several directions, while forces hired to Uldin and to Marcus cohabitated within a day's march, and Roma itself (as well as Ostia) remained free and open as a bastion of the Empire.

Dalmatia - *Civitate Foederatae*

(Roman Christian Civilized Component Nation)

Polyanthus, Dux Dalmatia

Diplomacy:

The *dux* was pleased at his baby daughter, less so to be sending men and treasure off to Mediolanum.

Kingdom of Roman Damnonia

(Classical Pagan Civilized Open Empire)

Volusian, Rex Damnonia

Diplomacy:

Unable to support the large Roman garrison, many peripheral fortifications were abandoned in order to balance the budget.

Kingdom of Roman Gallaecia

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Carpus, Rex Gallaecia

Diplomacy:

These were good years for Carpus, who ruled with a light hand.

Galic Kingdom of Lemovicia

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Appolonius, Rex Lemovicia

Diplomacy:

Lacking ambition and still shaken by the passage of the Alamanni years ago, Appolonius decided to keep the low profile of his tiny realm.

Taifali Tribes

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

King Vallia

Diplomacy:

Roman priests were busy among the Taifali, and thousands were baptised within a few years. Only the court remained faithful to the Old Gods, plus some of the elders too objure to try anything new, including the fine local wines. While the people drifted a bit closer to Roma, Vallia was intrigued at the possibility of an alliance with the Suevi (see *Suevi*).



Kingdom of the Red Huns

(Asiatic Roman Christian Nomadic Open Empire)

Edeco, King

Diplomacy: Neapolis (F)

Now a king, Octar readily accepted the yoke of Roman Christendom by setting a tithe payable to Innocent. His court was further know for its friendliness to the Emperor and shunning of embassies from Uldin, the Ostrogoths, and other enemies of the Empire. The king spent these years holding court in Neapolis with his vassal, Turpilio *comes Neapoli*. It was during intense negotiations that Octar suddenly slumped forward in his seat, felled by a heart attack.

The kingdom was immediately thrown into turmoil, as Octar had not bothered to officially name his son as his successor. Clans began choosing sides, each occupying sets of villages, as Turpilio opened negotiations between the son Edeco and Octar's brother, the Prince Modares. Within a week the latter had agreed to recognize the rights of the former, and after a few warriors holding out in a hilltop village were slain Edeco was, on Turpilio's suggestion, crowned by the bishop of Neapolis to the general acclamation of the crowd. As part of the arrangement Turpilio was made a member of the ruling clan in rites which left the consular descendant speechless for an entire day.

For his part Edeco announced a continuation of his father's policies, and also to guarantee the future of his uncles and his sisters, including the identical twin daughters born to Octar some months prior to his death. He further asked the Church to consider Octar a candidate for beatification.

Gepids - *Brothers of the Ostrogoths*

(European Pagan Barbarian Component Nation)

King Hellebich, Chief of the Gepids

Diplomacy:

In the midst of political instability and military passivity among their Ostrogothic brothers, the Gepids wondered at it all and generally took little interest. Hellebich remained childless yet popular, especially after ordering a general looting of Roman Christian churches in Alpes Cottiae, and was ever on edge for some Roman attack. The assault which finally came at dawn on November 19 of 419 was on his heart, whose defenses had been weakened by 50 years of hard living.

The nobles quickly conferred, and the young Vidimir was chosen by general acclamation to lead the tiny kingdom. When in the following year it appeared that Tamora had taken a step too far (see *Ostrogothic Kingdom*) the new king decided to distance himself a bit from the spectacle of a Gothic queen marrying a Roman bishop and agent. Ties between the two remained strong, however.

North Africa

Berber Kingdom of Tingitania

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Flavius Juba, Rex Tingitaniae

Diplomacy: Tingis (F)

Juba was pleased to see many unemployed scribes flock to his government, and as his agents were able to purchase cut-rate slaves for the same purpose. In Europe these days spear skills were valued more than the ability to keep books, much to Tingitania's benefit. He was also happy to have a baby son added to his household through his marriage to Constantia, daughter of the *praefect* of Tingis.

Donatist Christian Church

(Donatist Christian Church Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Archbishop Emeritus

Diplomacy:

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

Eastern Europe

Arian Christian Church

(Arian Christian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Vandalarius, Pontifex ipseque Primas Gothicus et Germanicus

Diplomacy: Moesia (AB), Europa (CH), Sicilia (CH), Syracusae (CH), Campania (CH)

The Pontifex was relieved that the various persecutions of Christians by Goths and others was successfully limited to the competition, as it were. Bishop Sunagamus, a Goth, was named to the highest post after Vandalarius' and sent off to found new parishes. He met with marginal success.

Empire of the Huns

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Uldin the Hun, Khakhan

Diplomacy: Patzinak (UN), Carpathia (PT), Moravia (P)

Vandals, Goths. Bah. It was becoming clear to Uldin that little would be accomplished while such lesser peoples were left free to pester his *minghans* in their quest for loot and conquest. Thus it was that he lead the royal clans down the Danube into the lands of the Asding Vandals and Rugians. Splintering in the steppe lands, including Patzinak, was to be ignored - for now.

For his part, Godegisel realized he lead more a pool of refugees than a nation. His pride told him to come up with some defense against the dread Hun and uphold his people's trust - not to mention his own position. Yet the lesson of Airmnareiks' (Ermaneric) fate was that resistance in the face of overwhelming numbers of steppe warriors was foolish. Thus when Prince Ruas rode up to the gates of Alba Iulia Godegisel was there to meet him with the appearance of hospitality. One did not spit in the face of a wild auroch.

When Uldin arrived, his first question was, "Where are the Silingi?" A few nervous glances among Godegisel's clansmen did not fill the awkward silence, but the Asdingi *thiufan* spoke up with, "They left before Easter, marching to the North." The Khakhan was not pleased, and those present later claimed to have suffered permanent hearing loss during his tirade. Yet Uldin knew that Balimber would be able to deal with that insignificant threat, and he settled down to serious talks with Godegisel. By the time the Vandals were celebrating the birth of their Dead God the Khakhan had made some progress, though not nearly so much as he might have hoped.

Lacking in neither funds nor ambition, Uldin offered pay and loot for mercenaries to be sent to beleager Roma. Many heeded the call, but a surprising number opted for the larger amount of coin proposed by, of all people, the Picts. Geraldin and Hrothgar lead a small mixed host of Alans, Germans, Romans, and Huns south to Latium (see *Ostrogothic Kingdom*).

Looking to the West from Slovakia was another host lead by Balimber. Tens of thousands of Huns, including some who were free bands, were joined by the Quadi under their King Vitalianus and two mercenary forces under their own leaders, Goths under the Thiufan Onoulph, and Armenians under Prince Razmig. Before heading for Austria, the host ravaged the Quadi lands, intent only on cleansing them of Roman Christian temples. The dozen or so small wooden structures were razed, their eucharist items and other valuables pilfered, and the priests either martyred or run out.

By June the army entered Austria, Hun outriders roaming through mountains and forests looking for an enemy. They were, after a fashion, in luck. For Gaiseric, King of the Siling Vandals was intent on implementing his program of Gothic unity by starting with the traitorous Quadi. Luckily for him, the local *rex*, a hitherto obscure ruler by the name of Thiudmir, a vassal of the Alans, gave the Vandals warning of the Hun movements and a hasty defense was established.

Gathered with their front on the **Thaya River**, the Vandals and Austrians knew they were outnumbered by nearly two-to-one and generally outclassed. But in Thiudmir they had a leader well-versed in the art of war, having served for a time under Stilicho before raising his own band and conniving his way to rule. The Huns had been stifled in their attempts to force various passes and forest trails. For his part Balimber was please to have brought his quarry to a halt. Trusting in his overall superiority, he ordered a general assault across the river. Being Huns, they of course attempted to cross the Thaya just upstream with a mounted column to take the enemy in flank or rear.

But Gaiseric expected this and ambushed the column from a dense wood nearby. Thus the Hun advance across the river met the Vandals head-on, being charged in turn as they crossed the stream. A fierce struggle ensued, but the dancing horsemen from the steppe managed to drive back the shielded infantry, who fled to a wood to their rear. Thousands were cut down as they ran, but the vast majority made their way over hill and along trail away from Balimber's harrying riders.

The Hunnic host continued unopposed through Austria and gave it the same treatment as Slovakia. Unfortunately for the ravaging bands there were no Christian churches of any stripe to loot. Thus this rough beast slouched more than paraded into Raetia II in the summer of 418. While there were some peasants to be abused, the landscape was generally quiet, many villages empty. After a few days of such reports Balimber sighed and ordered his men to advance on the city of Castra Regina.

Reports from along their line of advance had told him that the Vandals, Austrians, and Alans were heading for the sanctuary of Castra Regina's Roman-built walls. And impressive they were, Balimber had to admit, as he viewed them one July afternoon. Bastions, curtain walls, various engines - this he had not bargained for. His army encamped outside the walls and exchanged some sniping with the enemy while his staff considered various options. It was generally agreed that the Alans would not leave their stronghold under any circumstances, and that the remaining Austrians would follow their lead. The Vandals, however, were another story ... Balimber sighed, then shrugged. Gratification deferred was still gratification, and after only a week outside the city he commanded some of his men to remain, while the remainder of the force were turned loose on the landscape to glean what they could, and when winter came early that year the invaders quartered themselves in peasant huts and nobles' houses. Most men were happy to have the opportunity of "sharing" their captives and count the loot from looted temples of Hera, Jupiter, and others. By spring of 419 the men fired what had become their villages and marched back into Austria. It too was savaged, and by the autumn the host was marching hundreds of captives from the raids and depredations towards Slovakia.

As the Huns retired, the people came out of hiding to find about what they expected. The Alans were disgusted and decided to finally leave the sway of the emperor in Mediolanum and strike a more independent course (see *Alans*). Raetia II and Austria were liberated behind the Huns, though it was usually at least a moon before any valley was entered following news the last enemy rider had left, such was the fear inspired by the men from the steppes.

Balimber had been pestered by Vitalianus the Quadi *thiufan* to return to Slovakia to drive out the Siling Vandal occupiers, and at last decided that this would be a good idea. The men, after all, had been promised another chance at the Vandals, and the Quadi would (sigh) need to be rescued once more.

They found the Vandal army deployed along the **Granua River** about two score miles north of the Danube. Patches of snow marked the fields with white, the remainder a scene of scattered woods and brown grass and mud. A lot of mud. Before the Prince of the Huns could issue orders, he found that the Quadi had quick-marched up on the left and were already only a half mile from the river. Balimber had enough time to say, "Tengri!," before ordering his fastest *minghans* to support the rash infantry. Thus the Vandal forces, lead by their "Flavia" Hunneric and some Arian bishop Paulus, were hit pell-mell by Quadi foot, then the quick Armenians under "Prince" Razmig, and finally by the bulk of the Huns, and the mercenary Goths under Onoulph.

The battle lasted from midday until the cloudy sunset of a chill early Spring evening. Thousands of dead littered both banks of the river, and despite the cries of the dying and the loss of family and friends the Vandals were pleased at merely surviving. Jubilation was not to be theirs, however, for their Prince lay dead in his tent - or what was left of it after a squad of light horse had attacked from

the rear - and the remainder of the Hun army was still facing them. Thus bishop Paulus ordered a night withdrawal to a previously scouted position upriver, and ordered prayer as well.

The Hun army paced the Vandals the following day, doing little more than skirmishing. Paulus was alarmed to hear from an outrider that their refuge was already held by an as-yet unidentified force. The despair vanished within the hour when the warriors were found to be Gaiseric and his men, recently arrived from Austria. The combined force took heart and made a defense against the enemy.

Meanwhile, Balamber had chastised Vitalianus for his behavior and ordered an encirclement of the Vandal army. Thus it was that on the morning of the fifth day after the outset of the battle the Vandals looked out from their position in a shallow oxbow of the river and despaired. On all sides were arrayed men, most with bows. A small gap near a rock outcropping was left, but that was all. Shortly after the grey sky had lightened sufficiently archery commenced. After a half hour cowering under shields and a bit of countershooting, the targets decided that this was not a reasonable long-term tactic, and began to attempt breakouts.

Few made it past the ring of Huns, Goths, and Armenians. A late afternoon thunderstorm allowed, finally, the Vandal leadership to break through to the north with around half their force. Balamber ordered a vigorous pursuit, determined to end the matter. Thousands more were slain in the mud, the cold, and the dusk. At last, less than a few thousand of the Vandal host made it to Hunneria by June of 420. Losses to Huns, their hirelings, and their allies were minimal, and they pursued over the Little Carpathians into Moravia. One casualty was bishop Paulus, whose constitution was worn down by the cold and damp of the mountains.

The Silingi made a stand at the village of **Olomouc** on August 22 of 420. Despite fierce resistance, the outcome was never in doubt, and within a few hours the Huns had slain hundreds of warriors. In the following weeks the tribes were run down and captured or slain, and the remaining warriors lead by King Gaiseric fled into Bochnia, Hun horse archers shadowing them closely. Balamber's various mercenaries, meanwhile, were encamped on the plain about the Siling capitol city, Hunneria. Some few even ventured into town to purchase supplies and found it a far cry from the "real" metropolitan centers of the Empire. They were content to wait.

When Gaiseric entered Bochnia he found that the Prince of Volhynia, a lackey of the Hun, had defeated his small forts and set up an overlord. This minor Slavic leader and his staff were rounded up and beheaded, and the people cheered their liberation. The king knew better, and wondered how long it would be before he would need his sword arm once more.

Orthodox Christian Church

(Orthodox Christian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Patriarch John Chrysostom

Diplomacy:

Events in the east (see *Sasanian Persia*) left the councils in a state of paralysis, unable to decide on debating war, Manicheans, Pelagians, Donatists, or bread prices. Petrus, the secretary general, collapsed of apoplexy at one of these sessions and died shortly thereafter, on April 1 of 418. Bishop Theophilus died at 48 in Naissni in the following year.

Rugian Tribes - *Brothers of the Vandals*

(Arian Christian Barbarian Component Nation)

King Nevitta

Diplomacy:

Nevitta wondered at the presence of Uldin with his boot not on the king's neck (see *Asding Vandals*). He was nonetheless happy to father many children.

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: Moesia I (UN), Moesia II (UN), Dacia (UN), Dardania (NT), Cilicia (T), Palmyra (P), Cyprus (F), Serdica (F), Thessaly (F)

Cherchen refugees finally settled on Constantinople side of Arcadian wall, called the "New City," and the city proper also grew as families moved back into the restored burnt quarter. Theodosius II joins the court, no longer an *adolescens*, and awaited a bride from Aquileia. None arrived, but how the charming young man took out his frustrations was left a mystery. The imperator, before riding to the east, authorized the creation of the Duchy of Moesia to streamline the bureaucracy. Several noses were out of joint over this, but most approved.

M.M. Illyricum Dux Priscus loaded troops and shipped them to Antioch, then took a fast galley to Cyprus for some R&R. His parties were so well received that the locals decided that they needed to pay their full taxation and volunteer their sons for the legion. About the time this mission arrived on that sun-drenched shore, M.M. Praesentalis Fravitta succumbed to the gout and terrible sores while affixing his seal to official scrolls in Antioch in November of 418.

As chaos raged in the south and east (see *Sasanian Persia*), the M.M. Thracias Dux Theophylact wooed the senatorial classes in Serdica and Thessaly, winning "clients" and improved loyalty to the Imperator. More exciting was the mission of M.M. Orientem Dux Verinian to Persian Osrhoene. His efforts weakened the ties to Ctesiphon, but failed to break them, due in part to the large Sasanian garrison and general uncertainty in the region.

As for a *cassus belli*, Flavius Arcadius Augustus Orientalis sat on the throne his father's courage won and steeped his fingers before speaking unto the assembled nobles and senators:

In truth, no man could ever say that Rome and Persia had ever been friends, and perhaps that is natural, for Rome is the God-Sustained Empire of Christ, peerless in her power, glory and antiquity; Blessed Rome's fate is to strive eternally with all those who envy our Divinely-Ordained eminence. And could there be, has there ever been, since the days of Carthage, any empire which so envies us as the Mede envies us?

Aye, they envy us - and well they might for our power and glory is without equal. Yet, if the Persians are our foes, there have been some, in years gone by, who have occupied the throne of Persia but who have proved to be men of honour and of valour. Such men may have been our foes but they were worthy foes with whom accommodations and understandings might be reached. In the past, our forefathers and theirs were able to extend the hand of peace, to set aside old enmities and old wrongs and bear no abiding hatred for an honourable enemy.

But what of the present? For two long decades, I have pursued a policy of peace towards Persia. I have sat idle as Yazdigerd, Father of Lies, spread his malicious calumnies about me. Taking the Lamb as my model, I have turned the other cheek to his gross and base deceptions. I have listened as emissaries came to me from all corners of the earth telling me of the Persian's interminable plots against me. Why, the cretin who dwells in Ctesiphon, and who is well deserving of his soubriquet "the Mad," even tried to turn my own dear, departed brother against me - Honorius, of blessed and glorious memory, who fell a martyr of our dynasty, faith and republic.

All the while, the mewling coward of Persia denies his actions. "Oh no," he lies, with his mealy-mouthed protestations of innocence, "I have not plotted against the Eastern Augustus." Why, there is scarcely a prince of this earth who has not received the devious overtures of the lying Persian - while Yazdigerd sanctimoniously complains that he pays no tribute to the Khan of the Huns, he obfuscates the fact that he has shamefully and treacherously solicited the Huns to attack us! Worst of all, the lying toad even approached my own brother! This spineless Mede who plots and lies but will not face me in battle sought to convince my own brother, who died in defence of Rome and of our Flavian dynasty, to attack me!! Is there no level to which the Shahanshah will not sink?

Well, I say "enough!" Persia has had her chance. Our hand, time and again offered in peace and reconciliation, has been rejected for the last time amidst sanctimonious lies from a Shah who is known through all the wide world as the greatest of liars, the greatest of cowards and the most cretinous individual ever to walk the earth. If the Princes of Persia had any sense, they would remove the addle-headed buffoon whom they call "the King of Kings" and send him off to be a jester, that his actions might at least be a source of amusement. As it is, since they will not act, our honour demands that we act and so we march to war. We will war against Persia; we will war against them until we have recovered Mosul and Osrhoene, which are by rights Roman provinces held by Persia only because we tolerated their presence in the hope of fostering peace; we will war against them until we have recovered Nisibis and Dura, cities that are rightfully Roman and chafe against the oppression yoke of the Persian overlord; we will war against them until Ctesiphon, the canker of Mesopotamia, is blotted from the map and the Persians and all others see that our Roman honour will brook no further insult and that the days of forgiveness are long past.

Verily, having taken the Lamb as my model in days gone by, I now strap on the Lord's armour and call upon him, God Who Is Mighty In Battle, to guide my arms as I march forth, bringing back strength and glory to this, our republic, and bringing about the final and cataclysmic clash between this world's two towering temporal empires. And in years to come, when men ask why

we fought this war, they shall be answered with these words: "Because of the madness of Yazdigerd, because of his deception, his stupidity, his vanity. This fool of a Persian, this pompous, puffed-up dolt, who thought himself more than he really is, destroyed his empire and his dynasty through his own arrogance."

There was a silence among the assembled, followed by a few cheers. These served to awaken those who had dozed off during some rhetorical flourish or other, and the cheers increased in volume.

The Duchy of Moesia - *Civitate Foederatae*

(Orthodox Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Melchiades, Dux et Praefect

Diplomacy: Dacia (HM), Moesia I (T), Moesia II (FA)

A new frontier command was created by Arcadius, to be commanded by Melchiades. While honored at the new titles, the *dux* was alarmed at the prospect of having to support his troops and the roads they march upon without support from Constantinople after 420. A city or two would have been nice, he was heard to grumble.

Middle East

Ghassanid Arab Kingdom

(Monophysite Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

King John the Fair, Theodotos

Diplomacy: Hijaz (UN)

The piety and generosity of John only leads to more suffering at the hands of the Lakhmids (see *Sasanian Persia*).

Kingdom of Yemen

(Judaism Civilized Open Empire)

King Ishmael ibn Yahsub

Diplomacy:

The king decided to concentrate on matters at home. As a result both Ishmael and Adam were blessed with babies in their homes. Effort spent on reorganizing the government also yielded benefit for the king, as more power flowed into his hands.

Lakhmid Arab Kingdom

(Monophysite Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Sheikh Amr al-Qays

Diplomacy: Bostra (PT), Arabia (P)

The sheikh ordered a general call up of men of military age, pressed his vassals for more troops, and generally made it known that glory awaited all who answered his plea. Thus it was that a great host was gathered and sent against the hated Ghassanids, lapdogs of the Romans. Clever courtiers failed to note the similar relationship Amr al-Qays faced viz Ctesiphon. For after all, troop pay in good silver coin had been doubled and a generous looting of Petra promised. Few really believed the latter, but the former garnered wide currency, so to speak. And so they marched west in their thousands, by foot, camel, and horse (see *Ghassanid Arab Kingdom*).

Meanwhile in al-Hira rumor of a great scandal arose among the Monophysite clergy. For word had spread that the Patriarch would rule that the bread for communion would be baked within the church, during the eucharist. By the time the story had spread for a week, the baking had become a fire, and the fire something to be worshipped just as those devil Zoroastrians were said to do. Royal agents quickly tracked the source of the calumny to a wine merchant near the palace, who had mysteriously disappeared. Neighbors reported that the man was a foreigner - some said Greek, others Persian, others Indian - and it was widely reported that a foreign conspiracy was behind the attempt to defame the local priesthood. This, news from the front, and the death of the Sheikh's wife while he was away on campaign cast a pall over the capital.

Monophysite Christian Church

(Monophysite Christian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Patriarch Luke

Diplomacy: Coele Syria (MN), Lydia (CA), Alwa (CH), Kerma (CH), Sa'na (CH), Qustul (CH)

Alexandria became more and more a city of His Holiness the Patriarch, who caused the poor suburbs to be improved and included within the city walls. Furthermore a great fortress was built on the eastern edge of the metropolis as a bulwark against aggression by sea and land. Alexandria was now a city to be ranked with its pagan namesake. A few Red Huns were hired as military advisors and within a month were to be seen directing sweating troopers in archery practice while sipping cool juice in the shade. The Patriarch appeared to favor Ernestus as his successor, and named him Archbishop of Egypt, leaving Grandmaster Parthimus, the *Praefectatus* of Alexandria, somewhat annoyed.

Great efforts were made among the Nubians of Axum. The Patriarch himself travelled up the Nile to collect the young Blemmye prince Agetal from the Nobades king. The young man was soon given a promising future as a Prince of the Church. Coming from the dusty hills by the Red Sea and shifting camps with the seasons, Agetal was overawed by Alexandria and soon became "more Roman than the Romans." Parthimus kept the lad close and dined with him weekly, pleased with the changes the Holy Spirit had apparently wrought in the youth.

Bishop Dorian "*Peregrinatus*" was finally released by the might khan of the Oghuz Turks. Despite being warned to not return, the priest slipped back into the camps of these nomads and continued to minister to them as they made for the rich lands of Persia. In Gurgan he was finally apprehended by the khan's guard and as punishment was used as target practice for 12 shots by the court archer. At sunset a large crowd had gathered to watch, silent. A dozen arrows were sped towards the holy man, yet he was not killed as each missile seemed to miss him at the last moment. He was cut down from the post, to which he had been tied for three days. Acclaimed a miraculous act, Dorian was carried off by the jubilant crowd and spent months recuperating from the ordeal in the back of a bumping wagon. The religious affiliation of the court archer was a topic of much discussion around the evening fires.

Scores of missionaries descended upon Mecca, standing out among the locals by their black pins through white tunics, walking about in pairs, and visiting the dwellings of the poor and rich alike. Within a few years the city fathers had hidden away the idols of the Ka'abah and turned the place into a church.

Amid all the other turmoil in Persia, Luke was outraged at the martyrdom of of Abdas, Bishop of Karkar, in 420, along with nearly a score of priests, virgins, and deacons. The fact that the Osrohoene martyr had out of a rabid sense of anti-idolatry burned down the local Zoroastrian temple and refused an edict from the Shahanshah to rebuild it was quickly glossed over, and the man was canonized within the week.

West Africa

Moorish Kingdom

(African Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

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

Diplomacy: Arguin (UN), Ghana (FA), Khalem (PT), Senegal (UN)

The march of Berber nationalism in Sub-Saharan Africa continued unabated. General Abarug the Infamous invaded the kingdom of Ghana and handily defeated the army and captured the royal family. His next target was Senegal, but to get there he had to pass through the multiple tiny kingdoms of Khalem. These refused to allow such a demonic force to travel their roads and trails, so Abarug was forced to subdue them before invading the kingdom of Senegal.

And now a look inside the most ruthless kingdom in the world:

The wind from the river made the tribal banners flap and dance in the sunset's dying light. The palace roof was almost deserted - only two older men and a teenage boy stood at the edge, watching the horizon. To the south was Lake Debo, reflecting the flaming sky. Everywhere else they looked were well-tended fields, dotted by dark-skinned slaves and their Moorish overseers. Work crews were now returning to their barracks, passing on the way the foundations of Mopti's first wall.

"My Sheik", one of the men began, "the traders from the Idir tribe report that our ancestral lands are not under the Roman yoke anymore - other Berber tribes rule them". His words carried what almost sounded like hope.

The other man chortled. "Abarug my friend, the Romans were a temporary risk, maybe, but never a yoke. Do you miss the desert and the Latin-speaking lions prowling on our borders? Would you go back to the Old Lands after all you've achieved for us here?"

The grizzled general smiled briefly. "You're probably right, my Sheik. We're safer here, and there's combat - and slaves - enough if we wish for it. Now - what is your wish regarding your rule in Senegal, and the declaration of war from Ghana?"

The Sheik turned to look at the flaming horizon and was silent for a moment. "Senegal is too far and will soon find an excuse to stop paying tribute. And that kingling in Ghana must be taught the price of defying the Moors. Take our warriors west, Abarug, and bring back all the people of Senegal and Ghana. In chains. When you return we will hold Sedray's coming-of-age feast - you are one of the guests of honor". The teenager next to him beamed with pride.

"Thank you, my Sheik. It will be done." General Abarug left the roof with his usual scowl. He could already be heard barking orders at his captains. Sheik Abdul smiled - his old friend would make sure this was another well-run and successful campaign. Time to have the slave barracks enlarged, he thought... Then young Sedray spoke up: "Father, what did you mean when you said General Abarug would be a guest of honor?"

The Sheik's eyes gleamed dangerously. "Ah, my son, at your feast I will kill two birds with one arrow. I will give Abarug a much-deserved reward, as well as rest from battle. At the same time, I will teach the Ghanans the true meaning of punishment." At his son's puzzled look, he chuckled. "I'm giving all of Ghana to the General after his campaign, Sedray. If those meddling fools

think Abarug made them suffer as our General, wait until he rules them as our Governor!"

The king of Senegal protested that he was already a vassal, albeit unwillingly, of Abdul al-Kasurga. A messenger returned with the chilling message that the Sheik required his people for various labor projects. An army of over 5000 outraged Senegalese warriors marched out to meet the Berber army. In a classic maneuver, Abarug attacked their front with a portion of his light horse, ordered a feigned flight, then counterattacked the pursuing mass of ill-ordered troops. The local army was essentially wiped out and most of the people were enslaved and marched back to Songhai tied in groups, nearly 30,000 of them. They joined 10,000 refugees from Jenne-Jeno in shared misery.

On his return from conquests to the West, Abarug was feasted at the same time Sedray was named the Crown Prince. The general was further given Ghana as his personal fief as reward for his years of service to the sheik and the people. Having been ravaged by the Berber army, Senegal was turned loose. Meanwhile, the sheiks of Arguin realized there was no reason to continue to send tribute to the distant al-Kasurga, and cordially evicted his tax counters and other representatives. And to the east and south years of warfare and refugees caused the unexpected (see *Sudanese Kingdom*).

Sudanese Kingdom

(African Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Mansa, King of Sudan

Diplomacy: Sudan (HM), Garou (FA)

While the Sheik of the Berbers feted his son and general, the outrage and fear felt by his neighbors reached a peak. In the spring of 420 the king of Sudan, Mansa, declared his intention of driving the Romans (by which he meant the Berbers) back across the Sahara. Thousands of refugees from Songhai cheered the king and many volunteered to join his army. The king of Garou decided to pledge his people to the cause, thinking it was better to join with others to resist the inevitable enslavement promised by the northerners.

East Africa

Axumite Empire

(Monophysite Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Emperor Tewodros Ella Asgad

Diplomacy: Berbera (P)

Shamed by his failure against the Blemmye, Tewodros led a host against Berbera, crushing the local clans and adding this strategic stretch of coast to his realm. Furthermore, many evangelists were funded to spread the Good News to the people of Djibuti. Enough of them responded with a heartfelt "whatever" that the province was welcomed into the Holy Mother Church.

Blemmye Tribes

(African Pagan Barbarian Component Nation)

King Satifal "the Great"

Diplomacy: Beja (F)

Outraged at the creeping "Romanization" of their overlords the Nobades, the Blemmye nobility raised up one of their own, Aspher, a distant cousin of the captive Satifal, as the steward until the return of the king (see *Nobades Kingdom* below). The attempt to place the Blemmye under the suzerainty of Zakarias of Beja did not help attitudes along the Red Sea. But the main complaint was

the implied need to replace the worship of the gods of their ancestors, and many hoped their Prince Agetal would return to them and to the old ways.

Meanwhile Satifal, who had travelled to Yemen after banishment from Nobades and Blemmye lands and the execution of his son and heir Ephisal, received this news with gladness. Within a week he was back in Blemmye. Aspher was not pleased, as he had designs on the throne himself. Several of the steward's cousins ambushed Satifal while he was greeting people in a market village. The assassins were spotted and torn to shreds by the well-armed mob, who then stormed the camp of Aspher and treated him as harshly.

Ironically, the statement of Zakarias that as king he would continue to embrace the rites of old worked in his favor, and he was welcomed back into the kingdom as a valued ally. In 420 he wed the very young daughter of Satifal, Sinhuway. She was 15 and he was 44, yet politics outweighed all else in these dangerous times and by December she was great with child. This sealed the relationship, and Zakarias was named Prince and Heir to Satifal.

Nobades Kingdom

(Monophysite Christian Civilized Open Empire)

King Phillipus Silko, Basileus

Diplomacy: Beja (UN), Blemmye (UN), Nobatia (UN), Kasu (EA), Qustul (F)

The entire realm mourned the passing of general Dunkas, who died of an untreated infection resulting from a sparring wound in January of 417. Thus Prince Agetal had to make his way north with only a few companions (see *Monophysite Christian Church*).

Why did the handsome lad travel north? King Phillipus Silko announced on Easter Sunday of 417 that his nation was converting to Christianity under the Patriarch of Alexandria, and submitted to baptism at the hands of the Bishop of Meroe. This change in policy outraged many, leading to the loss of the Blemmye nation, Nobatia, and as well as the Beja. At the news of the rising the few hundred Blemmye troops which had been placed under the command of Zakarias, king of Beja, mutinied against a man widely loathed for having "betrayed" the Blemmye king, Satifal. This despite his announcement at the baptism that:

Our religious traditions will stay unchanged, despite the religious conversion of the Nobades. Monophysite Christians are to be tolerated, although not encouraged. Prince Agetal, son of the former King of Blemmye, is studying the new faith, but far away in Alexandria, not here in our kingdom. Let this shine as an example. Those wishing to embrace this new faith can study it there, not in our land where we hold dear to the traditions of our fathers.

But Zakarias was out when the warriors came looking for him, and he slipped away home. The Blemmye, on horse and camel, gave chase, and when they lost him they took the opportunity to slit the throats of their few Nobades minders and escaped back home themselves. Phillipus cursed the ingratitude of the barbarians, on whom he had lavished gold and grain, and then resumed the oversight of his diverse and fractious land.

Happier news was generated by Lord Shenouda, who by the end of 417 had won the willing allegiance of Kasu and a beautiful princess for the king. Their wedding was the event of the social season:

The wedding ceremony lasted for only the typical 40 days, but it was still filled with the usual long series of rituals, both old and new. According to long standing traditions, the groom presented several gifts, particularly garments for the bride, her mother and sisters. These presents were boarded on a camel, adorned with decorations, colourful silk fabrics, and jewelry.

All propaganda efforts were made to ensure the King's natural honesty and trustworthiness was well known and gifts were selected to embody these royal traits.

During the wedding ceremony King Phillipus Silko was well dressed, holding a sword and a whip. The bride carried loads of jewelry all over her body. Around the neck, she wore 2 lines of necklaces, topped by two more simple lines of jewelry. Her ears displayed a large pair of earrings dangling from the top part of both ears, a second pair from the lower part and yet a third in between. Her ankle was adorned with a silver anklet and her fingers with silver rings.

The new chapel built by the Monophysite Church in Kerma was named for Saint Mary, but it was judged too small and without proper grandeur for such an auspicious royal wedding. Thus most of the wedding itself took place in the large open square of the city, before a multitude, much as the King's parent's wedding had. Thus the location continued an old tradition while the service was settling a new one using the Monophysite Christian format.

The ceremony did not, sadly, prevent the young lady from dying in childbirth the following year. The city of Qustul approved of the baptism of the king and yielded to his authority.

Persia

Orthodox Zoroastrian Church

(Orthodox Zoroastrian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Narses-Kartir, Mobedhanmobed

Diplomacy: Parthau (AB), Abadan (CA), Kirman (AB), Kirman (city) (CH), Ormuz (AB), Khurasan (UN), Nishapur (CH), Uruk (CH), Abarshahr (UN), Hecatompylos (UN), Persia (CH)

Over 4000 *gyanavspar* are outfitted and sent to the eastern frontier under *mobed* Shaarox, sworn to die in the defense of the Faith with purified *daena*. They were about to enter Margiana when word came of the Indian invasion, so the force turned around and raced back over new roads to join the main army of the shahanshah as was their duty. Ahriman the Destroyer has many heads, and now one of them was apparently in Pataliputra. Shaarox is slain in battle, a worthy death, and is replaced at the front (see *Sasanian Persia*).

Kartir spends much time in Asuristan, Ahvaz and Parthau writing his *Letters to the Arabs*, which are religious instructions to the missionaries entering Oman. Azargoshasp wanders the desert, befriending the Bedouin and littoral princes alike, preaching the *gathas* of Ahura-Mazda in Dharan. Few heeded the call. Namirog found small success in al'Bayad, the advice of his *mobedhanmobed* notwithstanding.

Kingdom of Persarmenia - *Sasanian Persian Satrapy*

(Monophysite Christian Barbarian Component Nation)

King Mazdak, Satrap

The king was pleased to father a son and daughter, and less pleased at the outbreak of war (see *Sasanian Persia*). A long-term subsidy for clearing forests in Ghilan was announced, and settlers flocked there, many refugees from war-torn regions.



Sasanian Persian Empire

(Orthodox Zoroastrian Civilized Open Empire)

Yazdigerd I, Shahanshah of Persia

Diplomacy: Ahvaz (F), Osrhoene (C), Mosul (UN), Asuristan (OC)

On the issue of evangelism within the Empire, Yazdigerd had this to say:

We, Shahanshah, Beloved of the Sun, Favored of the Gods, hereby outlaw unauthorized proselytization in our provinces and dependencies. We, in the interest of our own Christian communities welfare, forbid the parasitic extraction of their wealth by their own prelates to be disposed of to succor the wretched enemies of our state.

All grain, gold, and manpower derived from Persia will remain within Persia for the benefit of Persian subjects. Any attempt to influence the loyalty of the Christian communities, close to our heart though not in faith, is also forbidden. Any violation of this decree will result in various unspecified, but quite unpleasant, penalties for violating parties. In our house we are master, and our guest must be wary of what they say and do with others when resident within our domain.

Against the Darkness in a spirit of joy and peace.

Yazdigerd III Shahanshah

Despite these stirring words missionaries found no purchase in Asuristan, where the local Christians and Jews were "polite" to the emissaries of the religion of their masters, but no more than that. In Mesopotamia evangelical *dasturs* were listened to avidly by Manicheans and Monophysites alike, painfully aware that an army besieging Ctesiphon would quarter themselves in places like Veh-Ardashir and not care whose food and daughters/sons they were taking.

The capitol grew as more artisans were encouraged to move into Ctesiphon. Furthermore the great city was finally given walls and gates, as were Dura and Nisibis. This move seemed extravagant at the time, though none would gainsay the Shahanshah, but in the end proved providential. Much of the Persian Silk Route was upgraded from a string of post stations along a graded track to imperial-licensed caravanserais along a paved road.

The famous mercenary Qutlugh was tempted to take the offer from the imperial *arteshataransalar* but by early 417 rumors had found his ear and he declined. The Persians cursed him as a bloody Turk. They would see more of them ...

De Bello Persico

Spring of 417

- **Eastern Romans:** Arcadius crosses the Hellespont into Asia Minor with light troops, ostensibly on a tour of the local defenses and to discuss issues with the Patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem. The *comes* for Arabia, al-Mundir, is halted at the border stone with Palmyra and a full-scale battle erupts after one of the Palmyran nobles is felled by a slingstone from a clan enemy in the Arabian ranks. The locals are no match for the Roman-trained army and Palmyra is annexed as a march province under Arabian jurisdiction. A few days later the main Eastern Roman legions under Eutropius Cypriotis, Bishop of Thessalonika, arrive with nearly 100,000 men and the Palmyrans give up all thought of resistance. With him is Athaulf, Magister Officiorum, and his Gothic *buccellarii* and their families.
- **Zoroastrians:** The Orthodoxo called 4000 *gyanavspar* cavalry to service as military servants of Ahuramazda, some equipped as cataphracts armored head-to-toe and carrying the double-ended *kontos* in the old style, others as cuirassed *asvaran* archers, and many skirmishers. These immediately marched for the Turanian frontier.

Summer of 417

- **Eastern Romans:** M.M. Illyricum Dux Priscus lands in Antioch with thousands of legionaries destined for the command of Eutropius Cypriotis.
- **Gupta India:** Rabindranath Tagore marches across the Hingula and into Makuran and begins the process of subduing the Persian satrapy. The local imperial authority is *mihr* Feruz, who takes the field with a small force, mostly naval. These Persians are either slain or flee, and Feruz falls back into Musama, whose landward side is cut off by a large force of Persian *paighan*.
- **Sindhu:** The *maharaja*, Abhayadatta, slips into Musama with a small fleet disguised as cloth merchants and spent the many months working contacts with city officials.

Autumn of 417

- **Gupta India:** The fleet of Shri Lal Bahadur looks for Persian warships to sink in the Gulf of Oman and then the Persian Gulf, but finds none.

Winter of 417

- **Eastern Romans:** Aetius Renatus, Vicarius Generalis Aegypti, joins the Arabia contingent in Palmyra with over 20,000 men of his own raised from Faiyum.
- **Sasanian Persia:** Reports from Makuran are taken seriously and the Shahanshah authorizes the military to engage in standard defensive maneuvers. Riders take the orders to the far reaches of the empire within a week and horse and foot begin to move by February. Conversely, the massing of Roman troops in Palmyra is passed off by advisors as "maneuvers" by the effete Romans, while the Indian threat is taken very seriously - they do after all have more elephants than does the Shahanshah, and they are what counts. Even Artaban returns from his diplomatic mission in order to oversee the defenses of Ctesiphon.
- **Lakhmid Arabs:** Hashim al-Kansa attempts to slip through Bostra but his force is caught by the local sheik. Despite a fierce resistance the natives are overwhelmed and chased off. Sheikh Amr al-Qays decides that there are too many cursed Greeks in Palmyra and joins the rest of the army in Bostra.

Spring of 418

- **Eastern Romans:** Iohannes Xiphos, Bishop of Naissus, arrives in Palmyra as the second-in-command to the Emperor.
- **Gupta India:** Makuran is subdued with minimal effort by over 30,000 troops and 150 elephants under the command of general Rabindranath Tagore.
- **Lakhmid Arabs:** Moving into Arabia, Sheikh Amr al-Qays finds more than he bargained for when he runs into the *foederati* al-Mundir and his army racing back home from Palmyra on the news of the Lakhmid invasion. Poor al-Mundir is outnumbered and outclassed at the battle of **Thantia**, his troops fleeing into the hills and anonymity, their sheikh barely making it through the gates of Bostra with a broken left arm. Lakhmid losses are minimal, and Amr al-Qays decides to press on to Petra and the Ghassanid heartland.
- **Sasanian Persia:** Nearly the entirety of the Persian army is mustered on the plain just east of Ctesiphon on the afternoon of 23 April 418. Yazdigerd I looks over the serried ranks of gleaming armored cavalry, the dull glare from the wicker shields of the infantry, and the small mountain ridge of the elephants and their support troops, and his heart rises. The small dog on his lap yaps, and the Shahanshah climbs down from his observation chair, mounts his armored horse and rides in review along the front. These are of course the Immortals, each impeccably outfitted, and he does not bother with the rear rankers, hoping that they are at least vaguely similar.

The 100,000 or so men are ordered down river and along the coast, to take on the Indian threat. Morale is high and they begin to march within a week. About 10,000 remain in Ctesiphon with Shapur and Artaban while the rest march down the road to Uruk.

Summer of 418

- **Eastern Romans:** M.M. Orientem Dux Verinian arrives in Palmyra with thousands of heavy and light troops for the Bishop. Georgios, Prince of Lazica, entered Balasagan with his nobles and peasant levies. Unfortunately for him that province was neither Persian territory, having been overlooked by the bureaucrats back in Ctesiphon, nor was it Roman. The local *naxarar* did not look kindly upon the interlopers. An ambush along the Araks river sent the Lazicans back home, wiser if fewer.
After helping subdue Palmyra, Athaulf, *magister officiorum* and *rex Gothicus*, waits until April of 418 to slip through the wastelands of Circis, avoiding the usual routes and guided by a local ruffian.
- **Oghuz Turks:** Khan Sonqur and his clans made a crossing of the Atrak river into Khurasan - much more pleasant than the deserts of Gurgan. He was enraged that the local *dihqans* put to the question said the Persian army had passed some months ago, headed back to the capitol. The locals in Nishapur were extremely relieved, and praised the ancestors in the agiaries for the ability to leisurely observe the Turkish horde from the safety of crenellated bastions and watchtowers. The Khan, for his part, decided that if the shahanshah would not defend his people then they would now be his. Local resistance was quickly disposed of and the Turks settled in to starve out Nishapur.
- **Gupta India:** A large force under Vinayak Damodar makes the difficult crossing into now-Gupta Makuran in the hot season. Shri Lal Bahadur lands in Bandar and captures the satrapy from the Persians. The locals are for the most part too surprised to put up any resistance, and Crown Prince Skanda Gupta wades through the surf carrying the imperial standard onto Persian soil. Some brahmins are scandalized, but the troops cheer their prince heartily.
- **Lakhmid Arabs:** While mopping up and doing a bit of light looting in Arabia, the sheikh is surprised by word the Ghassanid ruler, King John "the Pious," has taken the field against him and is a few days march away. King John's army found the Lakhmids at the caravanserai village of

Mota on 7 July of 418. The smaller Ghassanid force was lead by the acclaimed king, along with his brother Paul and general Mukhtar. The battle was begun late in the morning after two single combats, both won by the Ghassanid champion Peter ibn Al As of John's bodyguard. Thus bouyed, the Petrans charged forward and engaged in a long swirling melee all along the Lakhmid line. King John lead his cavalry in a desperate attempt to keep his flanks secure. By the late afternoon it was clear that Amr al-Qays had used his superior numbers of horse to work around the left flank, and John ordered a fighting retreat. Some Ghassanid pseudo-legionaries kept formation as night fell and were able to fall back to their camp and then flee during a miraculous morning thunderstorm the following day. But most of them fled pell-mell along the caravan route only to be cut down by Arab horse in close pursuit, their bodies to be looted and then left to rot under the merciless desert sun.

Before the next moon the Lakhmid army was outside Petra - once again. King John had regrouped his ragged forces and was waiting in prepared positions as a last stand to throw back Amr al-Qays. The sheikh looked over the only way into the approaches to Petra and did not like what he saw. Archers filled stone redoubts, behind which were horse ready to sally and between which were armored men presenting a wall of shields. Then he smiled, feeling alive once more, and ordered his general Hashim al-Kansa to send his hillmen and siege engineers up on the rocks to the west. Then Amr al-Qays ordered a general assault on the enemy position. This pressure continued for several hours, until finally al-Kansa's men had turned secured the heights above several of key Petran positions. Huge red rocks were pryed loose by Persian-trained engineers and rained down on the defenders, who panicked and fled into the city. Once more Ghassanid losses were heavy, but King John managed to organize the rout and saved thousands of his men. Yet more important was the shooting of one Petran, who managed to fell the sheikh's prize warhorse. The mount dropped in mid-turn, pinning Amr al-Qays as his men were pouring through the enemy lines. He was pulled free, screaming in pain from a broken right leg.

In his rage he ordered the province looted and the city surrounded by the army of Hashim al-Kansa. Thus it was that once more Petra was invested, the Lakhmids attempting to starve the defenders out.

Autumn of 418

- **Gupta India:** With the countryside of Bandar secured, the Indian army surrounded the landward side of Ormuz. Not since the rise of the grandson of Papak had the city worried about a siege, and the ancient walls had fallen into disrepair, the militia reduced to a tiny city watch that for the most part policed the ever-unruly harbor district and harassed innkeepers for free meals. The *spahbad* and other city officials met with Skanda Gupta and agreed to accept an Indian *visaya* to oversee affairs but otherwise not require a garrison. The locals were sullen, resentful, but often debated exactly how fast the Hindus would run when the Shah arrived.

Their faith is fulfilled when in late September word comes from the Nepalese Prince Vis'vadeva Licchavi that a large Persian army under the shahanshah himself is a few weeks march away in Mand.

- **Sasanian Persia:** Arriving in Mand the Shahanshah was upset to hear word of atrocities committed by the Indians in neighboring Bandar, and the brutalizing of Ormuz's citizens. Yazdigerd orders an advance to liberate Bandar and by October advance scouts are engaging Indian foraging parties. The *arteshataransalar* arranged the army to advance along the coast in battle formation, solid core of infantry with flanks guarded by the *asvaran*, skirmishers to the front and elephants in the rear.

The Indians had not been slack, and important passes and ambush points were occupied by light troops to slow the advance of the Persians. By 6 October the two armies had danced each with other enough to arrive at a somewhat agreed battleground near the tiny port village of **Ardeshir-e-Babakan**. Both forces numbered around 100,000 troops, and each maneuvered to

anchor a flank on the warm coast.

Overall command on the Indian side was officially under the purview of the Crown Prince, Skanda Gupta, but unofficially the *mahasenapati* was Vinayak Damodar. The Nepali prince led the strongest contingent of horse and so Vis'vadeva Licchavi was named *mahasvapati* though he was not strictly speaking a Gupta. Skanda Gupta was given command of the highest ranking troops, the elephants, as their *mahapilupati*. The command staff of *mahadanda-nayakas* was rounded out by Rabindranath Tagore and Shri Lal Bahadur, in charge of the van and rear respectively. Tagore suggested placing tribal and city archers on his large fleet contingent to fall upon the enemy rear, supported by a few units of horse. All agreed this was a good plan, and so the day of battle saw the Indians securing their left flank on port of **Ardeshir-e-Babakan** with ranks of massed archers supported by elephants to their rear (along with the imperial standard) stretching for well over a mile inland. There, on the right, were the Nepalese cavalry, with the Gupta horse held in reserve.

For their part, the Persians were confident in the superiority of their *asvaran* against all foes. The shahanshah, his heir, and his grandsons all took an active part in the plan for the day of battle. Crown Prince Varhanin put forth a number of ideas from his sons Darius and Khusros, his charm and theirs clearly taking the lead in discussions. Kshrish was left with the task of leading the infantry in support as their *paighansalar*. Shaarox, *mobed* of Uruk, commanded the *gyanavspar* and as such demanded pride of place in the van. The shah hid his amusement at their eagerness and allowed them to lead the assault. Rustam commanded the light horse, who dominated the space between the armies, though maintaining a respectable distance from the massed Indian archers behind their wicker shields.

By the time each side had prayed, made various ablutions, and sorted out ranks, the sun was nearing its high point in the sky. The Gupta fleet was hiding behind Qeshm island, and the Persian army had advanced across the Kol river before dawn to take up position against the invaders, only a quarter mile separating the lines. Battle opened with a charge by the *mobedanmobed's* troops, a thin line of mailed cataphracts on armored horses supported by Holy *asvaran* and light cavalry. As soon as these began to trot forwards the sky before them darkened with Indian arrows. Most were too high, however, and within a few heartbeats the metal-plated horses crashed into the infantry. Many of these fled, some held, and into the chaos surged the Indian elephants and cavalry in support. The *gyanavspar* commander, Shaarox, had his horse shot out from under him and was then trampled by an elephant, after which Persian holy warriors light to heavy were pushed back by the counterattack and raced back to the support of the *paighan*, who then loosed their own volley into the center of the Indian lines, a milling mass of men, horses, and elephants.

Meanwhile, the Indian fleet landed behind the Persian lines and troops disembarked. Unfortunately for them the shahanshah from his command throne in the center of the line had noted their approach and detailed his grandsons to deal with the threat. These teenagers waited while the ships unloaded, then charged down a low hill near the sea into the Indians. Both Khusros and Darius each dispatched a number of poorly-armed sailors, while those "Immortals" and other reserve horse slaughtered thousands, even capturing a few of the smaller ships which had been beached on the sand. Scores of cavalry dismounted on the wet sand, stuck into the dampness lit torches they had carried into battle, and began lofting fire arrows into the Indian ships just scores of yards away. Many of the large vessels managed to sail away under skeleton crews, but several caught fire and burned to the waterline. The archers looked behind them in time to see Khusros fall from the saddle, a stray Persian javelin knocking the young man from the saddle. Before his guard could use their swords and maces to beat a path through the press of ferocious Indian tribal archers the prince had been battered and beaten so severely that he never recovered, dying in his tent that evening.

The Gupta prince saw the fire behind the Persian lines and noted the repulsion of the enemy

heavy horse and ordered a general advance. Yazdigerd saw this and ordered an immediate countercharge. Inland, on the Persian left, most of the troops were armored cavalry who plunged into the advancing archers with gusto, happy for the rush of cool air over their baking suits. The lines disintegrated into a swirling mass of warriors over a mile long, and after a quarter hour the Indians found their inland (right) flank pushed back, slowly. Persian *ballistae* were pushed up and used to pick off the odd elephant, to no great effect. The Indian foot near the shore had meanwhile managed to hold off their Persian counterparts, aided in no small measure by the capture of the hapless Kshrish fighting at the front of his troops, the duty of any *dihqan* being to stiffen the resolve of the peasantry.

The day was yet to be decided when a charge of Persian *pushtigban* guard cavalry, filled with young men of the finest of the seven families and loosed by order of Yazdigerd himself, overran the position of the Indian *mahasenapati* Vinayak Damodar, and the Crown Prince ordered a general withdrawal. Neither side cheered overmuch initially. The Indians were happy to retire with most of the elephantry intact, while the Persians licked their many wounds and celebrated the victory. The Sasanian Persians lost 7000 effectives, while the Gupta Indians were missing over 20,000 troops. Nepalese horse and "uncivilized" Indian light troops covered the retreat into Makuran, and the unwallled city of Ormuz was yielded up to the advancing Persians.

- **Oghuz Turks:** King Sonqur was pleased to see his nephew, Tamil, at the head of the migrating horde. Along with the royal clans were the tribes of Kazan, Ob, Kama Bulgar, Chorasnia, Otrar, and Taboslk, around 100,000. These set up camp outside Nishapur and awaited events.
- **Eastern Romans:** Athaulf leads his *buccellarii* and Roman engineers to avoid the trade roads and crosses Sawad undetected. By December they were encamped on the Euphrates, taken by most to be refugees invited by the Persians as per Yazdigerd's manifesto.

Winter of 418

- **Oghuz Turks:** Many of the lesser khans had begun griping to Sonqur at the lack of booty on this invasion. The great khan denied their requests, averring that the Persian army could be at their throats at any time. The Otrar and Tabolsk khans, however, were only fellow travellers, and decided on their own to raid into Margiana, whose city Merv (aka Mary or Marv) was widely known on the steppe as a rich and powerful place. Thus the hardy Turks marched up the newly-paved Silk Road across the hills and into the irrigated lands around Merv, intent on a hearty moon of pillaging. What they found instead was a population hidden in strongholds and cities, all transportable loot - even the cattle - hidden away. Then began the campaign of shah Narses of Margiana, who directed numerous sorties against the ill-organized tents of the would-be raiders from dozens of fortified villages. The invaders at first attempted to counterattack, but found themselves outnumbered and outclassed, and left hundreds dead in the valleys and hills as they streamed down the road back towards Nishapur. The Manichean peasantry gleefully stripped the dead and taunted those near death.
- **Sasanian Persia:** The *spahbad* of Nishapur considered his grain reserves and the cool season, as well as the barbarians outside the gates. The population was on half rations, but not all the horses, camels, and oxen in the city had been killed - yet.

To the south, the shahanshah ordered the expulsion of the Gupta from Persia. The army therefore pushed along the rugged and arid coast into Makuran, and by 8 January of 419 were a day's march from the still-controlled port of Musama. Once more, they found the Indians awaiting them. The *spahbad* Feruz, who had been in hiding in a tiny fishing village since losing the satrapy to the Gupta, presented himself at the camp of the shah. From his proskynesis he begged forgiveness and the chance to lead troops against the Indians. Yazdigerd was a kind and merciful despot, and stayed the hand of his executioner, putting Feruz at the head of a troop of light horse and ordered to harass the enemy. The disgraced noble grinned at the chance to fight

once more - and the odds that he would not lose his ancestral lands to the crown.

The Indian army decided this time to avoid a single pitched battle, but to instead campaign over the wastes of **Lankara** near the coast. Thus much of January consisted of raids, assaults, ambushes, and the occasional small battle. By February the Indians had pulled back across the border into Sindhu Edrosia, unable to overcome the hostility of the natives and the vast Persian cavalry superiority. Losses in the campaign were nearly catastrophic, including the death of the *mahadanda-nayakas* Shri Lal Bahadur, and no thought of renewing the assault on the Sasanian empire would be possible for several years. The very young Prince Skanda Gupta was blooded and bloodied, thus pleasing his family and leaving the lad with the occasional tic in his left eye.

Spring of 419

- **Lakhmid Arabs:** Camped around the city of Petra, the invaders awaited a sign of capitulation from the Ghassanid capitol. The citizenry wavered, but the iron will of King John held them together - for now.
- **Oghuz Turks:** The beleaguered city of Nishapur continued to hold out against the barbarians encamped about it. As much could not be said for the nomads, among whom the restive Kazan and Ob clans had enjoyed the scenery long enough. While professing their *anda* viz Khan Sonqur, they hitched up their tented wagons and rolled through the pass into Parishkhwargar on the Caspian littoral. A short campaign hard campaign against Persian fortifications leaves the nomads in control of the satrapy. The Ob tribe settles there, finding the fishing excellent and the caviar divine. The Kazan remain there, undecided.
- **Sasanian Persia:** After his transport to the Gupta capitol of Patiliputra in chains, Kshrish was unfettered and a regular guest at the table of the *maharajadhiraja*. He was valued as a genial and well-spoken enemy, for an *mleccha* of course. Sadly he choked on a bone in a dish of tandoori chicken and died on April 24 of 419.

Prince Varhanin is nearly killed while hunting one of the last lions of Makuran. Several men ambush him from a cleft in the rocks, and only the fast thinking of young Prince Darius saves him. Riding to the sound of battle, courtiers trailing behind, he shoots three arrows at the gallop, dropping three of the would-be assassins. One survives and under "questioning" reveals Roman agents hired them.

- **Eastern Romans:** Essentially, all hell breaks loose.
In the south the Visigothic legion crosses the Euphrates using siezed barges and whatever else can be had and invades Asuristan. Hard fighting with the garrison ensues.
The main army, with Emperor Arcadius himself, leaves Palmyra on March 29 and enters Persian territory, Mosul, and begins campaigning there. With the Persian army fighting Indians in far Makuran resistance is left to the local garrison of around 9000 regulars, who put up a stiff resistance. Bypassing Dura, the vast army crosses into Mesopotamia and begins reducing the fortified towns of this rich region.

Summer of 419

- **Lakhmid Arabs:** The Ghassanid king continues to hold out in Petra.
- **Oghuz Turks:** By July the situation in Nishapur has gone beyond desperation. A defector from the city outlines the weaknesses in its defenses to the khan, who is pleased to promise his family will be spared. At sunset on July 22, the Turks make a sudden rush on the eastern gate, which is thrown open by members of that family. The scene which follows becomes a parable to later Persian children. What few defenders who are not surprised are slain, and the population is herded out of the city where they are stripped of gold, jewels, and other sparklies. They are separated by suitability for various slave duties - pottery, sex, rugs, and so on. Their beloved city is then sacked and burned before their eyes before they are marched off to the various camps.

But the city does not burn well and few of the citizens are captured, mainly due to the lack of practice the Turks have at committing such atrocities. Similar treatment is given to all the agiaries, towers of silence, and other Zoroastrian temples, as well as they can.

Content with his conquests, Khan Sonqur orders an advance down the Silk Road into the wastes of Abarshahr. The walled oasis towns and their garrisons of horse and foot were overwhelmed in a short campaign by the Turks, and the locals surrendered.

- **Sasanian Persia:** Left behind in Bandar to keep a watch on the Indian frontier, Feruz was diligent and happy until claimed by a flux after eating some of the local raw shellfish and died on 28 July of 419.

More alarming was news from the Roman and Turanian frontiers. The loss of Nishapur was a blow to imperial prestige, despite the resistance of Merv. But the threat to the capitol was guaranteed to gain the attention of the peripatetic court of the shahanshah, though it seemed the Roman army was smaller than what the Gupta used along the Persian Gulf. No matter, as everyone understood that a threat to Ctesiphon would not be tolerated. It had been nearly 60 years since Julian's army had threatened its walls, and Yazdigerd felt his duty to defend the city strongly. The presence of Goths at Uruk lent all the more urgency to the march home, given their fierce reputation.

Given that the main army would not be able to enter Mesopotamia until well into the following year, the shahanshah urged his men on ceaselessly.

- **Eastern Romans:** Despite a heroic resistance the militia of Mesopotamia is winkled out of its strongholds and despatched. Roman losses were again less than a thousand effectives - noticeable, but far from dissuading Arcadius from continuing the war with his remaining 120,000 soldiers.

Athaulf continues to campaign in Asuristan.

Autumn of 419

- **Eastern Romans:** Looking at the newly-expanded walls of Ctesiphon, Arcadius was disheartened. Merchants had informed his agents of "activity" about the enemy capitol in 417, but he had paid this no heed. Though the fortifications were nothing as compared to those girding Constantinople, they yet were as grit in his eye. Further, there was apparently an army within to defend the place.

But the emperor was not about to repeat the path of Julian, and ordered his generals to begin a siege of the place. The shahanshah was many months away, his army nearly to Sind, and might pursue the Indian army, so rumor claimed. A proper Roman siege ought to show these barbarians how little they knew of poliorcetics. Approaching and cross trenches were dug, each week a bit closer, while various engines rained projectiles, mainly brick and rock, against the city. It was hot work through July and August, and hundreds of Romans were casualties.

A berm which had been hastily erected under fire some weeks prior settled suddenly while the emperor was on an official review of works well-away from the hottest fighting. Arcadius and two staff officers fell nearly a story down a slope along with wooden supports and other debris. The only injured person was the Royal Personage, whose left calf had been crushed. After screaming in pain for a bit, he resolved to leave military matters *entirely* to the professionals. The common troopers cheered him as he passed on a litter, though Arcadius darkly wondered exactly why.

Within the walls, however, the Persians were suffering far worse. Water was scarce, food moreso, and defending troops were decimated after the manner of Scipio. Among the command Artaban lead the faction for bowing to the inevitable, attempting to spare the people as much agony as was possible, and surrendering the city. But he was outranked and outnumbered by the hawks, lead by the *eran-spahbad* Spahbad, and so they grimly endured the sapping and flaming bombardment from behind crumbling walls. One of the Persian officers lost his left arm to a

stone shot from a Roman engine.

At last in control of Asuristan, Athaulf plans the assault on Uruk.

- **Oghuz Turks:** The nomads settled in for a blockade of Hecatompylos.
- **Lakhmids:** Sheikh Amr al-Qays marvelled at the ability of John the Ghassanid to rally his people to resist him. Petra held, but few could say for how long.
- **Sasanian Persia:** The main army enters Bandar.

Winter of 419

- **Eastern Romans:** Unwalled, Uruk was savaged by the Goths. Aside from the tons of gold and silver carted away, silk, spices, and other portable wealth was grabbed by troops given leave to keep the entirety of their take. Many were inspired to acquire a servant or "mistress" as well, and thousands of families were torn asunder. Once a mighty center of commerce and culture, Uruk was reduced to a shadow of its former self after Athaulf ordered the place put to fire. The city did, however, survive after a fashion mainly due to lack of diligence by the Goths in the utter destruction desired by Arcadius, aided by an unusual cold rain in January.

Just up the river, meanwhile, the self-same emperor ordered the continuation of the siege. Arcadius now insisted on riding his favorite horse when away from the captured Persian villa he occupied in order to avoid hobbling about with a crutch while his leg slowly healed. Appearances are, for a leader, all-important.

Yet Arcadius failed to realize that most people regard survival as all-important. Thus when the city finally fell on March 2 of 419 he insisted on riding into Ctesiphon as its conqueror, a feat never before achieved by a Roman. And despite the best efforts of his Special Guard there was no way to know that on a crisp morning a section of the street would collapse into a large space filled with grimly determined Persians. A number of Romans on horseback in the middle of the victory procession tumbled into the deep pit. One - amazingly - remained on horseback, while the remainder were a jumble of man and animal, each struggling to foot or hoof. One soldier was injured, and two horses screamed from broken legs. All settled down within a minute.

"Stand down," called a voice in accented Greek from the darkness. Staring at the dozens of arrowheads gleaming dully in the weak light, the eight Romans rapidly realized there was no way to fight their way out, no way to climb out, and no help on the way. Luckily for them the city *dihqans* were not under orders from Shapur to slay all attackers. Rather, the Romans were ordered to surrender, were bound, then shuffled through the tunnels to a remaining gate tower. The Roman command was stunned to read the note brought by a scarred *asvaran* to the tent of Bishop Eutropius Cypriotis. A few officers were sent to the Persian position to confirm the horrid facts.

For Arcadius had fallen into that hole, as well as one of his commanders, Iohannes Xiphos, Bishop of Korinthos. They were being held by the intact Persian command, lead by the *spahbad* Shapur and the *mihr* Artaban, in no mood for lenience. Their first threat was to begin to send the bishop back home piece by piece until every Roman soldier was removed from Ctesiphon. At this news Aetius Renatus, *vicarius generalis aegypti*, pulled his Nilotic legionaries out of the city immediately, and those under direct Roman command followed suit shortly thereafter.

Stories of the fate of Valerian at the hands of his captors ran through Arcadius' dazed mind, and he hoped the nicer ones were in fact correct. He knew, however, that the Persians would not slay him out of hand, and that there was yet hope for his survival. Indeed, within the week he was back in the his own bed, furious.

For the commander of the army, Eutropius Cypriotis, Bishop of Thessalonika, had had enough. The army was marching back to Antioch with all due haste, abandoning the siege works and leaving the Persian capitol more-or-less intact. Defeat had been snatched from the jaws of victory, and the priest was none too happy with the emperor.

"You sack-headed priest!" roared Arcadius in the dining hall of the Persian manor used as the siege HQ. "We were *in* Ctesiphon. I rode down the street, smelled the air. I could *taste* it, you oaf. Speak!"

The man of peace and war knelt on the rug before the enraged imperator, face down, enduring the tirade. He had heard worse in seminary, and from more imposing figures, those who seemingly held the power not of this life, but the one after, in their hands.

At last he lifted his face, and the Arcadius was surprised to see no trace of concern there. "With your capture, *flavius*, the Lord of Hosts has spoken. Who are we to say nay to Him? Listen to me, man." The imperator was so taken aback at this form of address that he was - unusually - rendered mute.

Eutropius continued. "After your capture, I fasted and prayed from sunset to sunset. At last came a vision, sent it seemed by the Holy Spirit, of you, on a cross, dead. Ctesiphon burned, aye, but so did Constantinople. Armies battled, Roman fought Roman, and Persian fought Roman. The dead in the cities were as wood chips on the carpentry floor, pushed against the walls to make room for more battles."

Into the hush he finished. "You, my emperor, are like me, a flower in this world, soon to wither, fade, and pass away. The empire is a Holy Creation, and our passions are nothing as compared to it. Rest assured that the Cross of Christ will be delivered to the barbarian. But not here, not now."

The bishop rose, bowed deeply, and receded from the room. To the surprise of many Arcadius did not order the man flayed alive. The treaty with the Persians had promised that the imperator would be returned in exchange for the invader's army leaving the empire entirely. What the Persians did not know was that the Visigoths yet held Asuristan, or that the Roman army vastly outnumbered even that of the shahanshah.

- **Lakhmids:** The army of Amr al-Qays begins to chafe under the discipline required to maintain a blockade of Petra. Yet the siege continues.
- **Sasanian Persia:** The main army enters Mand.

Spring of 420

- **Eastern Romans:** The Visigoths enjoyed the perquisites of owning Asuristan.
- **Sasanian Persia:** The main army enters Diyala.
- **Lakhmids:** The long-suffering Petra continues to hold out. of his people, relents and yields up himself and his kingdom.

Summer of 420

- **Eastern Romans:** The Visigoths continued to lounge in the hot weather as servants fanned them and fed sweet meats and fruit to them.
- **Sasanian Persia:** Reports from across the Tigris held grim news for the court at Dastagird. And indeed the countryside of Mesopotamia was, well, disheveled, as Ctesiphon was approached. Several members of the court wept openly to see their beautiful capitol, walls breached, suburbs burnt. Realizing the scale of what had happened, Yazdigerd announced a five-day holiday of both rejoicing and penitence. The army was held close to the capitol, for none trusted the Roman to keep his word.
- **Lakhmids:** At long last, Petra falls. King John, seeing the suffering of his people, relents and yields up himself and his kingdom. The city is sacked, its people lead off in bondage, and the government dismantled. Only John's twin sons are not in the grasp of the Lakhmid sheikh. At news of the loss of, well, everything, the Hijaz sheikh leaves the Ghassanid camp.
- **Oghuz Turks:** While Ctesiphon was delivered from the hand of Ahriman, the citizens of the old Greek city of Hecatompylos knew that no savior would appear for them. Thus the city was

yielded up to the Turk on July 3 of 420. By now the average warrior was not pleased with city dwellers at all, and the sacking and subsequent torching of the metropolis was thorough. Some citizens escaped across the desert, but most were either slain or carried away as captives. The anguished cries of the grieving, wounded, raped, and tortured continued all through that day and into the next. As for the Oghuz and their allies, they were once more well-pleased with khan Sonqur and did not shirk their duty to give him a share of the booty.

Autumn of 420

- **Eastern Romans:** Athaulf began to get bored sitting in the captured mansion in Asuristan.
- **Sasanian Persia:** Yazdigerd himself hosted late-night strategy sessions, planning to deal with Arcadius' army, Athaulf's army, and Sonqur's army.
- **Oghuz Turks:** Moving down the Silk Road, the Turks came next into Persia, which was rapidly subdued. Local mobeds were chased down, their places of worship looted, but much was hidden by the common people, whose belief remained strong.

Winter of 420

- **Eastern Romans:** Athaulf remained bored, doing a bit of hunting now that the weather had cooled. Emperor Arcadius and Bishop Eutropius were reconciled in Antioch, and held a number of large staff meetings on the topic of - what else - Persia.
 - **Gupta India:** Years of late-night meetings, bribes, and the occasional murder lead to the young *spahbad* of Musama declaring that his city would now be under the Gupta umbrella, and that he, Bahram, would henceforth hold the Indian title of *visaya*. Seeing the imperial court up close had not, apparently, left a favorable impression on the local merchants and *dihqans*.
 - **Oghuz Turks:** Now encircled, the citizens of Ray were not hopeful. The fate of Hecatompylos was ringing in their ears, and the agiaries and dasturs were busy with the prayers of the faithful.
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South Asia

Lambakanna Sinhala - A Kingdom of Chera

(Buddhist Seafaring Component Nation)

Chandra, Raja

Diplomacy:

The Pandya were holding more interest for the Sinhalese, especially after the *raja* passed away in 418. His brother Chandra took the helm and decided paying taxes to Chera was unwise.

Buddhist Stupas

(Buddhist Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Master Rugendra

Diplomacy:

The hierarchy was *stupa*-fied.

Chera Kingdom

(Hinduism Seafaring Open Empire)

Gaman, Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy: Sri Lanka (NT to Chera)

An empire slowly slipped away, yet Gaman was content to swim, fish, and play with his little son.

Pandya Kingdom

(Jainism Seafaring Open Empire)

Jatavarman, Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy: Kalyani (F)

Several projects were engaged, including the *rajadhiraja* announcing a policy of religious toleration. Troops under Lord Banabhatta were shipped to Kalyani, meeting some rough seas crossing the Gulf of Mannar. He succeeded in getting Kalyani fully integrated with Pandya, thanks to the new religious policy. Further, the *yuvaraja* of Sri Lanka decided to stop paying taxes to Chera, further outraging the competition. Sadly, at a celebratory party Banabhatta choked on a mango rind and died at the end of July, 418. And a daughter was born to Jatavarman, in partial compensation for the loss of his good friend.

Empire of the Guptas

(Hinduism Civilized Open Empire)

Kamara Gupta, Maharajadhiraja

Diplomacy: Kingdom of Sindhu (A), Musama (FA), Kingdom of Vakataka (T)

Angered by reports that Persia planned to interfere with trade between the Gupta Empire and the Roman Empire, the Emperor ordered the removal of the Persian presence in and along the former Persian Gulf, now renamed the Chandra Sea after the Emperor's late father. News of war was taken seriously in Ctesiphon, but the renaming of the Persian Gulf only brought derisive chuckles at the court of the shahanshah (see *Sasanian Persia*).

So mighty are the Gupta that war with perhaps the most powerful empire on Earth is not too much. The city of Mulasthana is founded in Sukkur on the Indus, as well as a road linking it to the greater empire. Also along the river the *maharaja* of Edrosia is established by Kamara as the new king of Sindhu, ruling with the *raja* of Pattala the lands of Edrosia, Baluchistan, Sind, and Maru, as well as their own African allies at Opane in Berbera and Sarapion in Scebeli (see *Kingdom of Sindhu*).

On the domestic front Kamara is also busy, siring many children. But his daughter Anasuya, wife of Subhas Tharoor, never recovers from the difficult birth of her child, and passes away in 419, months before her own sister, the sickly 12-year-old Harina, dies of a fever. The Pallava king pays homage at court and weds Kamara's daughter (see *Pallava*).

Kingdom of Sindhu - Gupta Tributary

(Hinduism Civilized Component Nation)

Rudradaman, Maharaja

Diplomacy: Musama (FA), Scebeli (FA to Sarapion), Opane (UN)

The new *maharaja* receives help running his fresh realm from the Hindu hierarchy. Happy at his position - it's good to be the king - the loss of a number of trade connections was not welcome news. But the birth of three daughters helped him forget such minor concerns.

For her part, the Kandake of Opane was so annoyed at being sent into Berbera on a fruitless mission to win their allegiance that the young lady revoked the status of her city to Edrosia.

Hinduism

(Hinduism Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Virasenadeva, Guru

Diplomacy:

The ancient texts were consulted.

Jain Sects

(Jainism Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Visvasena, Acharya

Diplomacy: Patiliputra (AB), Pattala (CH), Avanti (CH), Rajput (CH), Sikkim (CH), Nepal (CH), Kosala (CH), Palura (CH), Gayr (CH), Annhivarta (MN)

Baskets of rice were sent to the most impoverished peoples at various sites throughout India. Jain wandering mendicants were blessed as they passed in streets in every city. As well, many ancient volumes were acquired and monks were been busy seeking the whole and only truth. Several *niryuktis* on the basic texts were produced and distributed for discussion.

Vakataka agreed to pay a tithe to the *acharya* but Pallava and Chera decided they were not interested at this time. Aleray had some difficulty off the coast of Africa, where unfamiliar winds kept his ship in Opane from August of 420 onward. The Svetambaras had better luck on their tour, founding many sites of worship and community in the mountains. Not to be outdone, the Digambaras and Vesambaras worked hard as well, the complex at Ellora expanding to new glories. All were challenges due to the small number of Jain adherents, though many *rajas* looked kindly on them and granted charters.

Kingdom of Nepal - Gupta Tributary

(Buddhist Barbarian Component Nation)

Biscotti Licchavi, Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy:

While Prince Vis'vadeva was in the hot lands of the south at the head of armored horsemen in the service of the Gupta, his father saw to home affairs - like giving Queen Pima a baby son in 418. This took her mind off the Crown Prince, sent off to war with barely a trace of dark fuzz on his handsome cheeks. His letter detailing how he slew an even dozen Persian *asvaran* during a scouting mission gone wrong did little to ease her worry.

Pallava Kingdom

(Hinduism Seafaring Open Empire)

Mahendravarma I, Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy: Kampara (FA), Malabar (T)

Mahendravarma decided to move to the next stage of his life, to marry, to attain *vivaha* for the sake of his nation and family. Several small yet exquisitely outfitted warships and a horse guard set sail for the Gupta capitol to wed the princess Priyamvada. Conservative brahmans were outraged both that a *sulka* would be paid by their *rajadhiraja* to Kamara Gupta and that he would travel by ship. These concerns were mollified by the performance of an *asvamedha* on the Ganges, and he took his second bride in his 51st year, and her 15th. It was nonetheless depicted as a good match for the Gupta, extending their influence beyond Vakataka. The young lady and her entourage made a leisurely

procession with her new husband to his palace in Kanchi. In spite of - or perhaps due to - her youth no child was forthcoming, and many brahmans whispered smug rumors in the frescoed corridors.

More "fruitful" were the efforts of lord Beluvarman in distant Kampara, where the local *raja* decided that ties to Pallava had many benefits. Meanwhile the admiral Kangavarman had a trying time when one of his captains misread the swell just outside the capitol and came broadside to the flagship. Luckily the collision killed only a handful of sailors, and the fleet continued on. Sadly for him a flux claimed him on August 1 of 419. His Kadamba son decided that he did not want to serve Mahendravarman so well, and Malabar drifted away from Kanchipuram a bit. Sitting in Vijayadurga and collecting taxes on the very nice road the Pallava built seemed preferable to marching to war - or, really, anywhere.

Vakataka Kingdom - Gupta Tributary

(Hinduism Civilized Component Nation)

Divakarasena, Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy: Asmaka (UN), Nasik (UN), Pundra (UN)

In his 21st year, the Prince Divakarasena decided that his minority must come to an end, that he must ascend to the Vakataka throne. A propitious moment was chosen by the brahmans, and within the consecration pavillion the young man was purified before dawn. At sunrise he took his chariot to the eastern gate of the capitol and made a procession with the state elephant, guard, harem, and others. Finally he took his throne, atop a tiger skin, and gave gifts to various subjects and freed many prisoners, slaves, and animals. His mother was freed as well from the duties of the Regency, though she remained as Queen Mother and advisor. The ambassador from Patiliputra read aloud a pronouncement that Kalinga and Palura would hereafter be a part of the Vakataka realm, to the surprise and delight of the large crowd gathered outside the palace.

The news that he would be a *samanta* under the authority of his cousin Kamara Gupta received a far more mixed reaction. Kshatriya and brahmans at court acceded to this new world. Outside the capitol it was not a universally welcome change. In Asmaka, Nasik, and Pundra the countryside rejected the idea of Gupta rule. The cosmopolitan peoples of the cities were not so concerned and remained loyal. Courtiers and generals could not agree on a course of action, and thus the young man concentrated on improving his hold on what he had.

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.

Secret Movement

Unlike regular movement or evasive movement, Secret Movement (rules **7.2.4.24**) relies on the charisma of the army leader. Further, a successful secret move requires a die roll against that leader stat.

As such, odds are improved by spending more time on the operation in blocks of five AP, [5], as discussed in an earlier hint, and the expenditure of gp also as noted before. Successful movement means that the move is not noted and more important is not reacted to. Failure simply means the effort failed and the intruder may need to face defenders at some point.

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