

Newsfax, Turn 7

(start of 425 CE through the end of 428 CE)

Notes:

1. Please remember to use the **Custom Units** information on your stats sheet for such things as gp and nfp costs, APs, etc.
2. You are encouraged to submit text and images for inclusion in the newsfax, which may satisfy your need for propaganda, creativity, or fun.
3. At the bottom of the newsfax is a rules hint, usually a choice nugget right from the GMs rulebook. See earlier turns for more of these.

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

- Return of the Living Dead - *Soundtrack*
- Pink Floyd - *Meddle*
- Green Day - *American Idiot*
- Ramones - *Rocket to Russia*
- Bikini Kill - *Reject All American*
- Elastica - *Elastica*
- Autolux - *Future Perfect*
- New Model Army - *The Love Of Hopeless Causes*
- Curve - *Pubic Fruit*
- Lush - *Spooky*
- The Cramps - *Greatest Hits*
- Curve - *Doppelgänger*
- The Tahitian Choir - *Rapa Iti*
- Marcel Cellier - *Le Mystère Des Voix Bulgares*
- Ashwin Batish - *Sitar Power 2*
- Killing Joke - *Night Time*
- Killing Joke - *Brighter Than A Thousand Suns*
- Montserrat Figueras - *Ninna Nanna*
- KUOM - www.radiok.org
- KCPW - www.kcpw.org

Generally eastward starting with ...

Central Asia

Hephthalite Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Ilginc the Cruel, Khakhan of the Hunas

Diplomacy: Otarsh (NT), Quba (FA)

Enraged at the White Turks, the Khakhan decided to simply exterminate them. To that end, an army of thousands of armored horse archers and their families marched towards the Balkash border. One frigid March evening their gurkhan, Inatcicik "the Silent" revealed to his officers by signs what was intended in Balkash and Turgay - the slaying of thousands of common people. Surprise showed in the faces of several, who asked in several different ways what was to be expected of them.

Now, the Hunas had no regrets over mud-diggers or city-burrowers. Everyone knew these were a lesser life form polluting the Earth, and it was nearly a religious duty to destroy them. The White Turks were, however, a brother people clearly skilled in the ways of the steppe, dutiful to Father Sky and Mother Earth. While one might honorably slay such in battle (or steal a horse or three) killing them out of hand was an abomination to these sub-khans. That very night Inatcicik was dragged from his tent and beheaded, his body fed to dogs. The army chose a new leader who decided to keep the army in Chu. A herald was sent to Ilginc, pleading the loyalty of his army and begging his understanding of their need to put down his rebellious servant, Inatcicik.

Berated, abused, and physically threatened at court, Zor Halat was sent out to plead the Hephthalite case before the leaders of Quba and Otarsh. Claiming his family would be dishonored and slain were he to come back empty-handed, these nobles agreed to bond with the Khanate. In Otarsh this led to a small riot when one Manichean priest reminded his congregation of all the evils delivered on them by the Hephthalites. Despite his reputation, Ilginc did prove to be a master of the gentler arts, having two pairs of identical twin daughters on his wife, Kiliciler's daughter the *khanum* Umay.

White Turk Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Khan Fittcheen the Grey

Diplomacy: Scythia (T)

Fittcheen was greatly relieved to see the massive Hephthalite army turn away from his borders (see *Hephthalite Khanate*).

Khwarizm Hunas Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Akhshunwaz, Khakhan of the Hunas, Khan of Khwarizm

Diplomacy:

The main army under the *gurkhan* Akhkulili rode horse and camel into Kara-Khitān and within a few weeks had obliterated the local resistance, who had decided to fight a stand-up battle. Hopelessly outclassed in every way they were slaughtered and the invaders marched on Maracanda. The polite entreaties from the grand city to simply accept a bribe and withdraw was rebuffed, and the approaches were closed down by the Hunas troops.

Unfortunately for Akhkulili the city was well-prepared to face a scruffy bunch of barbarians, with cisterns full and granaries well-stocked. Further there were a dozen secret tunnels, some several miles long, leading out from the behind the walls to maintain communications and some small supply lines into the ancient place. After months of fruitless encampment, Akhkulili decided to accept the silver horse trappings offered by the Persian nobility and withdrew to take out their annoyance on the local peasantry in a series of random attacks.

Steppe Shamanism

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Primate Religious Authority)

Toulun Sechen, High Shaman

Diplomacy: Balkash (CH)

The people of the White Turks were relieved enough by the retirement of the savage Hunas army (see *Hephthalite Khanate*) to accept the establishment of a holy place. But all efforts in Otārsh failed miserably, including those of the High Shaman. Despondent, he died there, leading to a crisis in the nascent bureaucracy. Chatting up all the right people, Toulun acceded to the leadership in a peaceful process. The fact that he was the cousin of the deceased High Shaman was a benefit, of course.

Revered, the late Zugeer had several of his wisest comments committed to song. Some examples follow, dictated in a *ger* outside the walls of Talas.

On the peoples of the world...

...the Gods and Spirits have divided those under the sky into three kinds, the Shaman, Those of the Plains and Those of the Soil. The Shaman and Those of the Plains are bound by the Gods and Sprits to ride free without bounds, follow their traditions and the Yasa. Those of the Plains are bound also to tend their herds and ever study the arts of war so that they may defeat those who oppose them. Those of the Soil are bound by the Gods and the Spirits to tend their farms and huddle in their cities and to produce those things Those of the Plains are bound not to produce...

On literacy...

The words of the Gods and Spirits are not to be bound unto the page, as Those of the Soil are bound to their farms and cities. Thus no Shaman has need to learn to read for then they shall be distracted from the words of the Gods and Spirits.

On the raising of princes...

It is said that far to the east the Emperor of China has decreed that his heirs be raised as those of the Plains, that is wisdom, for only those raised of the Plains can rule those of the Plains and those of the Soil...

On the allegiances of the shaman...

Under the sky there are no allegiances save those created by the ambitions of men, the Gods and the Spirits do not follow the allegiances of men... the Shaman is bound to the allegiances of men only in their role as mediator between the Gods and Spirits. They are bound to their fellow Shaman in the brother and sisterhood of their calling and give their ultimate allegiance to the Gods and Spirits themselves...

On the centre of the faith...

All under the sky is sacred to the Gods and Spirits, thus there is neither a boundary nor a centre to that which is sacred, there is no centre to the faith save that which is found in the heart of any man...

Kushan Empire



(Buddhist Civilized Open Empire)

Koungas "the Redeemer," Kidarite Shao

Diplomacy: Ghazni (F), Tokharia (UN)

Despite doubts as to his loyalty, Koungas had little choice but to name his son as his heir, Kanishka III, on 4 January of 425. The prince had openly scorned his father on the hunt and at court, but was popular with many among the nobility because, well, the boy knew how to party. Or so he thought. The night of his coronation Kanishka attempted to sing while eating a pheasant drumstick and choked on a bone. Despite attempts by drunken aristocrats and dancers to revive him, the prince died.

The Shao himself was unmoved by the affair, neither ordering the revelers executed nor ordering a mourning period. He had other matters on his mind, revealed when the passes cleared in the spring of 425. Once more the Turkish mercenary force under Qutlugh was hired, and conferences with embassies from the Gupta and Nepal were numerous. While Koungas himself headed for Tokharia and Ghazni, an army under Rustam Whitehair, Prince Gudarz of Kapis, and the Shah of Tokharia invaded Margiana from Transoxiana and set about reducing the large number of fortresses there.

Local commanders put up a spirited resistance, but at last were forced to withdraw by the summer into Merv, which welcomed them. Rustam was now limping from an arrow wound to the leg received while attacking some nameless town along the Murgab and cautiously set about securing the approaches to Merv. This was wise, as the city was one of the most well-defended in the world (*GM note: city walls, plus citadel, plus megalithic wall around it*). Such was its might that despite his command of 25,000 men Rustam was unable to seal off the place. Concealed passages, hidden postern gates, and many well-guarded caravans made isolation of this Silk Road gem impossible without enough troops to watch all around. So poor was the situation that the lords of Merv and Maracanda were sending humorous poems to each other at the expense of any "barbarians" who would dare take their cities (see *Khwarizm Hunas Khanate*).

And so he waited for reinforcements. As it happens, these were not to arrive, leaving the old man and his troops to rot in dispersed encampments. For the second Kushan army under Tayhar Lionshield, including Qutlugh's men, had swept into Hazarajat just as Rustam had entered Margiana. Tayhar met little organized opposition and soon had surrounded the city of Kandahar. As with Merv, the invaders lacked adequate troops for taking such a place. Succor for them arrived in March of 426 in the form of an army of Indians under the Gupta commander Rakesh Koshy, along with a cavalry force under the young Nepalese prince Vis'vadeva Licchavi and his aid Lord Jai Pratap. Thousands of much needed siege troops and infantry changed the situation, and by April the first approach trenches were being made.

No attempt to starve out Kandahar, these men wanted in the old-fashioned way. Unfortunately for the Kushans, Indians, and Nepalese, the defenses were well-made and well-commanded. By May hundreds of men had been killed on the walls, though parts of the city had been burned by incendiaries lofted within by great engines constructed by the Gupta engineers. The scene disgusted Vis'vadeva Licchavi. This was not war, not as he knew it - or perhaps wanted it. He reflected on the maxim of Gautama Buddha, "Even death is not to be feared by one who has lived wisely." Had he lived wisely? Slaying people in some dry lowland far from home, people who had done him no injustice? Reflecting on a particularly heated exchange in the commander's tent one evening, the prince reached a momentous decision, and by dawn the entire Nepalese force was nowhere to be found.

For the horsemen from the mountains and valleys loved their prince, and would have as gladly followed him on a mounted charge against the Kabul gate of Kandahar as home to their families. While Jai Pratap counseled against such a rash act, he too knew that his duty was to watch over the young prince, and rode at his side.

This left Tayhar and Koshy in something of a mire, as the city was suffering under the attacks which had for the most part been planned by the Nepalese prince. They decided to press on, hoping the defenders would lose hope with time. Those in the city had noted the departure of a sizeable portion of the enemy army, and took heart. Indeed, the **Siege of Kandahar** was to pass into the world of epic song. The defense of the city lasted until the last guardtower was taken, just as winter began to paint the summer-brown peaks above the plain - in 428. So many acts of daring, bravery, and cowardice had lead to a two-and-a-half year siege that the invaders treated the citizens with unexpected respect. The place was spared by mutual agreement, the Indians even rebuilding a quarter for use as barracks.

So it was that the stiff defense of Kandahar left the besiegers of Merv bored and ignored. Adding to the sense of ennui was the death of the Tokharian shah, from a cough, on 16 August of 428. His men took this cue to march home, which region promptly decided to leave the empire.

Oghuz Turk Realm - socii populi Romani

(Monophysite Christian Nomadic Open Empire)

Khan Sonqur, Rex Turcorum and Magister Equitum per Orientem

Diplomacy:

The khan was pleased to receive glorious titles from Constantinople, and let all who would listen (and who could not?) understand his important role in the mighty Roman Empire.

Juan-Juan Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Anakai, Ilkhan and Regent for P'ulochen, Prince

Diplomacy: Yun (F), Huang (A)

Despite the successes on the battlefield (see *Later (Hou) Yen*) many nobles were distraught at the death of the Eastern Turk *khanum* and Ogodei's daughter Shara (see *Eastern Turkish Kingdom*).

Eastern Mongolian Kingdom - Juan-Juan Sub-Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Component Nation)

Khan Juchin

Diplomacy: Wu Hai (P)

On the march into China Juchin's men captured a convoy of travelling scholars. These were impressed into the army and formed a new bureaucracy, much to the delight of the Ilkhan. While the bulk of the Juan-Juan federation swarmed across the Wall into Yun, the Mongols crossed instead into Ordos unopposed.

Travelling through the sparsely inhabited region the Mongols entered Wu Hai, which had recently been under the Hsiung'nu. After an unexpectedly tough resistance from remnant Hsiung'nu and Han warriors the place was subdued under the will of Juchin.

Eastern Turkish Kingdom - Juan-Juan Sub-Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Component Nation)

Khan Alptketin

Diplomacy:

These loyal vassals of the Juan-Juan Khanate followed them into Toba lands, aiding the Later (Hou) Yen to encircle several cities (see *(Hou) Later Yen Dynasty*). Success crowned their efforts and the khan was pleased. The birth of a son, Altakai, in 426 to the *khanum* Shara was more good news. Within a few months, however, this daughter of the great Ogodei was dead, taken by a fever which was ravaging the peoples. Indeed, in October of the same year her twin brother Alp Arslan was also felled. The infant was

made of stronger stuff. On his first exposure outside the birth yurt a dozen ravens appeared from a clear northern sky and circled him for some time before flying off. More amazing, he drew their pictures in the dirt, good omens indeed.

Tu-Yu-Hu Kingdom of the Aza

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Khanum Goland

Diplomacy:

Tending to her children and various events at court kept the khanum busy enough, though most were amazed at her disinterest in re-forming the kingdom.

China

Chinese Buddhism

(Chinese Buddhist Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Master Lo-Wang

Diplomacy:

The Buddhist project continued, feebly.



Chinese Kingdom of Annam

(Daoist Civilized Open Empire)

King Wei-Chou Su

Diplomacy:

After a painful illness lasting years King Ma Yueh died, finally, on May 22 of 428. Many wondered at the stability of the realm after the loss of a man so important to their cause. Neither son, both teenagers, was anything but the issue of concubines. Nonetheless the younger son was guided into relinquishing whatever claim he may have had to rule, and other nobles helped his older brother to understand that he would need to assume the rule of Chinese Annam.

The kingdom was as disabled as its king, and no new initiatives were begun.



Daoism Temples

(Daoist Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Ko Chao Fu, Ling Pao Master

Diplomacy: Koueichou (MN), Chi (MN)

The beneficence of the priesthood feel upon Shantung, with more irrigation systems and dikes built for the general good.

As the leaves began to turn in 428, the Ling Pao Master put down his work of many years to celebrate the completion of the Five Sacred Temples. These are:

Temple of South Heng Shan: Ghandge

Temple of North Heng Shan: Ningsia

Temple of (East) Tai Shan: Funiu

Temple of (West) Hua Shan: Lanchou

Temple of (Center) Song Shan: Chinling

Each is a place of learning, repose, and testing for those seeking to be Enlightened. Rumors quickly spread that a path to Immortal status lead through them, quietly denied by all monks - with a smile.

Wisdom from the desk of Ko Chao Fu A new county magistrate named Xi Men-bao came to Ye county. This happened in the early stages of the warring period (476-221 BC). He was very earnest in his work and cared for the lives of his people. Because of this he frequently went on tours to inspect Ye county. After a short while, he discovered that Ye had a very bad problem. Every year when the rainy season came the rivers overflowed and caused great floods. These floods took peoples' lives and property, and this caused the people of the county to be very troubled.



Evil witches with some elder officials took advantage of the situation and deceived everyone. The witches told everyone that if the river spirits were given a wife, then the river floods could be avoided. Some rich families offered large sums of money to the witches so that their daughters would be spared. But many girls and their families fled to avoid being selected by the witches as the river spirit's wife.

On the day the river spirit took its wife, Xi Men-bao was among the great number of people standing on the riverbanks. There he saw the girl, whose eyes were red and swollen from crying, about to be pushed in the river. Xi Men-bao said this girl is not suitable and asked the girl to tell the river spirit that she will find another more suitable girl to send to the spirit.

When he finished speaking he commanded his attendants to throw the witch into the surging river. After a while, he spoke again. "Why has the witch been gone so long? Some of her students should go and see what happened to her." Three of the female students were thrown, one after another, in the river. After waiting a while Xi Men-bao turned his head and said, "Women can't do anything right. May I trouble three of your elders to go and find out what the matter is?"

The three elders were also thrown into the river. When the other bad officials saw what was going on they knew they would also be thrown into the river. They were so afraid that they knelt down in the ground and pleaded for their lives. Xi Men-bao calmly said, "The river spirit must be happy with his guest now, but we do not need to wait. Now let's go." Since that time on no one dared to speak about the river spirit taking a bride.



Later after Xi Men-bao's leadership various constructions were built to prevent the overflowing and people were grateful to him and lived happily ever after.

Eastern Ts'in Dynasty

(Daoist Civilized Open Empire)

K'ung Ti, Emperor of China

Diplomacy: Kweichou (NT), Chinling (NT), Lingtung (NT), Fukien (NT), Nanyang (F)

As with the Sung Kingdom, their masters were busy as bees making the lands flow with honey. Long-suffering Yen refugees were given lands to found the city of Nanyang in Funiu along what was becoming a pilgrim trail to Tai Shan. This in turn was upgraded to a true road, further solidifying imperial ties to the region. Other roads were raised and smoothed by peasants from Taiping to Chekiang. Huge ships were built at various ports and fresh crews were trained by seasoned veterans of the open ocean.

Mirroring this productivity, sons were born to K'ung Ti and Zhang Ti. Even the death of the Marquis of Chiennan did not lead to the abandonment of the empire, as his weak younger brother took over local control.

The apparent dissolution of the Toba realm (see *(Hou) Later Yen Dynasty*) was greeted with relief at the imperial court. Some few wondered at the motives of the Juan-Juan, but were confident that the weakened nomad army would not be a serious threat.

Khanate of the Hsiung'nu

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Bulinger, Khagan of the Hsiung'nu

Diplomacy:

The migration of the Hsiung'nu hit a snag when the people decided that resting a few years in Tsaidam would be a good idea. And so the tribes and herds came to a halt, much to the annoyance of Bulinger. The death of Kouang, Tarkhan and khan of the Lang Shan, in 428 added to his frustration, as this prince was a prized advisor and good hunting companion.

More positive was the news that his least favorite concubine had given birth to identical twin sons of good size and health. Bulinger was well-pleased, being advanced in years and having given up on the possibility.

Korean Kingdom of Koguryo

(Chinese Buddhist Civilized Open Empire)

King Changsu

Diplomacy: Bandao (AW), Pusan (AW)

Jin crouched behind the boulder imbedded in a hillside many *li* from his home village. He could see the Koguryo patrol in the brushy swale below him, men in metal helmets and cloth coats with round shields slung on their backs. Some had swords out, the rest with short bows in hand, the half dozen of them advancing along the gravel and through the scattered bushes slowly. To the eyes of the old man the southerners looked more tired than cautious, and he smiled, just a little.

The elder handed a slip of paper to the small boy at his side, who slid upslope silently, just as he would when stalking a rabbit - or his little brother. A few minutes later a hail of stones and arrows arced through the air towards the party of foreigners and a score of the local lads charged into them, armed with a variety of farm implements and a few swords. In a few minutes it was over, all the soldiers of the King of Kogoryo lay dead, their cooling corpses already stripped.

And so it was throughout Bandao, as the oppressions of the Pyong-yang court had driven the locals to extreme measures. By the end of 425 Changsu was drilling the remains of his army in Anshan and considering the lessons learned. The rustics in Bandao cheered their nobles, who raised a number of the braver peasants to their ranks by marriage. Daoist priests blessed these unions and generally accepted those who had been forced into Buddhism back to the native fold. Religious tensions remained high,

however.

An attempt by the celebrated Langtu in Pusan met a similar though less drastic fate. The Emishi colonists settled there were shocked to receive a decree that they should supply manpower for the army and swear loyalty to the King. They had been settled some years before in a complex agreement with the Yamato realm across the sea, and had grudgingly accepted their lot as slave colonists in a new land.

Barricades went up swiftly in the approaches to the city, and the citizens, still mainly women, children, and the elderly, now bolstered by rebellious men from Silla who had married the foreigners, put up a spirited defence. The forces of Langtu were repeatedly thrown back with loss, and by September of 425 had decided to fall back for the winter. They never returned, though the little city was thereafter vigilant against a possible renewal of hostilities.

Later Liang Kingdom

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Lu Ssu, Emperor of China

Diplomacy:

Lu Ssu, having reorganized the empire, relaxed and enjoyed the company of concubines. Several children were produced, but few warriors were impressed.

Uighur Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Component Nation)

Hsiao Hsin, Khan

Diplomacy: Gurban (UN)

These Turks remained calm while chaos reigned in China. Too calm, perhaps, since when the Khan of the Gurban died within a week of sudden onset leprosy his brother decided to take the tribe out of the Uighur realm.

(Hou) Later Yen Dynasty

(Daoist Civilized Open Empire)

Mu-jung Ch'uei, Emperor of China

Diplomacy: Chi (F), Ch'ang-tzu (A), Tai (P), Shan'si (P), Tai'Yuan (C)

Princess Wan Yin, always in a rather frail girl, was felled by a sudden fever in the flower of youth. Grain continued to flow to Ch'ang-tzu.

Wandering Daoists spouting mystical nonsense caused general resentment among the mostly Buddhist citizens of Chung-Shan. Scores of families decided to accept the teachings of Siddhartha and abandon the immortals out of sheer embarrassment.

But of course the big deal was the invasion of the Toba Wei in concert with the Juan-Juan. 200,000 invaders crossed into Yun in the summer of 425. With so many warriors, wagons, and families the army was divided into numerous nomad columns heading south. Meanwhile, thousands of Hou Yen troops took little-used mountain passes to invade from the east.

Reports from the frontier reached the Toba Kuei at his palace in Tai, and confusion ensued. Some advisors counseled that the Juan-Juan needed to be faced first, while others held forth that the army of Mu-jung Ch'uei was the greater threat because its heavy cavalry. Rather than face each separately, the emperor remained at his court, having decided that one battle ought to decide the matter. His faith rested in the superior quality and armor of his heavy horse, drilled to perfection in the art of lance and bow, each clothed in metal armor on felt caparisoned horses. The guard units were numerous and featured large men on horses wearing metal scales for protection.

Thus it was on October 11 that he rode forth a score of *li* to a plain outside **Tai**. Juan-Juan scouts had been raiding along the hills to the north of here, and Toba Kuei wished to force a decisive battle here, on ground of his choosing. Leaving the details of command to his cousin and heir, Tao Wu-Ti, the emperor rode with his guard to visit the various unit commanders.

Meanwhile, the other emperor was greatly relieved that his army was now in one piece and advancing on the enemy. Mu-jung Ch'uei and Kutelburi, the Juan-Juan Gurkhan, had worried through May and June that the Toba would wise up and hit one or the other of them while on the march. The Juan-Juan were relieved to find their ally already in enemy territory, as they knew that their forces, while numerous, were not so well accoutred as those of the Toba. Many of the older clan leaders noted to their families the irony of the Juan-Juan leaving Mongolia for Europe and then riding all the way back just to attack their long-time neighbor. "Better late than never" was the phrase passed often around the thousands of campfires.

The day of October 12 dawned bright and clear, no clouds to be seen. Kutelburi was pleased with the reports of skirmishing in the hills, for he knew that his strength lay in his doughty horse archers. The various tribal contingents drew up along a line across the plain, blocks of cavalry here, archers on foot over there, and a line of spearmen further down. By comparison, the Toba matched their frontage with Chinese armored spearmen in the center, armored cavalry on the wings, and lighter troops on each wing. Guard troops were held in reserve behind the infantry, in keeping with local tradition.

Tao Wu-Ti signaled a general advance, pushing aside the swarms of Turks and Mongols circulating between the lines shooting arrows and then galloping away. When less than a *li* separated the armies, he himself ordered a charge of the heavy cavalry. Kutelburi, the Turk commander, had expected his enemy to hold his army in low esteem, assuming it could be swept away in a single charge. Thus the mixed allied troops in the center gave way before the pounding hooves of the Toba, who were sucked into the center of the Juan-Juan formation. Winded, the attackers pulled up and prepared to roll up the enemy line from the inside.

Then the Hou Yen troops charged. For Kutelburi had received permission from the emperor to have the latter hold his men in reserve, and these fresh troops, lead by the infantry, crashed into the tired Toba cavalry, aided by the allied Turks. The Toba were in danger of being hacked to pieces where they stood. But these men maintained discipline, formed up, and charged back out to their own lines, leaving hundreds of their own dead behind them.

Seeing their own commander leading what appeared to be a rout, the Toba Wei army began to fall back. Sensing victory the Juan-Juan horse archers swarmed around the retiring enemy and began picking them off with clouds of arrows. Tao Wu-Ti ordered flags to wave, and the Chinese infantry formed into blocks both guarding and guarded by their "barbarian" horse. The coordinated counterattacks felled hundreds of horse archers, and the Toba army escaped south into Shan'si. They were battered but intact, the Juan-Juan unwilling to follow up their victory in the face of such alien tactics.

Kutelburi settled thousands of Turks and Mongols on Yun land confiscated from their Toba lords. The Chinese peasantry hoped the new masters would be no worse than the old. A week after the **Battle of Tai** the Eastern Turkish khan, Alptekin, arrived and immediately set about besieging the Toba capitol with the help of the Hou Yen forces of Mu-jung Shen-qu. With few resources at hand it was considered that the **Siege of Tai** would not last long. And indeed, when the south gate fell on March 3 of 426 the garrison immediately laid down their arms and pleaded for mercy. They were disarmed and paroled.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the Toba Wei army slipped into winter quarters in Shan'si and prepared for a counterattack. Probes into Shan'si by the daring khan of the Altai Turks kept Toba Kuei and his staff busy misdirecting them and making the occasional riposte. The cold went into the lungs of the Juan-Juan Ilkhan Anaksos and he died of the cough in February, and his clan soon chose another energetic youth to succeed him.

A spring rainstorm brought more than damp fields, as the Juan-Juan and their Yen allies moved south. One would not say that these "marched" so much as oozed or flowed in individual *minghans* rather than *tumens*, clans rather than tribes. As the Toba army was encamped in cities and villages around Shan'si there was no definitive battle as at **Tai** the previous year. Rather it was a matter of raid and assault, at which the nomad horse excelled. Once more the Toba were decimated but gave as good as they got, sometimes in street fighting over unwallled towns and villages.

Consequently Tao Wu-Ti was once more forced into a fighting withdrawal yet further south, into Houma. This province was, however, suffering under the depredations of Kuvrat and this steppe mercenaries. These were swept aside by the still-massive Toba army and dashed off to join their Yen paymasters. The **Shan'si Campaign** was not pretty, but showed that the life of the steppe warrior was well-matched by that of the trained regular trooper. In one sorti against the invaders 7,000 Turks were captured in their wagons, the women, children, and elders carried off with the Toba army.

Weeks of retiring, advancing, probing with small units, sudden advances, and general chaos took its toll among the leadership on all sides. Guyuk the mercenary commander was slain when his camp was overrun at dawn by a large Toba raiding party. The khan of the Zaysan, Ternet, was slain in combat while attacking a body of Chinese infantry, taken down by a volley of crossbow shafts. His brother replaced him in the field and gained revenge on those very Han later that day.

As campaigning was winding down in Shan'si, a heart seizure claimed the champion of the Hou Yen, Bailao Qu Li, "the Scythe." His passage on a pleasant June day in 426 cast a pall over the nobility, some wearing white headbands in his memory. The Yen fleet stopped its patrols along the river, but this was not of great import as the enemy had no fleet to take advantage.

A more important death was that of the Toba emperor. A daring raid by khan Alptekin of the Eastern Turks caught the imperial guard napping, literally, and in the scrum Toba Kuei's horse fell, breaking his leg and pinning him. As it happened Jyh-Houng, one of the army commanders, had been visiting to confer with his cousin on the campaign, and rushed to his aid. This rash act did not in the end succeed, and both were slain at lancepoint. The nomads beheaded them both in joy and the Eastern Turks gained wide repute throughout the Juan-Juan federation thereby.

Reaction among the Toba Wei was naturally less positive. But as Crown Prince Tao Wu-Ti was already in overall command of the army he was acclaimed as the new emperor with little dissent.

Following on behind the main army was the force of Mu-jung Shen-qu and his steppe allies, intent on taking yet another Toba city. The target this time was Tai'Yuan, which was invested in July of 426. Roads leading into the city were dug up, trenches and latrines were dug, and nomad tents sprouted seemingly like mushrooms in fields outside the unwallled city. The Toba garrison began berating the citizens to put up barricades and defend their city. This they did, but after a week of such efforts the Hou Yen forces were invited into the city, and with a day it had fallen. The garrison was either slain, escaped, or surrendered, and by the August the large city had achieved a measure of independence not seen in generations.

By the end of 426 the nomad horde was pressing southward once more, into the sole remaining Toba province, Houma. The two armies moved warily, each with a healthy respect born of several years of nearly continuous campaigning. Many troopers on each side had achieved a high level of competence and reliability, and all knew that to lose Houma would mean the end of the Toba Wei dynasty. With their backs figuratively to the Huang Ho, the weary men formed up for battle near the village of **Xinxiang** at a crossroads on the Wei River.

The **Battle of Xinxiang** would prove decisive in the long-running campaign against the Toba Wei dynasty. A cold front had cleared the sky of early May of 427, and the dawn was comfortably chilly for those in heavy armor. Tao Wu-Ti had placed his Chinese archers with its left on the brush along the Wei, and some armored spearmen next to them in a thin line backed with a few *minghans* of lance-and-bow troops. To their right was a long thin line of mixed blocks of more heavy horse and light infantry, culminating in a deep mass of armored cavalry guarded on their far right by more traditionally armed light horse, bows in hand.

Facing them was the usual mixed mass of the Juan-Juan federation, each grouped by clan, various *jaguns* of foot archers and javelinmen, or light horse archers, bolstered with the armored nobility. This line stretched away from the river paralleling the Toba formation, and behind it was the much smaller but clearly more disciplined Hou Yen army. Years of warfare had taken their toll on both sides, but the Turks and Mongols were clearly short thousands of the nomad horse they had begun the campaign with long ago. The khan of the Altai and his fierce *hoyen-irgen* were nowhere to be seen, but Kutelburi had put him to excellent use.

As the two armies closed the range, the mass of Toba heavy cavalry waited on the right, so that their army advanced in echelon. The emperor smiled as he looked into the immediate future and the demise of the Juan-Juan. Then shouts arose to his left, and he saw movement in the camp, which he had left guarded with some few units of Chinese. These, he saw, were fleeing along the riverbank as horsemen and foot were seen torching the tents. This was the force of Altai he had overlooked, who had crossed the river to their rear and was busily looting his camp. The emperor ordered an immediate charge of the heavy cavalry, hoping to keep his army too busy to note the enemy to their unprotected rears.

This thundering assault did indeed sweep all before it, decimating the auxiliaries from the tribes of the Dzamin Uud and the Naiman, who sensibly fled. But the remainder of the Toba army was not fooled, and began falling back to try to stop the nomads stealing their stuff. In the retreat the emperor's lieutenant, Ts'ui Hao, was seriously wounded by a lance to the leg. The Toba army did manage to retreat, but unlike in previous defeats they were harassed mercilessly, scores more horsemen falling to the enemy while covering the main army. This was a true loss, and the emperor despaired, having lost all of his lands and cities to the Hou Yen and their nomad allies. But all surviving unit commanders showed up the following day to once more swear to each other as *anda*, and Tao Wu-Ti wept openly at this display of loyalty. One junior officer suggested they might escape into the now-wasted lands of Huang and await developments while raiding across the border.

Scouts were sent to the border regions as the army struggled along to the West. A week later riders returned bearing the bad news that the Urkel clans, a blue-eyed band of Europeans hitched onto the Juan-Juan wagons, had settled there and were actively defending the border. The realisation that the Toba Wei had nowhere to run hit hard. The emperor and his staff presented themselves before the Khan of the Juan-Juan and surrendered. Tao Wu-Ti was treated fairly well, being held prisoner at the Hou Yen court. His second, Ts'ui Hao willingly entered into bondage with his master, while the young Shi Le escaped with some household troops (2HC,3XC,1XEC) and took up the life of a mercenary. The remainder of the troops were disarmed and paroled home, except for some hundreds who hoped to sign up with the Yen army.

At the same time, a happier band of thousands of Yen natives had finally marched back home after spending some years in captivity under the Toba. The popularity of the Hou Yen emperor threatened to elevate him to the ranks of the Immortals despite his barbarian heritage.

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

(Daoist Civilized Component Nation)

Ma Ch'in, Sung King

Diplomacy: Shensi (F), Shentung (F)

Under the direction of bureaucrats from Chien-k'ang thousands of peasants toiled to create a road and waystations from Pienching all the way to Chang'An. Thousands of northern refugees were resettled in Shensi on land vacated by the Later Ts'in nobility who had based their dynasty in these rich lands outside the ancient capitol. With the settlers and the new road, Shensi was clearly entered into the Kingdom very closely. The Honan countryside was also busy, scores of irrigations dams and canals being dug, bridges built, and general tidying done.

Many letters hoping to open trade relations seem to have gone missing, and many of the merchants, mainly foreigners such as Turks, Sogdians, and other undesirable, were frustrated. More pleased was the duke of Shentung, where arguments by General Li Yapeng and the investment in the region lead to his acquiescing to entry in the Kingdom.

Toba Wei Empire

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Tao Wu-Ti, Emperor of China

Diplomacy:

As the grey light of early dawn casting a glow, a scream went out from the palace and guards ran towards the apartments of the emperor. They heard the words for the first time since listening at the knee of grandmother, telling tales of fright from life on the steppe far to the north - *Allghoi Khorkhoi* - and some skidded to a stopped, carried back to these stories. For the *Allghoi Khorkhoi* was known to kill any who saw it, a sandworm the size of a man's arm that struck without warning and was terrible to behold, a glistening pink tube spraying poison (in some accounts) that was instantly fatal.

When the doors to the apartment were opened by force (for they had been locked from the outside with iron bars) a serving girl in a yellow tunic lay dead, face twisted in a death agony that even the hard men of the imperial guard flinched to see. The emperor held a serving platter in his hands and pointed at the small window. Those guards who looked carefully could see a glistening trail over the sill and out into the night. Toba Kuei never spoke of the matter again, but all were in awe of his having survived an attack by this legendary monster.

The emperor lived to see yet worse horrors, these of a more comprehensible nature (see *(Hou) Later Yen Dynasty*).

Western Ts'in Empire

(Asiatic Pagan Civilized Open Empire)

Chow Lu, Emperor of China

Diplomacy:

The once-revered Chow Lu was now seen rarely outside the palace. Rumor had it that he had become sick, or weak, or too fond of food and frolic. The Han bureaucracy kept the empire running regardless of the barbarian nominally in charge, and peace continued.

South East Asia

Cham Kingdom

(Hinduism Barbarian Open Empire)

King Samudravarmān

Diplomacy:

While seeing to the administration of the kingdom, Samudravarman managed to sire several children. Several captains of the infantry were executed when it was discovered they had been passing on information to the Khmer for many years.

Chen-La Kingdom

(Hinduism Civilized Open Empire)

King Pendravarman

Diplomacy:

Except for aging, Pendravarman did little except to enjoy his position.

Khmer Kingdom of Funan

(Hinduism Civilized Open Empire)

Korn Danh II, the Great, King of the Mountain

Diplomacy:

Mighty armies were raised, great works constructed, and generally Funan was a busy place. Saha Yudaveer, long-time aid to the Great King, died of a fever at the advanced age of 49 in 425. The court mourned his loss for a fortnight.

Kingdom of Tarumanegara

(Buddhist Seafaring Open Empire)

Purnavarnam, Raja

Diplomacy:

The fishing, it was good. Tales of a race of short human-like people reached court, and made for good entertainment from somewhere east of Bali.

Malayadvipa - Gupta Tributary

(Buddhist Seafaring Component Nation)

Sripanasan, Regent for Crown Prince Varanavendra

Diplomacy: Wangka (A)

The gold ships from India continued to arrive with the monsoon winds, and all was well in the kingdom. Having left his studies, the *kshatriya* Varanavendra lead a fleet to the important tin-mining island of Wangka, there to seek a bride and an ally. There he found both, though neither the girl nor her father, Wili, would improve the glory of the court back home in Malayu. Nonetheless within a year the princess had given birth to a son, and many dragons, rhinos, and "old men of the forest" were roasted in celebration.

Pyu Kingdom

(Buddhist Civilized Open Empire)

King Kyanzittha

Diplomacy:

Growth characterized the Pyu Kingdom in these years. Cities grew as farmers were encouraged to work in their small industries such as pottery and metalworking. Vast terracing and irrigation works were completed in Burma to the joy of the locals. Overseeing this, and as well teaching the nobility about the insights of The Buddha, the elderly Prince Nagarjunakonda at last converted them entire from their misguided pagan ways. Overall Kyanzittha had reason to be pleased.

Japan



Emishi Lords

(Asiatic Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

King Ashitaka

Diplomacy:

Outrage at news from Pusan (see *Korean Kingdom of Koguryo*) was tempered at amusement at overtures from the Yamato court (see *Yamato Japan*). Ashitaka was distraught at the death of his long-time retainer, Lord Tatari, on July 24 of 428. His replacement from the family was a shallow youth, interested only in rice candies and peasant girls.

Yamato Japan

(Shinto Civilized Open Empire)

Jingu Koga, Regent for Okinagatarashi-Hime No, Kima of Wa

Diplomacy: Kwanto (F)

A truce was announced between the Emishi and Yamato Japan. This truce will be kept on the Japanese side, unless the Emishi break the truce. Use of Emishi troops, warships, or other actions against Japanese provinces, forces, leaders, infrastructure, treasury, merchant or warships, and/or trade will break the truce. The Emishi ambassador smiled at this announcement, and claimed it as proof the Yamato court was terrified.

As if to prove him right strongholds were constructed around the loyal provinces. More impenetrable to him was news that the Tombs of Nara were completed in Yamato. Inside the high 400 meter long earthen walls rest the late Kima of Wa Nintoku, his queen Narua, Crown Prince Ojin and his wife Minekawa Takako. Ceremonies completed the sanctification of the square front and round back (as seen from above) keyhole shaped earthen Tombs. Clay grave offerings, such as horses, chickens, birds, fans, fish, houses, weapons, shields, sunshades, pillows, and male and female humans filled the tomb. While this display of devotion did not impress the Emishi, the citizens hearing tales of the edifice and celebrations were pleased.

"Young Okin did a fine job at the Tombs of Nara dedication ceremony. He is finally ready to be King of Nihon, within his limits," mused Jingu. "Okin is not a warrior, and he could not lead a horse to water, but he can chair a meeting. Let him go to every rice board meeting, the irritation planning meetings, the blessings of the harvest. They are important, but have bored me to tears for years. One more chart of rice varieties and food properties will make my head explode. So Okin grows up to be an overly pious, soy sauce making boy King. *A so deska.*"

"Um, well, let's be honest. Better him than me. I can lead the Miwa Guard into action better than anyone else. Let me count my blessings. I could have had to marry that toad Mononobe Jutaro. I shall defend the realm. After all, I can still pierce a falling cherry blossom with an arrow from a horse at gallop, and have honored my father Nintoku and his memory."

While the aforementioned Kima remained in the capitol and oversaw various functions, Prince Matsui Kazu directed the improvement of Edo in Kwanto into a small port city. This, and the visit of Hiroaki "the Protagonist" among the local nobility, convinced the villages of Kwanto to fully join under the Yamato banner.

Southern Mountains Clans

(Shinto Barbarian Open Nation)

Mononobe Jutaro, king

Diplomacy: Kagoshima (F), Yamaguchi (A)

Koji Jutaro, despite assurances from Jingu Koga, was unnerved by the recent events to the North (see *Yamato Japan*). Nintoku's death had initiated a power struggle between brother and sister, but the Regent of Akihito Jutaro wasn't sure what the winner had in mind for those of the Southern Mountain Clan. Quickly he marshaled his forces to protect the young king all the while he knew that a single strong push from the Yamato would end their short lived independence. First he ordered the construction of a fortress at Kokura, a small village on the high ground that controlled access to the lowlands where ferrymen had plied their trade for centuries between Saga and Yamuguchi. Called Kokura-jo, this port fortress would hopefully be a deterrent to any aggressors trying to come across the strait.

Setting off in the early spring Koji, with the young King Jutaro in tow, was determined to rally more support to the Jutaro clan. His plan was to travel across Kagoshima and Yamaguchi in a quick attempt to build an alliance should Yamato decide that the Southern Mountain Clans should still belong to their empire. Ahead of him he sent loyal men dressed as merchants to spread the tale of how Jingu had usurped the throne from Ojin sending the prince into exile while her lover Heero murdered his wife and two children. Additional rumors hint at Jingu's anger that her father had given greater sovereignty to the Clans,

a desire to force them back into subservience, and punish those who had encouraged independence. Weeks later Koji would enter the villages and towns promoting unity with Jutaro while giving small gifts as a sign of friendship. He also promises military cooperation and mutual defense pacts to allay fears of northern aggression. In Kagoshima, Koji himself takes a wife in an attempt to improve relations and bind the two nations closer together.

These efforts at diplomacy were a resounding success and Kagoshima stopped wavering and entered the Southern Mountains system. His entry into the local nobility by wedding a young princess aided this greatly. Yamaguchi decided to help Koji in his defense of the realm. This was part of a trend, as Koji also managed to extract oaths of fealty from all under his authority, tightening his web of power across the islands of the south.

Western Europe

Alamanni

(Roman Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Arbogast, Rex

Diplomacy:

Laid low by a pox, Arbogast could only watch as his kingdom was losing lands, like a boar torn apart by wolves (see *Kingdom of Roman Gallaecia*, *Rugian Tribes*, and *Siling Vandals*). At length, in the morning of August 30 of 425, he succumbed. His son by a local concubine was but 13 and many were worried that one of several aggressive nobles would seize the opportunity and use murder as the route to the throne. But the church was behind the young Wulfgar and he was duly anointed on September 3.

Kingdom of the Alans

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Arlon, Shah

Diplomacy: Austria (UN)

The movement of Huns and Germans past - and sometimes through - this largest of Alan domains stirred the people and their khans. Thus it was always the case that travelling merchants and others were welcome at the court of Xerxes, who enjoyed tales of distant lands and customs. Further, he was tired of his neighbors the Romans and the Huns, neither of whom paid him enough attention. After conferring with his friend and ally Thiudmir of Austria the shah decided that the clans would leave the cold and high transalpine lands for the sunny and warm south.

Spring of 425 saw great debates across the kingdom. The city-dwellers of Castra Regina had no intention of leaving their walls, while the Germans of Austria were enthusiastic migrants. Raetia II held both the original Roman settlers and the various nomads under the dragon banner of the Alans, mostly of course Alanic, but with some Goths, Huns, and others as well. The Latin speakers were keen to stay, so they did.

By June the passes were clear and the flood opened upon Raetia I as the host of tens of thousands of warriors, mostly ahorse, and their families, moved up the Danovius. At **Phaeniana** the road lead to the "new" Roman fortifications, consisting of ditches, pallisades, earthworks, trenches connecting guard towers, and thousands of *comitatensis* manning them. This was the entryway into one of the most heavily-fortified provinces in the world, and even Thiudmir, hero of many clashes with barbarians in the past, was at something of a loss as to how to employ his 25,000 warriors, nearly all cavalry.

Leading the Romans was their *dux Raetium* Narses, son of a Sarmatian father and a Persian mother, a man who had seen and done more than most 25-year-olds. His nominal commander was Timotheus, a *magister officiorum* and as well the Bishop of Narbo. The old priest wisely let Narses organize the defense while advising him on the various tribes facing them, as Timotheus had recently been in attendance at the court of Xerxes on imperial business.

August of 425 saw the Alan force encamped against the Roman lines. Thiudmir tried various ruses, assaults, and stratagems. Each of these was well-considered and timed perfectly, but each was thwarted by the logic of internal lines, hard-trained troops, and years of Roman preparation. By early September frustration finally overtook Xerxes, who was keen to cross to Gaul before the snows flew. Thus on September 10 Xerxes and Thiudmir lead an attack all along the lines, with various distractions, smoke bombs, and other clever plans aiding them.

Two miles west of **Phaeniana** Xerxes himself lead several thousand nobles, dismounted and advancing in their scale armor with spears and bows, and these managed to push through a weakened portion of the defenses, burning wooden walls and towers as they ran to overwhelm the place. Unfortunately for them Timotheus quickly appeared at the head of a column of reserve troops and a fierce battle ensued. Hundreds were killed on each side, quarter neither asked nor given amidst the smoke, rubble, and flames. An arrow claimed Timotheus, who was urging his men onwards from the rear. They found him later with a smile on his lips, glad to leave Hell for Heaven.

Eventually the few remaining barbarians fled, leaving the Romans in possession of the ruined forts. Against a charred wall a centurion found Xerxes, run through by several spears. For a week neither side launched any attacks, often cooperating to find and bury or incinerate the dead. Seeing no hope of a breakthrough and with a large army of his dead overlord to consider, Thiudmir marched the host back north.

Wagons were unloaded and farms reoccupied to much grumbling. Seeing an opportunity, Artaxerxes, eldest son of the late shah, wooed a number of elders to his camp to press his claim to the throne against Arlon, his uncle and Xerxes' acclaimed heir. After much shouting and a few brawls the two men agreed under the advice of Thiudmir that the young man would succeed Arlon. The stress of these years showed in the now-grey king of Austria, and he was felled by a stroke on May 4 of 427 as he was up late feasting. Disgusted by the ineffective and quarrelsome Alans his heir declared independence and none gainsayed him.

Angles and Jutes

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

King Aethelred

Diplomacy:

Prince Hengist and Princess Brunhilde were blessed with a baby boy in 426.

Asding Vandals - *Hun Vassals*

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Gunderic, Rex Vandalorum

Diplomacy:

Aside from the passing of Queen Ursula, the wife of Gunderic and a cousin of Nevitta - and therefore a Rugian princess as well - and the birth of a son to Prince Gaiseric's favorite slave girl, little of note took place.

Burgundians

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Gundioc, King of the Burgundians

Diplomacy:

The aging Gundioc realized that the checklist in his head by which he ran his life had one remaining unfulfilled entry - *Overthrow Roman Empire*. Thus he conferred with the embassy from the Franks, and in March of 425 his host marched against those Latin lackeys, the Red Huns. Aeduia was conquered without difficulty, and by the autumn Cubia too was his, though resistance there was stiffer.

In the following year the target was real Roman territory, the fortress city of Augustodunum. The surrounding lands were all Burgundian, and the senate had hoped an army would come to drive away the barbarians. Instead, June saw trenches being dug across the four *via* into the city, semi-permanent encampments established, and patrols out across the landscape.

The **Siege of Augustodunum** lasted all summer, with both sides sweating and hungry. Sorties by the city *comitatenses* failed, and occasional supplies made it past the Burgundian patrols. However the city was largely isolated, and on August 4 the defenders submitted. Gundioc was thrilled to have the rule of a Roman city, but his men had another agenda. Months of tedious and dangerous work, combined with insults from the citizens, had hardened their attitudes. Thus when they occupied the city and rounded up the armed men, the barbarians delegated most of their number to loot, rape, and pillage. By the end of the following day Gundioc was able to get his troops back under control, and a number of them were flogged before their units for egregious acts. This helped mollify the citizens, but only a little.



Classical Pagan Oracles

(Classical Pagan Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Hecate, Sibyl

Diplomacy: Atrebatia (CH), Britannia I (CH)

As the Sibyl toured what might one day pass as "the beautiful south," hundreds of co-religionists were trained and equipped in Alexandria. The rapid buildup of Monophysite militias in the premiere city in the world was felt as a threat to, well, nearly everyone else. The followers of Jupiter took up the burden of protecting them.

Eire Kingdom of the Scots - *Diocese of Hibernia*

(Keltic Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

High King Donald I, Rex Scotorum, Vicarius Hiberniae

Diplomacy: Deva (EA), Connaught (T)

Donald "the Wise" offered vast wealth to the citizens of Deva, and after much discussion with Lachan "the Lame" they agreed to join in this new *diocese Hibernium*. The poor runner then sailed and rode to Connaught, where he convinced the petty kings as well to pledge for Donald. While helping a village there prepare for the coming solstice Lachan was overcome with an episode of his lifelong aigue, and passed away on December 17 of 428. He was praised at the wake as the man who had at least nominally united all the Land of Eire under one High King, and all prospered.

Franks

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Clodius, Rex

Diplomacy: Trier (UN)

The new year saw the death of princess Scarlt, widow of Merovech, who had spent her last years sequestered in a rude hut outside the royal palace as a nun. After dutifully burying her, Clodius moved ahead rapidly with his plans against the Red Huns. The embassy from the court of Gundioc (see

Burgundians) was actively sending couriers about, and by spring of 425 each ally was to have an army crossing into enemy territory.

Or at least that was the original plan. Allaert, *reges* of Belgica I, would not hand his troops over to direct Frankish command, leaving "The Bishop" (as he was known) with only some hundreds of warriors with which to invade the Roman province of Lingonia. The experienced commander decided this was impossible with the numbers given him.

While news of this debacle reached Clodius, the *rex* had his own troubles in Germania I. Thousands of families were trundling towards Trier in their wagons as the leader of the Franks negotiated with the senate of that fortress city for rights to settle them within the walls. It took only a few days for the city leadership, reflecting the consensus of nearly the entire population, to reject this wholesale. Further, they were so incensed at the idea of living cheek-by-jowl with thousands of smelly rural barbarians that the senate decided to reject all affiliation with the Franks, for now. Lacking an army suited to taking the most well-defended city on the Rhine, Clodius could only find a decent place to encamp the frustrated settlers before moving his army on to the next part of his plan.

The main Frankish army gathered in Belgica I and waited. At last, in 428, the order was given and the warriors marched into Parisii. As anticipated, the main Red Hun army under Edeco, the king, and Modares, his prince, was waiting for him. Over 5000 Franks marching in a wide deep column found an army of 14,000 nomads waiting for them a few miles upstream on the Matrona from the city of **Latinum**. Despite a good plan, the Franks had no hope of victory. They had no horse, few skirmishers, and were generally outnumbered and outclassed.

Clodius soon learned why so many sturdy German and other infantry tribes had submitted to the Huns over the years, and within two hours he was leading a rearguard action as men beside him were felled by red-fletched arrows. The pursuit was, as might be expected, brutal, and only one in three Frankish warriors found their way back to friendly territory. Allaert saw the destroyed army filtering back into his lands and could only shake his head in wonder at these foolhardy Franks. Only an early November snow had aided their escape.

Frisians

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

King Jentze Wolfsen

Diplomacy: Germania II (P)

Now. The time was right, and Jentze knew it. The Empire was like an old boar resting in the woods, tusks worn, and unable to resist even a child's spear. So it was that Ernst Terpstra took the warriors, horse and foot, into Germania II, a land which had submitted to the Frisians yet still claimed an imperial license.

The barbarians were then turned loose to act, well, barbaric. Whole villages were rounded up and marched north. Within a moon a well-organized resistance had developed, and the Latinized Germans who lived there began to raid Frisian camps, stealing horses, and generally making nuisances of themselves. Feigning a withdrawal in terror, Ernst suddenly turned on his would-be pursuers, surrounding them with concealed troops, and wiping them out. Thousands of peasants were rounded up and marched along with the army, making for the sorriest batch of camp followers yet seen.

Meanwhile, the army marched on Colonia Agrippina. Gazing in wonder at the high walls, well-manned redoubts, and imposing gates, Ernst was left with the realization that this would not be so easy a nut to crack. Wig, king of Holstein, was not concerned, as Jentze had granted him the province in which to implant thousands of his people on farms recently "liberated" by the Frisian army.

As word reached the king of the spoiling of his plans, his grandmother, the wizened matriarch and reputed witch Dorothea died at the age of 81. Or so it seemed. The Arian Christian priest coerced into officiating at her funeral was shocked to find not an old woman wrapped in a burial cloth, but a small child. While improvising a rite to cast out demons he was thrown to the ground by a terrific wind. When he arose, the body was gone, and the gathered family murmured, a few smiling. For it was known the old woman had never acceded to baptism and continued in the ways of her ancestors. None could say where she had gone, but likewise none would say it was to either a Heaven or a Hell.

Lombard Kingdom - *Societas Imperii*

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Autharii, Rex Lombardorum

Diplomacy:

Peace reigned under the steady hand of Autharii.

Pictish Kingdom of Alba

(Roman Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Sean Mac Aniel, King of the Cruithni

Diplomacy: Maxima Caesarea (F), Anglia (A), Strathclyde (UN), Flavia (F)

The oaken table in the longhouse of the "king" of Fothirdun shook, causing a pewter platter to flip a meaty mutton bone across the planks and into the waiting mouth of the "queen's" small dog, who dragged the prize across the floor as fast as his slipping paws could and into a dark corner. His point made with his fist, the king sat down once more, thin face ruddy. "I should yield to Sean?" he asked rhetorically of the half-dozen local nobility. "That curr worries more about his Roman friends in Flavia than we Picts, true people and real Men of Fortrenn!" That last oratical flourish raised a shout of agreement from his tablemates.

And this was how Strathclyde decided to secede from the Pictish state. Word quickly spread to Valentia, where yet more apoplectic nationalists raised spears in revolt. Sadly for them Count Padrig had just raised hundreds of troops who were quite loyal to the crown. The troublemakers were rounded up - not so many, in the end - and their estates confiscated. A few resisted and were slain in combat with Padrig himself. Thereafter none dared question the value of the state.

By the time word reached south of Hadrian's Wall, the troubles had begun to sound like a complete dissociation. Maxima Caesarea, never enthusiastic, renounced all affiliation, while in Anglia the two camps argued bitterly before the province abandoned Sean.

Sean himself, meanwhile, had received word by special courier from Padrig that the situation was in hand. Thus all were impressed that a king, his patrimony on the verge of disappearance, could calmly discuss politics with the various *potentes* of Flavia. So impressed were they that they joined the northerner's cause entire. Leading men and women of Anglia were similarly amazed with King of the Cruithni's composure, tipping the balance strongly in his favor there to the point where they committed troops to his cause.

Having put down the small rebellion, Padrig crossed the Wall and headed south to discuss recent events with the border *alae* and their leaders in Maxima Caesarea. Seeing for themselves the strength of the Pictish cause, and wearying of politics generally, these men threw in their lot with the "barbarians" as well. The 425 return of the king was widely hailed in Valentia. Maidens threw flowers at the feet of Sean and Padrig, young men sang, and all made merry. When by fall it was clear that Miranda was indeed "great with child" the good news was well-received. A pale girl with black hair was born on Epiphany of 429, and Sean was greatly pleased.

Quadi Clans - *Vassal of the Hun Empire*

(Arian Christian Barbarian Component Nation)

King Vitalianus

Diplomacy:

Lack of raiding, more power to Vitalianus, and few stipends or gifts lead to much grumbling among the clans. But as nobody had a good idea as to improving their lot, the Quadi remained quiescent.



Roman Christian Church

(Roman Christian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Celestine, Bishop of Roma

Diplomacy:

Three assailants were killed when the vicar of Knightsbridge was attacked as he walked across the yard for the morning offices. Unfortunately for them, the unknown attackers did not know that the priest, known among the local farms as "the Illyrian," was a recently-retired 20-year man from the Eastern Roman army. Within a few minutes the attackers were dead, some by their own weapons. While the priest treated the

episode with equanimity, his standing - and that of the Roman Church - grew in Londinium.

Siling Vandals - *Diocese of Spain*

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Gaiseric, Rex Vandalarum, Vicarius Hispaniae

Diplomacy: Carpetani (P), Toletum (NT)

The host marched unopposed into Carpetani as Gaiseric "Greybeard" added to his domain in Iberia.

Suevi Kingdom

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

King Agnar

Diplomacy:

A prisoner to the end, Alarik died alone in a cell with an ocean view at Aquileia, of the cough. And still the tribes kept watch on the city.



Western Roman Empire

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Marcus Traianus Marcellinus, Augustus

Diplomacy: Ravenna (UN)

After the exertions of prior years, Marcus decided to rest and warily observe the various barbarians. In 427 Flavius Tullius, *magister militum*, died of a seizure, leaving the main army in some turmoil. A more tragic death occurred on September 1 of 428 the *flavia* Aelia, wife of Marcus and daughter of Honorius, tripped and fell down a flight of stairs. She died the next day at the age of 22, and all the empire mourned her loss, the moreso for her infant son and two other small children. Of course many suspected foul play, but no plot could be envisioned or proved.

Holy Empire of Rome

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Pentadius, Augustus

Diplomacy: Sirmium (A)

Despite various entreaties, appeals to honor, and other desperate measures, the tribune of the 2000-strong expeditionary force from Constantinople had no intention of having his men leave Aquileia. The Augustus was naturally enraged, but had no recourse but to call off ambitious plans. In what might have been a sign from God on the relative virtues of cooperation versus force, Marcos Calpurnius Lorio was able to convince the senate of the imperial city of Sirmium to join Pentadius' realm.

Ostrogothic Kingdom

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Tamora, Queen Mother and Regent

Diplomacy:

Peace continued, and many considered that their position, while a bit tenuous, was not so bad after all.

Ostrogothic clans who had long been ignored in faraway Transylvania at last decided to give up on their queen. Their wagons rolled south into the abandoned lands of Wallachia and settled on the fertile plains.

Dalmatia - *Civitate Foederatae*

(Roman Christian Civilized Component Nation)

Polyanthus, Dux et Praeses Dalmatia

Diplomacy:

This quiet corner of the empire remained inactive. Most of the citizens were happy about that.

Kingdom of Britanniae - *Diocese of Britain*

(Classical Pagan Civilized Open Empire)

Volusian, Rex Damnonia, Vicarius Britanniae

Diplomacy:

Volusian was in a fix. The tax revenues were not what they ought to be, and the expenses involved in maintaining the roads, canals, and other works of civilization was just too much. So he decided to let them rot. Fortunately the engineers from Roma built well so no harm befell the magnificent works.

Kingdom of Roman Gallaecia - *Diocese of Lusitania*

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Gaius Carpus, Rex Gallaecia, Vicarius Lusitaniae

Diplomacy: Leon (UN), Baetica (C), Vettonia (T to Scallabitanus)

The *rex Gallaecia* dreamed large. Early in 424 he sent forth his few forces to increase the Diocese of Lusitania and watched the results.

The *duces* - as he had named them - of Leon, Scallibatanus, and Lusitania moved on Baetica. Local Romano-Iberians who had been subdued by the Alamanni and forced off the good land in favor of the invading Germans were given a little silver and a lot of hope, and raised up with the Gallaecian "army" against their oppressors. With the Alamanni army elsewhere the land was quickly conquered.

Then the next phase began, the enslavement of the northerner aliens. At word of this they rose up under a rebel leader, the aged Gundulf. Warfare raged across the land for months, but the unimaginative leadership of Gundulf, who always ordered his troops, many of them women and boys, to fight to the last. At length the Germans were either in coffles or dead, half given to the conquering troops, the remainder marched to Brigantium.

Paulus the *dux* of Leon was ordered back home to raise a siege army and beleaguer the hostile city of Legio. But while in Lucensis he died of a fever after feasting with Gaius Carpus. Not only did this squelch any siege plans, but a rumor quickly spread that he had been poisoned by a jealous *rex*. The *alae* marched back to Leon and the region left the Diocese.

Wiley words managed to convince the *potentes* of Vettonia to join in the Diocese, while efforts to cause Astigitanus to go the way of Baetica came to naught. And yet Gaius Carpus was pleased, in the main by the sloth of the Germans of Hauptland, for he knew that his little outpost of *romanitas* would not survive an assault of the northmen.

Taifali Tribes

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

King Vallia, Rex Taifalorum, Vicarius Belgicae

Diplomacy:

Another son was born to Vallia, and the small kingdom was happy and peaceful. The king took this as a sign that he should act, and so he rode into Ravenna in an attempt to gain the allegiance of that fortress city. While his mission did not meet with success, it did cause the senate there to consider for the first time the overall situation in the Empire, and opt for independence.

The son of the king, Joannes, having at last succeeded in besting a wild boar in the hunt, was anointed as crown prince, much to the relief of the people. The young man immediately hired many unemployed Roman and other scribes to begin to take over the tax records and put them in order. Many of the local magnates and minor khans grumbled at this. By the end of 425 a plot to overthrow the dynasty was uncovered. Put to the question the ringleader confessed and was executed in steppe fashion, by archery.

By the end of the year politics had settled once more, though people still wondered whether and how the Taifali fit into the Empire. While he enjoyed the title of *Vicarius Belgicae* make Vallia feel nice the Taifali were not yet ready to exercise it.



Kingdom of the Red Huns - *Diocese of Gaul*

(Asiatic Roman Christian Nomadic Open Empire)

Edeco, Rex Hunnorum, Vicarius Galliae

Diplomacy:

The death of their good friend and travelling companion Turpilio, *comes Neapoli*, on 22 February of 425 was marked as a great loss to all. The Roman had been named a member of the royal clan and was beloved for his honor, bravery, and true enjoyment of these steppe people in a new land. His men, stripped of their "old man," decided that returning home to Italia was pedestrian - literally - and decided to become freebooters. In the meanwhile they were happy to let their Hunnic friends feed them, and more than a few joined up.

The invasion of Burgundians was noted with some interest, but nothing was done to recover the lost lands (see *Burgundians*). In 428 the irruption of Franks across the border was swatted aside (see *Franks*) thus providing a bit of sport for the younger men.

Gepids

(European Pagan Barbarian Component Nation)

Regent Gorm, Steward of the Gepids

Diplomacy:

Spring, usually a pleasant time in Alpes Cottiae, was turned grey by the sudden death by fever of Vidimir in March. A crisis ensued, as the child of Vidimir was only four and many nobles organized on various political sides, whether pro- or anti-Roman, pro- or anti-Hun, and so on. A pro-Roman regent by the name of Gorm was finally chosen to protect the child and run the tiny kingdom.

North Africa

Berber Kingdom of Tingitania

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Flavius Juba, Rex Tingitaniae

Diplomacy:

Domesticity and paperwork were the themes in Tingis, as court was held for commoners and children were born to all the major nobles. It was a happy time, a peace appreciated by all citizens and allies who heard the news from the Empire.

Donatist Christian Church

(Donatist Christian Church Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Archbishop Gaudentius

Diplomacy: Africa (MN), Leptis Magna (AB), Syrtes (AB)

While conferring with locals on plans for expanding the local abbey complex at the coastal town of Hadrumetum, Emeritus died in his sleep on July 19th of 425 at the age of 83. Father Tamortus was on the scene and oversaw the completion of the new monastery. Gaudentius was elevated to be archbishop but continued his plans to increase the presence of the Pure Church in Leptis Magna, as well as in Syrtes, where there were as yet few adherents. Tamortus, now working on his own, proved singularly inept at inspiring citizens to do the Church's work.

Eastern Europe

Arian Christian Church

(Arian Christian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Vandalarius, Pontifex ipseque Primas Gothicus et Germanicus

Diplomacy: Austria (CH), Pannonia I (CH), Pannonia II (AB)

Years of organizing, cajoling, and bribery came to naught as Vandalarius found the city fathers of Alba Iulia unwilling to host a Holy City. Was not, they argued, the true city Jerusalem?

Fate was also unkind to Sunagamus, who built a fine church in Austria only to see his flock migrate to the more clement Gaul (see *Kingdom of the Alans*). Cameron, wandering the wilds of Thuringia, met with no success among the barbarians there, who scorned the idea of a Dead God while treating the old man with great hospitality.

Khanate of the Tyrasean Alans

(European Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Respendial, Khan

Diplomacy:

Respendial was delivered another son, and continued to dream of glory for his clans.

Empire of the Huns

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Uldin the Hun, Khakhan

Diplomacy:

Still stunned at their reversal, the Huns regrouped and plotted for the future - or lack thereof - of Rome.

Orthodox Christian Church

(Orthodox Christian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Patriarch John Chrysostom

Diplomacy:

The Church was too involved in disputes with Pelagians, Donatists, Monophysites, pseudo-Nicenes, and others to give John Chrysostom any chance to spread the Good News. At the Imperial Court most tried to disdain the clergy in private, but were yet afraid to do so openly.

Rugian Tribes - *Brothers of the Vandals*

(Arian Christian Barbarian Component Nation)

King Araharius

Diplomacy: Edetania (EA), Toletum (EA)

The ailing king smiled when the messenger arrived. The tribe would be moving, and to Iberia! Months of travel across the summer Alps and then along the coast took them at length to Carpetani and reunion with their brothers (see *Siling Vandals*). The province of Edetania and the city of Toletum had generously been given to the Rugians by their "brothers," and the barbarians promptly tried to make nice with the locals. These last did not appreciate more smelly Germans, but hoped to fare better with Nevitta than under the Alamanni or Vandals.

Having been under a long decline, few were surprised when Nevitta died in his sleep in May of 427. His older brother, Araharius, took over governance as expected.

Slavic Tribes - *Tributaries of the Huns*

(Slavic Pagan Barbarian Component Nation)

King Bole

Diplomacy:

A great sleep fell over the castle, and thorn vines grew over the walls. Within, a princess slept.



Eastern Roman Empire

(Orthodox Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Theodosius II, Emperor

Diplomacy: Memphis (UN), Egypt (OC), Augustamnica (UN)

A cold January dawn in Constantinople was warmed in a most unwanted manner by a blaze near the Gate of Neorian. An inordinate number of imperial guard troops quickly appeared and worked hard to put out the fire, sealing off the area as soon as this was done. On the same day in Antioch five Persian agents were trapped in a room across from the Golden House. Their plot to kidnap a number of scribes was foiled by an alert lay minister as she tended the beggars in the street. Though no battles were planned, the empire was taught as a tent rope in the wind, that wind coming from Ctesiphon.

Indeed, another agent from across the rivers, one Megabazud, was captured in Mosul conferring with sympathizers in a caravanserai on the road to Amida. He spent only two days in custody before escaping - his treatment had been so harsh that his rescuers had to carry him away. An attempt to counter such moves was the elevation of Priscus to be *dux Palmyrae*. This was not particularly successful, as the population was in the process of migrating (see *Lakhmid Arab Kingdom*).

More serious was the mutiny of the imperial army on 13 April 425. Under the Leadership of Eutropius, the former bishop raised to the purple by this army, the average *stratios* had seen no action, no loot, and no way home. Further, many whispered that the new Emperor was a Persophile, as he had restrained the army from smashing the Pagans and sacking their rich lands. Having been all the way to the capitol of Persia, the tribunes knew they could do it again, and were intensely frustrated.

The whispering and discontent came to a head when a delegation of tribunes and other officers met with Eutropius to demand action. The old priest, as was his way, patiently explained that the army needed rebuilding, more troops needed to be raised, logistical problems had to be solved, and generally that he was not ready. Of course the soldiers were having none of it, and the following day Eutropius learned that a coup was in the offing.

On the day, an armed party lead by the tribune Basiliscus, a hot-headed man whose mother was an Isaurian, burst into the imperial quarters. But Eutropius was already on a horse heading across the desert for Palmyra with his personal priest and two servants. Two days out the Emperor was stung by a scorpion, which laid him low with a debilitating fever. He was spirited to Antioch, where he was welcomed by the local commanders. Word reached Theodosius II, *Consul Orientem* and heir, in Constantinople. This prince knew that the Lakhmids were on the move, and that the Persians might follow on at any time. With the nominal emperor in hiding, Theodosius was advised to declare himself Emperor so as to maintain order and in particular to forestall the imperial army raising yet another soldier to the

purple.

Thus on 10 May 425 Theodosius II was anointed Emperor by Patriarch John Chrysostom. Two days later Aetius Renatus, leader of the Faiyum army with the rebels in Mosul, died when his horse threw him onto a cooking pot. This large component of the main army decided to march home to acclaim a new *vicarius*. Suddenly the position of Basiliscus and the plotters was weakened. The tribune had no ambition beyond the good of his troops, but men from some of the better families counseled him that failing a run at the imperial title, he had best flee, as Theodosius would not scruple to have him executed.

As evidence was the arrest of Eutropius in Antioch and his transport to the capitol. After a trial of some few days at court, Theodosius approved his execution by strangling. The day this news arrived in Mosul Basiliscus and a thousand others fled across the border into Osrhoene, placing themselves at the mercy of the Persians, who were rather pleased to see the defectors.

Meanwhile the rest of the empire slowly dissolved. Egypt was lost to the Arabs. In the process direct communication with the Upper Nile was lost, and the canal from the Nile to Clysma was no longer usable. This meant that direct trade with India was lost, causing great commotion across the wide ocean. Hundreds of ships sat idle in far-flung ports and merchants whined long and loud to their local kings and potentates.

The Duchy of Moesia - *Civitate Foederatae*

(Orthodox Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Melchiades, Dux et Praefect

Diplomacy:

Joyful at the late-life pregnancy of his wife, Melchiades was not to see the babe born. A fever claimed the old man in mid-January of 425. With no direction from Constantinople or Roma, the small realm collapsed into feuding families. Siricius, the *comes Moesia II* won over the main army and in a series of short campaigns - more showing force than using it - established his authority over the countryside by the end of the year. Constantinople could do nothing but issue a temporary appointment, distracted as it was (see *Eastern Roman Empire*).

Middle East

Ghassanid Arab Kingdom

(Monophysite Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

King Timotheus

Diplomacy:

Exile was sweetened a bit with children, but on March 9 of 427 the king died in his prime, only 24 years old, of a sudden seizure of the heart. His brother, Samuel, was named king, but there was little rejoicing.

Kingdom of Yemen

(Judaism Civilized Open Empire)

King Ishmael ibn Yahsub

Diplomacy:

The year 425 saw the death of Crown Prince Adam ibn Ibrahim, and 426 claimed Kermi, king of Socotra. These did not cause any undue concern, and life remained calm in this prosperous land.

Lakhmid Arab Kingdom

(Monophysite Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Sheikh Amr al-Qays

Diplomacy: Augustamnica (HM), Egypt (P)

The sheikh awoke with a start, thrust from a vivid dream into what might be reality. A ruddy glow shone on his tent, the usual watchfires of the deep night. But his mind blazed yet more with the dreamscape. Dunes, the sea, a great river, metropolises, all within his realm.

Amr al-Qays arose, was dressed, and called forth his scribes, generals, and any others he might lay hand on at this hour. And who would say no? For the next week they worked, planned, and prayed. Spring came, and Numan son of Imru was named a prince. The lad was strong and well-made, yet within a moon he was dead of a pox. Some took this as a poor omen, but none mentioned the old ways to the Sheikh.

All the tribes were called to move, to travel to Egypt and settle there. This was generally well-received, for the Nile was famous, wealthy, and far from the war zone. In fact, the people of Hira took the opportunity and joined in, as did the tribes of Jabal Shammar.

As laden camels and donkeys headed westward, the Sheikh was not lax. His thousands of veteran cavalry raided into Syria, which they found to be heavily defended. Regardless the booty was considerable. With their new experience facing the *limes* outposts the next target was Palaestina Iudaea. Picking their targets and avoiding or overwhelming patrols the Arab riders looted nearly every place of note. Smoke rose from the suburbs of Jerusalem and Caesarea Maritima, and thousands of captives were carried off.

The Lakhmid king had hoped to pass through Petra and then through Palaestina Salutaris unmolested. But the local clans chose to oppose his passage in the rough country of the Sinai. These were wiped out easily, though in the course of campaigning both Hashim al-Kansa, trusted cousin of Amr, and the famous mercenary Malik ibn Nuweira died of fevers.

In the host summer of 426 the host entered Augustamnica and the defenders deserted en masse before the numerous cavalry and their terrible reputation. September saw the Sheikh's force advancing on Alexandria along the western arm of the Nile. Scouts reported an actual army opposed them near the sea, apparently Romans. The Arabs soon learned that the force was in reality the legion of the Grandmaster Parthimus, military *vicarius* of the Monophysite Church. While nominally of the same religion, the Sheikh knew a Roman when he smelled one, and had no qualms about laying such into the ground.

And so the **Battle of the Canoptic** saw a church army outnumbered by not quite two-to-one anchoring its left flank on the river, its right dug in to the marshy soil. Ballistae were massed there, a variety of cavalry and infantry lined up carefully by the wily old general. But Amr al-Qays was having none of it. While hundreds of horse skirmished before the lines thousands more swept around the flanks, swam or forded various obstacles, and before noon were attacking the Alexandrians from nearly all sides. For the Sheikh had left the road to the great city unguarded, and down it fled the majority of his opposition.

Back in Augustamnica, thousands of Arabs were settled as the new masters under the watchful eyes of barbarian warriors. The locals sighed and kept working the fields. A diplomatic effort aimed at the city of Memphis met with some success, as the senators realized that no succor was forthcoming from the Empire. All along the Nile, reaction to the Lakhmid incursion was mixed. While many acclaimed the invaders as fellow Monophysites who would free them from Orthodox oppression, most were appalled at the powerless of Constantinople to protect them.

Monophysite Christian Church

(Monophysite Christian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Patriarch Luke

Diplomacy: Syria (CA), Qustul (AB), Soba (CH), Mecca (CH), Asir (CH), Yemen (CH), Berbera (CH)

Thousands of *sesterces* raised from church estates and donations went to increasing the prosperity of Alexandria, now clearly the most glorious city in the world. Missionaries in to Nobades lands met with some small success in those faroff lands, while much closer to Alexandria a cathedral was raised up in Dmayr, a caravansarai on the *via* to Palmyra. It was the largest building east of Damascus, and the surrounding village rapidly grew to a ramshackle collection of mud huts, an ugly shell surrounding a brilliant pearl of marble and alabaster.

Beatification was assured for Bishop Dorian Perigrinatus as he passed away in Asuristan in 426 at the age of 56. Revered among the Oghuz Turks, his missionary work was appreciated by clergy and laity alike, a bright light among otherwise dark times. The efforts of Archbishop of Thebes, Ernestus, and Thomas, Bishop of Memphis, were not so dangerous, but nonetheless their work in exotic Nobades and Axum drew praise.

Public attention in Alexandria was, however, tacked to the waterfront by the spectacle of militia riding elephants. Or, rather, attempting to do so. Bishop Matthias was the butt of many jokes as he directed his men while an Axumite trainer, Joseph, occasionally tried to tell the holy man how to be effective. After weeks of failure, the Father relented and turned the effort over to Joseph after the Patriarch himself ordered it so. The decaying respect for Church militia spurred the intercession of Luke, which saved the project. By 427 a handful of Romans were trained in the use of elephants in war, the first time this had been done since the time of the Punic Wars. Few knew when entering this training how important it might become (see *Lakhmid Arab Kingdom*).

West Africa

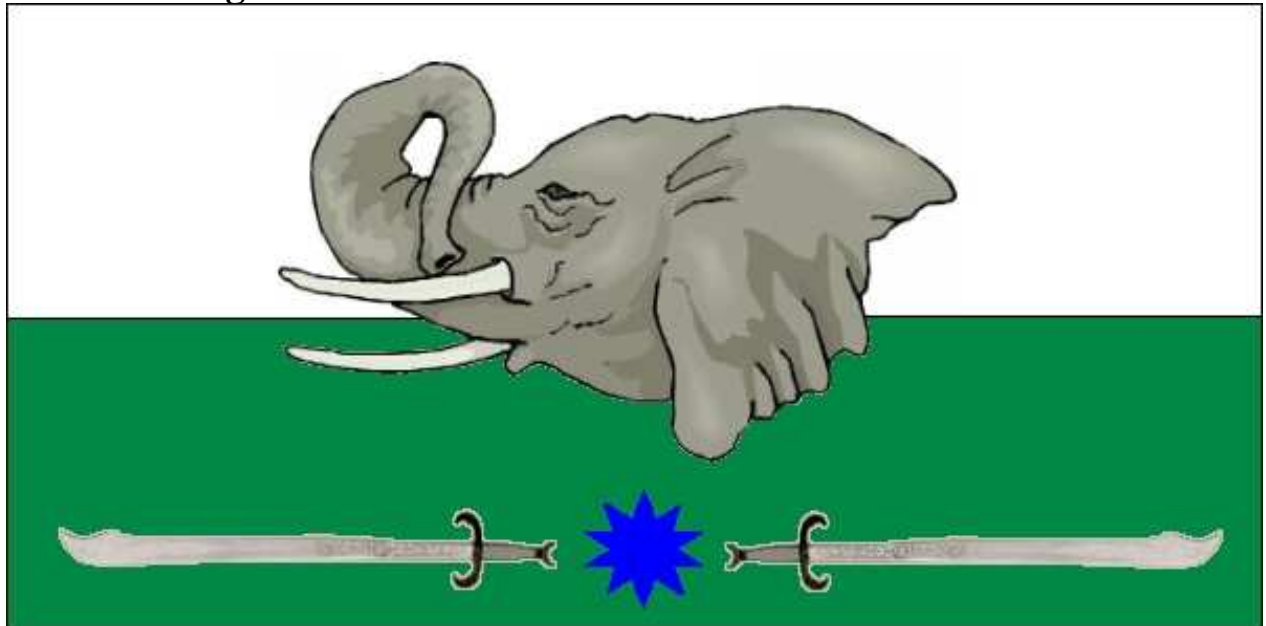
Mauretania Nigerensis

(African Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

King Solon

Not the brightest banana in the bunch, Solon was amazed to find himself surrounded by Moorish troops who had formed a cordon around what passed for a palace. Ten minutes later he was face down in his own blood, alive but bound. *Sic transit ...* though there was little *gloria* to be found here.

Moorish Kingdom



(African Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Sheik Sedray al-Kasurga

Diplomacy: Gao (P), Galam (UN), Khalem (UN)

Attempts by Sedray to preserve the old religion failed utterly, and his people were in danger of "going native, " as the sheik disparagingly claimed. The youth was, in the opinion of most, taking life way too seriously. Some claimed the stress of managing the work of thousands of slaves toiling to improve Songhai was creating a dark spirit in him. This was not changed by the birth of a daughter to one of his several slave girls.

Meanwhile, the main army was sent to finish the job in Sudan and take down Gao. As the place was filled with terrified refugees and cowering citizens - and had no walls - this was trivial. All were surprised they were not to be marched off to the well-organized work camps around the kingdom. Mansa, the king of Sudan, was lead away to court in fetters.

General Sukman "the Subtle" left troops there to keep the people under the Moorish sandal heel. His next target was the rebel kingdom of Solon. This act of insolence could not be allowed to survive. Surprised as they amused themselves on their estates, the rebels were killed or captured with little resistance. Adding another king to his collection caused talk among a few junior officers (they styled themselves *centurions*) that Sukman ought to add Sedray to the list. This rumor reached the general, who had the three men exposed on ant hills as an example to all. Following this up in traditional Moorish fashion, the people of Galam and Khalem were rounded up and "sold" down the river.

His army was given a triumph on returning home, and were feted at the coronation of Madjer, brother of Sedray, as prince on 28 August of 428. To signify the youth's eligibility he was "wed" on the spot to a local slave of similar age. Older Moors were dismayed that this dynasty was bred from conquered peoples, but most ignored their concerns. Victory was clearly sign of the god's favor, with two competing kingdoms utterly destroyed within a few years (see *Sudanese Kingdom* and *Mauretania Nigerensis*).

On the trail of this display of martial dominance, the Sheik sent messages to the petty kings of Adawara and Kumbi-Saleh:

You are harboring foreigners who have murdered the rightful ruler of the Moors. Deliver the Jenne refugees to our borders at once, or share the fate of all those who have tried to oppose us! Agree to our demand, and you shall live without fear of the merciless Moorish army for all times.

The slaves who had carried the messages were greeted as heros, given land, wives, and cattle, and declared brothers of the kings. Each scroll was taken to the central square of Kumbi-Saleh and there, to the cheers of locals and refugees alike, thrown into a bonfire. The music, dancing, and revelry continued until dawn. Few noticed the several score refugees leaving the city that very night, heading west with their families and kine.

Sudanese Kingdom

(African Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Mansa, King of Sudan

Diplomacy:

As Moorish troops marched through the streets of Gao to the wailing of women and men alike, the kingdom dissolved.

East Africa

Axumite Empire

(Monophysite Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Emperor Tewodros Ella Asgad

Diplomacy:

Aggravated beyond all reason by the recalcitrance of the port town of Opane, the emperor himself lead the army of Axum against it in 425. Arriving before the place in September, he and his lieutenant Kaleb set about the beleaguering of it. By the following June the walls - and warriors - facing him had been destroyed and Tewodros ordered the "pagan" city to be sacked. Needless to say the troops were all too happy to loot and burn the the city's main church, claiming that, well, Orthodox places of worship might just as well be pagan so far as they were concerned. And their concerns were mainly on the solid gold goodies such buildings typically held. They also beheld with wonder - then promptly torched - what might more genuinely come under the category "pagan temple" (see *Hinduism*). A few sculptures of Lakshmi and the consorts of Rama were smuggled out for the "education" of the common soldiery.

While the warriors of Axum had noted the presence of Asian ships and some alien fighters on the walls, they were nonetheless surprised to take prisoner a Sindhu noble (see *Kingdom of Sindhu*). Lacking a direct representative from the kingdom on the Indus, the ambassador of Gupta India was called on the carpet, literally.

Yet another inconvenient fact was that Opane was a tax-paying member of the same empire which had just sacked it. A few refugees from that city stirred up resentment against Axum in the surrounding region of Berbera, fueling a small revolt which was quickly - and bloodily - put down, with loss, in 426. Further, priests sent to Avalites proved inept, and in any event unable to explain Tewodros' persecution of fellow Christians, and most of the Monophysite families in that city returned to their Orthodox roots. The emperor was willing to put up with these insults if it lead to a diminution of South Asian influence in his region, and in this he was successful.

Happier news from the capitol was the birth to Prince Menelik and Elizabeth, Princess of the Blemmye, of a son. The father did not live to see this lad's baptism, as the beloved Menelik was killed in a hunting accident in 427 at the age of 27. All mourned his death - with the exception of those in Berbera, of course - and a church was built in the capitol in his honor. As his widow and the mother of the putative heir to the throne, this foreign princess became an important player in court politics in her own right.

Blemmye Tribes

(African Pagan Barbarian Component Nation)

Zakarias, King of Blemmye

Sinhuway, Queen of Blemmye

Diplomacy:

Discontent raised itself in a faction at court, who were upset that they, the brave defenders of Blemmye independence were squandered in a futile attempt to regain Zacharias his lost Bejan throne. Why should they be loyal to the inept King Satifal? But most had been driven to substantial nationality by warfare against the Nobades.

The political life of this important wasteland was changed forever by the death in his sleep of Satifal in the first month of 425. With no male heir on hand, a struggle ensued. Into this confusion, an alleged Nobades agent was discovered, captured after a struggle, then held in chains at court. After a few stabbings and a bit of bribery, the Beja king, Zakarias, was elevated to the kingship of Blemmye. His wife, the beautiful princess Sinhuway, daughter of Safifal, was crowned queen with him, the two viewed as co-rulers.

While many doubted such an arrangement could work, the birth in 426 of a son to the now-Queen Sinhuway sealed the deal for most.

Nobades Kingdom

(Monophysite Christian Civilized Open Empire)

King Phillipus Silko, Basileus

Diplomacy:

The *basileus* spent many months creating a Royal Lion guard. His best troops, however, resisted, as they already saw themselves as superior. Yet another wife of the king died, this time Henttaway, princess of Kordofan, of a cancer, in 427. Due to her vicious character few mourned the loss. Psakar, the count of Nubia, was pleased to be overseeing the improvement of many wastelands in his homeland. Brush was cleared, canals and wells installed, and land grants made, all with the help of the Church.

Persia

Orthodox Zoroastrian Church

(Orthodox Zoroastrian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Azargoshasp, Mobedhanmobed

Diplomacy: Ormuz (AB), Bandar (CH), Sakastan (CH), Makuran (CH), Abadan (CA), Persia (CH)

Busy establishing new agiaries and temple complexes, as well as raising more defenses against the expected assault from Constantinople, the Mobedanmobed was amazed at developments (see *Eastern Roman Empire*).

Kingdom of Persarmenia - Sasanian Persian Satrapy

(Monophysite Christian Barbarian Component Nation)

King Mazdak, Satrap

Diplomacy:

The mountain kingdom was quiet. Or so it seemed.

Blue Turk Khanate

(Asia Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Tardu, Khan of the Blue Turks

Diplomacy:

A wave of tax-farming and other corrupt practices swept the land. As this was the normal state of affairs nobody much minded. Further, the Ilkhan Bardus was delivered a son, and all rejoiced.



Sasanian Persian Empire

(Orthodox Zoroastrian Civilized Open Empire)

Varhanin, Shahanshah of Persia

Diplomacy: Nisibis (T)

The hundreds of scribes and functionaries in Ctesiphon speculated endlessly as to events in the west and east. In an innovative move Varhanin decided to raise a host of infantry Immortals along the lines of what Cyrus or Darius might have had. All expected an attack along the river, but none materialized.

South Asia

Lambakanna Sinhala - A Kingdom of Chera

(Buddhist Seafaring Component Nation)

Chandra, Raja

Diplomacy:

Caught between Chera and Pandya, the kingdom's nobles realized that it was best for them to give more authority to their *raja* so that he might steer them between these two reefs. Thus taxes were raised and a new "office building" was constructed and filled with scribes.

A few well-placed words and coins managed to spring the prince Vishnu from his confinement in Kalyani, where he had been caught some years previous on a secret mission. The tale, suitably enhanced by actors in *gosthi* reinactments, became a standard across the land.

Buddhist Stupas

(Buddhist Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Master Rugendra

Diplomacy:

Despite a distinct lack of effort, reverence of the Buddha grew, slowly.

Chera Kingdom

(Hinduism Seafaring Open Empire)

Gaman, Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy: Lambakanna Sinhala (A)

Gaman was pleased when his young wife Jyotsua delivered twins one year, then another child the following year. But in the next year she died of complications. The *Rajadhiraja* was not, however, a sentimental sort and within months the late queen's handmaiden was with child as well. Tied to the realm by marriage and trade, Lambakanna Sinhala was brought yet closer by the efforts of Lord Ichaa.

Evangelical brahmans sent to Gangas were, sadly, taken from a rather disreputable *guru* and soon caused great trouble. For these men excelled at gaining donations for the needy - who happened to be themselves. By day in rags on the dusty street, by night they would don rather clumsy disguises and frequent *ganikas*, drink heavily, and generally cause havoc. Within a few months the Hindu population was so ashamed of them that these men were not only driven from the area but they turned their temples over to those honoring the Buddha.

Pandya Kingdom

(Jainism Seafaring Open Empire)

Mindha, Regent for the Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy:

The Pandyans decided to keep to themselves for the most part. This at least was the initial hope. Jatavarman's sudden death of a seizure on October 5 of 425 caused great concern at court. A man who had devoted himself to the kingdom, the *Rajadhiraja* had taken few steps to ensure that his eldest son, Jahala, would have any help in acceding to the throne. Fortunately for the realm the Lord Mindha stepped forward at a tense session at court and declared that he would support the young prince. As he had sailed back from Kalyani and taken the main army in hand, nobody gainsayed him. The bureaucracy relaxed, trade resumed, and all was well.

Empire of the Guptas

(Hinduism Civilized Open Empire)

Kamara Gupta, Maharajadhiraja

Diplomacy: Keldyna (F), Gtsang (A), Sagala (F), Arjunayana (F)

January of 425 claimed the husband of Anasuya Gupta, the prince Subhas Tharoor, of a cancer. A favorite of the *maharajadhiraja*, he was survived by his little daughter only, who lived at court. Happier news came from the embassy sent to Keldyna, lead by the crown prince Skanda Gupta. The local *raja* was so impressed by the future emperor that he gave his daughter, perhaps the most sought-after treasure on the Ganges, in marriage. This princess, named for the goddess she so resembled, Lakshmi, fairly glowed under the wedding pavilion, the fire the two circled seeming dull by comparison. The pairing was to prove a good one, as they were blessed with three children in as many years, and Skanda eschewed the customary concubines.

The new *pitr* of the groom also was in a productive mode, but on a larger scale. New cities were founded: Dasapura in Avanti, Ankottaka in Gujerat, and Pragjyotisapura in Assam. Old cities were expanded: Pryaga, Varanasi, Keldyna, Mathura, Barisal, Delhi, and that queen of cities, Patiliputra itself. Further, a road was constructed from Keldyna to Patiliputra. Rakesh Koshy was sent with an army to aid the Kushans against the Persians (see *Kushan Empire*), with acceptable if not laudable results.

Yes, the air was indeed sweet. But Kamara would breath no more of it, struck down by a heart seizure at the age of 59, on 12 July of 428. The funeral was of course a massive event, but Skanda knew that his honeymoon was long over now. Whether he was up to the task of full responsibility would be a topic of much debate.

Kingdom of Sindhu - Gupta Tributary

(Hinduism Civilized Component Nation)

Rudradaman, Maharaja

Diplomacy: Sind (F), Ras Hafun (EA to Scebeli)

Greeted cautiously by the notables of the trading city of Opone, the brahman Venkatachalapathi Salmuldrala used his charm to overcome his minimal mastery of the local language and impress them thoroughly. Thus when the Axumite army appeared at the city walls in September of 425 the diplomat thought to make use his small fleet to help defend the city against the barbarian emperor Tewodros (see *Axumite Empire*). Unfortunately the holy man ended up a prisoner of that very same ruler, and the city of Opone was sacked.

Hinduism

(Hinduism Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Virasenadeva, Guru

Diplomacy:

Sent to far-off Africa, Paila worked hard to set up a temple and staff in Opane. With the building nearly done, the aged brahman was killed by a stone shot into the city by the besieging army of Axum (see *Axumite Empire*), and naturally the project was abandoned as flames, disease, and carnage enfolded the city.

The *guru* himself went to preach at the court in Sarnath. His wit and knowledge of the ancient texts managed to win them all to the worship of the Old Gods (no, not those ones ...). More brahmins went to Sind, and the people there converted en masse. The city of Varanasi was blessed with a delegation of senior priests, Shukaram, Jawarhalal, and Shouna. These, with large staffs as well, converted the locals, though Shouna had to be excused for his rude behavior on several occasions.

Jain Sects

(Jainism Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Sarvanandi, Acharya

Diplomacy:

Attacked by a vulture - nobody knows why - the aging Acharya Visvasena died later of infection and blood loss, on May 2nd of 426. Sarvanandi, a wandering Digambara, came forward after an illuminating dream and was chosen as the new Acharya with a minimum of struggle between the branches of the faith.

Kingdom of Nepal - *Gupta Tributary*

(Buddhist Barbarian Component Nation)

Biscotti Licchavi, Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy:

When Pima Licchavi, Queen of Nepal, excused herself from a tour of the gardens with the Kushan ambassador, few guessed she would never leave her rooms. A handmaiden discovered her a short time later, wracked with convulsions and unable to speak. The queen lapsed into unconsciousness and fell into what appeared to be a deep sleep for five days. At length, her breathing stopped. The mourning went on for several moons, most of it unofficially, as she was beloved among the common people. Lalitpur, her home, prays for her still.

The following year saw the passing of the lord Jai Pratap while on campaign with the Prince. Vis'vadeva was distraught that his mother had died while he was at war, and that his dear friend had been a victim (to him) of this interminable conflict. The thrill and challenge of leading men into battle had ebbed for him, and often his staff would find him on one of the many rocky outcrops near camp, reading some ancient text.

Pallava Kingdom

(Hinduism Seafaring Open Empire)

Mahendravarma I, Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy: Malabar (UN), Yavadvipanam (C), Mindinao (H)

The death in April of Raghu, Kadambanama Raja of Malabar, threw a spanner in the works of the Pallava political machine. Assessing the geopolitical situation the Kadambas decided to leave the rulership of Mahendravarma and take their own path. Perhaps the death in the previous year of the Kadamba princess Kangavarti, wife of Mahendravarma, had something to do with this.

Brahmans were funded by the *Rajadhiraja* to build the faith in Chola, a province already a bulwark of right-thinking. The locals were confused, amused, or annoyed as each saw this influx of mainly elderly mendicants and healers.

Beluvarman was placed in charge of a grand expedition to the eastern-most islands, beyond the pale of civilization, there to plant the flag of Indian civilization in the thin soil of Mindinao. His small fleet was sent to the east, arriving without incident in the far reaches of Yavadvipa. Most on-board were amazed at this, given that the Pallava nobleman spent most of the trip gambling, carousing, and generally showing few inspirational characteristics one would hope for in a *kshatriya* of such importance.

After conferring with the gods, ship captains, and leading citizens, he decided to site the new city near a river as it entered the sea, and most agreed this was wise. A few of the locals were captured and questioned, but little was learned - they did not speak Telugu, of course. Within a few months a classically square Indian city was laid out, with many houses built from the fine hardwoods growing all about. By 427 the new polis was surrounded with fields of rice, freeing the thousands of Pallavans from the necessity of living on fish and various jungle fruits. A minor epidemic caused much concern as scores were felled by an unknown fever, yet this subsided within a moon. Foundries were busy, trees felled, and ground was cleared all for the glory of distant Pallava.

Relations with the aboriginals were spotty and tense. These peoples grew rice and worked iron, a little, but had no writing and worshipped a variety of animal gods. On March 14 a young male of theirs was captured in the act of pilfering some dried fish. He was tried before Beluvarman and sentenced to a servitude of four years. The youth's relatives came before the lord of the city and through interpreters requested his release, but Beluvarman would not relent.

On the evening of March 19 the city woke to shouts, screams, and flame. The local tribes from up the river had quietly floated downstream, slain the guard, and were going house to house, looting, killing, and torching. Pallavan ships anchored nearby had been the first targets, and all were ablaze at the waterline when Beluvarman finally roused himself. Seeing the chaos he had caused, the great lord covered in his rooms. Sailors ashore and armed citizens, who vastly outnumbered the raiders, soon turned them back. In the morning it was discovered that during the confusion of the assault thousands of people had been spirited away by the tribesman.

Lacking effective leadership the Pallavans were in no condition to mount an expedition to rescue their loved ones. Thus they took out their rage on the representatives of their putative overlord in far-off India. Beluvarman was placed in a makeshift prison and the city renamed itself Yavadvipanam. While nominally a Pallavan property, in practice they charted their own course thereafter.

Vakataka Kingdom - *Gupta Tributary*

(Hinduism Civilized Component Nation)

Divakarasena, Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy:

Enough. The *rajadhiraja* was bored with the tedious and ineffectual blockade of the renegade city of Kalliana. A port on the Western Sea was essential to growth of the kingdom, and millions of peasants and their goods - and more importantly the *kshatriya* - depended on Divakarasena to end this decades-long siege, a siege which had to a large extent defined him. His Greek courtier had told him the tale of Troy, and had even staged it with actors and sets for his amusement. Divakarasena suspected that while it was doomed, the name of Kalliana would yet live on in India as the name Troy did among the *yavanas*.

The untimely death of the *raj* Sathiyadevanrao on May 19th of 425 did not overtly affect the campaign against Kalliana, though he was important in behind-the-scenes organizing. Regardless, the ravaged countryside about the beleaguered city hosted the army of Vakataka filled out with siege specialists, archers, elephants, and hundreds of support troops. Three weeks of flying arrows, rolling siege engines, and pushing elephants had reduced the northern gate's left bastion to rubble, and another few days saw the destruction of the other, leaving the massive doorway vulnerable.

The *raj* of Asmaka, Chakrapalita, had directed this brilliant attack and insisted on pride of place at the head of the nobles intent on storming the gate the following day. And so it was the northern gate of Kalliana was taken by the Vakataka army - nearly to the demise of its army. For the portal itself fell within minutes, the storming party pulling up short just beyond it at the makeshift wall of rubble rimmed with defenders. "We can take them!" shouted Chakrapalita, having seen the wide range in ages - and genders - of the variously armed citizens. His household troops, wearing bronze cuirasses and carrying a variety of spears, maces, and swords, yelled and charged the inner defenses.

In the melee that followed scores of citizens were clubbed, stabbed, and otherwise mutilated. But more yet remained. At the head of his men Chakrapalita became separated from them. A mere lad, wearing a huge potsherd on his chest for armor and wielding an iron bar he could barely lift, managed to strike the *raj* on the back of his head. The warrior collapsed immediately, and the boy dragged the man away and out of the immediate fray. Emboldened by this coup, the Kallianans counterattacked and managed to drive the Asmakan advance troops back.

That evening the cousin of Chakrapalita demanded and an assault at dawn of the entire Vakatakan army. Divakarasena, now in direct command, commiserated with the stricken *kshatriya* but refused. The Asmaka delegation became quiet, bowed, and left. A herald from their camp informed the *rajadhiraja* that they would not oppose Kalliana so long as their ruler was within the city. Thus it was that the siege dragged on through the rest of the summer and into the monsoon season. At last, the city walls were entirely reduced and their leader, a mere merchant by the name of Santiraman, came forth to beg for mercy on the place. As an offering of his submission, Chakrapalita was presented to Divakarasena. At this news the Asmakan camp erupted in joy, swore their loyalty to Vakataka - and at the same time warned the rest of the army that it would have to deal with them if Kalliana were sacked. Exasperated, Divakarasena agreed, and peace was declared. The city was occupied, the troops ordered to be on their best behavior by Chakrapalita, who had been well-treated by the citizenry.

One more bright spot for the people of Kalliana was the opening of trade with various foreign ports hitherto unavailable for commerce. Thus while those motivated by financial concerns were pleased, the more patriotic were sullen and seething, and many managed to combine both reactions in that way people around the world can play Janus unconsciously.

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.

Sex

A little something to get your attention.

More seriously, if your king dies without issue this will increase the chance for a Dynastic Failure. That's a bad thing. If the king spends an entire turn doing the **Rule** action (7.2.4.30) this may be combined with the **HC (Have Children)** action (7.2.14.18) to accomplish great things.

Notice that the **HC** action depends on the king's diplomacy stat. So a king with a low DP will be best served by trying to **HC** as often as possible. In *A Twilight of Empires* there is something of an out, however, because the king will always get at least one roll as if an **HC** action was performed, even for Component Nations and for unplayed positions. These guys are only human, after all.

Finally, other members of the royal family elevated to leadership will also be given a chance to **HC**. This can make for a tangled web of family relationships, and can either make a DF more or less messy. But your GM hopes that this will lead to a more "historical" game.

Hope this helps. Please see prior turns' newsfaxes for more hints at the bottoms of those pages.

A list of hints:

- Turn 6
- Turn 5
- Turn 4
- Turn 3
- Turn 2