

Newsfax, Turn 8

(start of 429 CE through the end of 432 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. Any sons and daughters not married off or promoted may form the nucleus of a revolt, so to coin a phrase, "Think of the children!"
3. You are encouraged to submit text and images for inclusion in the newsfax, which may satisfy your need for propaganda, creativity, or fun.
4. 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.

- Elastica - eponymous
- The Allman Brothers Band - *Brothers and Sisters*
- Big Brother and the Holding Company - *Cheap Thrills*
- Toxic Reasons - *Independence*
- The Chemical Brothers - *dig your own hole*
- Catherine Wheel - *Chrome*
- Man or Astro-Man? - *A Spectrum of Infinite Scale*
- Cocteau Twins - *The Pink Opaque*
- Garbage - *Bleed Like Me*
- Lush - *Gala*
- The Allman Brothers Band - eponymous
- O-Zone - *DiscO-Zone*
- Green Day - *American Idiot*
- The Moody Blues - *Days of Future Past*
- Ramones - *Rocket to Russia*
- Catherine Wheel - *Ferment*
- Interpol - *Turn On The Bright Lights*
- The Cramps - *Stay Sick!*
- Future Bible Heroes - *Eternal Youth*
- Offspring - *Smash*
- Tarnation - *Mirador*
- Blur - eponymous
- The Psychedelic Furs - *Forever Now*
- Pop-O-Pies - *The White EP*
- Grosse Pointe Blank - *Soundtrack*
- 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: Kashgar (A), Bactria (T), Otarsh (T), Pamir (P), Gandhara (PT), Khuttal (P), Kapisi (P)

Sending a dozen shamans into the Pamirs to convert the locals ended badly for the Khakhan. Village leaders smiled and directed the men to a shortcut over the mountains, where an entirely expected storm killed them with cold winds and fist-sized hail. Even the birth of another daughter to Ilginc did not cheer him from this debacle.

Ilginc marched his warriors into Chu to deal with the mutinous army under *gurkhan* Safeen. Negotiations were cautious on both sides, each leader having in hand tens of thousands of nomad warriors. By the autumn of 429 they had not yet agreed on terms for the mutinous soldiers accepting the orders of the Khakhan. Finally, in February of 430 the rebellious clans decided that the new direction Ilginc was taking the peoples was a sound one.

Meanwhile, the *ilkhan* Zor Halat went to Balkash, there to make nice with the White Turks and convince their khan, Fittcheen, that their relationship should be improved. On arriving in Balkash, however, the *ilkhan* found the Turk court had decamped a few days prior, and learned the entire nation was on the move (see *White Turk Khanate*). So Halat shrugged and moved on to his next assignment a tad early, riding for Kashgar to arrange a husband for one of the Khakhan's many daughters once they reach marriageable age. However even in political circles weddings for 4-year-olds were considered bad form, and the *ilkhan* dropped the idea. After some years the minor khans of Kashgar agreed to aid Ilginc.

The rather gruff lord Safeen continued attempts to woo the natives in Bactria. In the end they agreed to pay tribute to the Khakhan, but could not stomach closer ties due to his religious policies. Similarly, Ilginc himself was only able to convince the shah of Otarsh to pay tribute prior to returning home. Making up for all the disappointments of recent years, the *khanum* Umay delivered, at last, a handsome son in the winter of 432. After six daughters, having the seventh a son seemed to prove that the spirits indeed blessed the beautiful Umay, daughter of Kiliciler, and all under their tent.

Events in the Kushan land proved this yet more fully (see *Kushan Empire*).

White Turk Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Khan Fittcheen the Grey

Diplomacy: Scythia (UN), Avar (FA), Khirgiz (FA), Uze (FA), Bolgar (P)

Revered by all the clans, Fittcheen nonetheless was displeased. His 90th birthday had managed to do what no other in his long life did - make the khan feel truly old. Dealing with a large, powerful, and unpredictable Hephthalite nation pushed him yet further. After consulting with his court, including his friend Umulk the khan of the Turgay, Fittcheen declared that the people would be moving to richer pastures. The clans of Scythia scoffed at the idea and declared themselves to be White Turks no longer. After some wrangling the Avar tribe agreed to follow Fittcheen.

Thus when the steppe began to green the clans headed in the direction of the setting sun. Men of Tarhain were not willing to let them pass unmolested, sure that the Hephthalites would punish any who helped the White Turks. But the locals were easily brushed aside and the horde moved through Otrar and on to the land of Khirghiz. There the khan was impressed with Fittcheen and agreed to move with him, as the springs in the area were drying up.

Swatting mosquitos, they crossed Kazan to Uze. Here the khan was happy at the opportunity to strengthen his hand by migrating, and those clans fell in with Fittcheen's growing horde. Nogai was only the gateway to Bolgar. Here the Grey One planned to stay for a while, and so the native tribes were subdued in a campaign lasting but two moons. Scores of horse archers were lost, mainly to poisoned water at one site, but after declaring victory several hundred defeated Bolgars decided to pledge *anda* to Fittcheen, making him the most powerful - and aged - khan in the region.

Khwarizm Hunas Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Khingala Alchon, Regent of the Khakhanate of the Hunas, Khan of Khwarzim

Diplomacy:

The condition of Akhshunwaz began to deteriorate. Never particularly hale, the Khakhan grew in girth annually. Some at court secretly referred to him as "The Fruit." Starting in 429 his feet and hands caused him great pain, and by the end of that year he was confined to the palace. His armies and commanders each decided to return to the capital to look after their interests - and that of the Khakhan, of course ...

After many moons of great pain, Akhshunwaz at last died on a bitterly cold night in January of 432. Weeks of discussion among elders, intense negotiations, and a few personal threats did lead to a peaceful succession. Khingala Alchon was named regent for the daughters of Akhshunwaz until they were nubile, at which point they would likely wed a new Khakhan. Some used a game analogy, saying that rather than attempting to score with the goat carcass it was rather pushed down the field a bit. A new *Ilkhan* was named, and life continued. Some were amused at events around them, and the locals considered the calmness of the Khanate as a blessing.

Steppe Shamanism

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Primate Religious Authority)

Toulun Sechen, High Shaman

Diplomacy: Chu (AB), Balkash (AB)

New *keyids* are founded in Chu and Balkash, though the latter was among a very dispersed people (see *White Turk Khanate*). Meanwhile, Toulun orders the gathering of all scrolls and books in the city of Talas. On midsummer day of 429 these were burned as a sacrifice to the Gods and Spirits. This impressive blaze was secretly supplemented with dry willow twigs in the center since a place like Talas under the particular religion was not a great source of the written word. The Sechen also ordered all schools to train new shamen. A Buddhist school closed rather than submit, while the other two happily accepted the small subsidy and new students.

Kushan Empire



(Buddhist Civilized Open Empire)
Lakshmi, Queen and Regent for the Kidarite Shao
Diplomacy: Ghazni (A), Hazarajat (P)

The embassies from Patiliputra and Constantinople had become favorites of Koungas. What they had to say often kept this emperor awake late into the night, dreaming of expanding his already enlarged realm to the Euphrates in the west and China in the east. Thus the assault on Sasanian Persia continued, with concrete aid from his larger partners.

While others worked out the details of logistics, invasion routes, and international cooperation, Koungas and his guard travelled to the city of Ghazni and talked at length with the local khan. After more than a year of discussions the nobles agreed to aid the Shao with their treasure and lives.

As their ruler chatted peaceably in comfort, the troops of the empire pressed the attack against Persia. In Margiana Rustam Whitehair continued to isolate the great city of Merv with a cavalry army of some 8,000 men. Unfortunately the fortification system built over centuries by the locals enabled supplies to flow, albeit impeded, into the city, a continual frustration to the aged Rustam. His efforts to convince the town fathers that the Persians would not come to save them were met with ridicule - one boasted, "It is instead Varhanin who wishes more for our aid, I'll wager." (see *Sasanian Persian Empire*).

After reassigning some units, Tayhar Lionshield lead Prince Saxena of Und and the Gupta *mahadanda-hyaka* Rakesh Koshy, with their troops, against Hazarajat. This campaign against an already-subdued province was confusing to the soldiers, annoying to the locals, and of course met with success. More interesting was the push into Kash in order to beleager the town of Farah. With thousands of highly-skilled Indian siege troops Tayhar was confident this effort would smoothly come to a rapid conclusion. He was therefore shocked at the stiff resistance of the locals, and by the winter of 430 the Kushan army was still encamped around Farah.

One reason for this was a sortie by the defenders on November 3. An unusual fog had settled on the region, so that the Persian garrison commander personally lead an assault on the Indian camp. This penetrated as far as the tent of Rakesh Koshy, who was slain together with his guard. The following day saw a violent assault by the Gupta troops, enraged by the death of their *mahadanda-hyaka* and the affront to their honor in having their camp invaded. A section of curtain wall was taken for a while before the local militia wiped out the Indians on the parapets. In December, then, Tayhar was talking with the remaining commanders about options when a note arrived by swift horse from the Kushan court.

Koungas had died of a sudden seizure on December 11. His eldest son was only nine years old and unable to take the throne, while the dead Shao's two wives - each of whom had a minor son - formed two camps to work for their respective children's nascent ambitions. Prince Gudarz of Kapis, Prince Saxena of Und, and Prince Larta of Tokharia revolted immediately, those on campaign marching home in disgust at the fruitless campaigns of Koungas.

Watching from the walls of Merv the defenders were amazed to see the larger Kushan division facing off against the Turkish mercenaries under Qutlugh. Within a week they then saw these two forces treating each other amicably and preparing to march off. Rustam Whitehair himself came before the city fathers and apologized for the siege and explained that they had to return to the Kushan capital to "restore order." In absentia the mother of the elder son of Koungas had had Rustam named regent, and he had used this flimsy bit of legitimacy to claim power.

To the south in Kash, the siege of Farah was suddenly lifted when the allied force from Und marched home and the Kushans and Indians decamped together under the leadership of Tayhar. The wily old general had convinced the Gupta troops to join with him in return for loot and glory when he became regent for the Shao - or took power in his own name.

Amid the confusion many provinces took the opportunity to leave the empire. Badakhshan, Harev, Khuttal, Purusapura, Kapisi, Ghazni city, and Herat all left. Rustam and Qutlugh headed for Afghanistan, but were unable to get past rebel Badakhshan and over the mountains to the capital. Conversely Tayhar was able to march his Kushano-Indian army into Afghanistan. At his approach Queen Lakshmi and her son the prince Shaka fled into the mountains, leaving the capital to welcome the rebel army. Queen Prakasina and her infant son Vasudeva were most pleased and hopeful.

Almost unnoticed amidst imperial politics was the little matter of 30,000 Hephthalites on horseback sweeping into Pamir in July of 430. The defenders were overwhelmed in a short campaign and by the fall this army was making its way over the passes into Gandhara. The winter and spring saw increasing raids across the land, with the numerous defenders eventually slain, driven off, or vanishing into villages. Now helpless, the province spent the summer of 431 being looted by the nomads, who were enthusiastic at finally oppressing worthless Hindus instead of fellow steppe warriors.

A further blow against stability in what remained of the empire was the death at age 36 of Tayhar Lionshield. Some said he was poisoned, while others claimed that the soft life at court weakened him. Either way, that army was now left leaderless. Furthermore, in June the now-rebel general Rustam died at age 65, frustrated as usual in his ambitions. His troops refused to follow the leadership of the Turk, Qutlugh, who then left them alone in Transoxiana to seek employ elsewhere. As Rustam breathed his last, Queen Lakshmi managed to have herself smuggled into the capital, where she began to organize a comeback. On the 14th of June 430, Lakshmi lead her husband's guard troops in a coup and declared herself regent for the Crown Prince. The young Prakasina was ordered out of the city and was kept with her child under guard in a nearby monastery. The Indian troops wanted none of this, and began to march south, back to their homeland - or at least so far as Punjab. Her situation secure domestically, Lakshmi began to consider the Hephthalite threat.

For late in 431 the Hephthalite army under Tasra had taken the caravan routes into Khuttal and conquered that province with little effort. Once the land was cowed - and in fact literally "decowed" - the lord Safeen joined the *gurkhan* and planned their next moves. June 30 of 432 saw an assault by dismounted Hephthalites while their compatriots attempted to cover their advance with archery. Hundreds of defenders were picked off, as were hundreds of attackers, and by the end of the day the attackers had suffered on the order of 10,000 casualties. After some reorganization a second assault was launched on July 7. Both sides were more cautious and better prepared this time, with the exception of the garrison commander, who popped his head over a parapet just in time to meet a black-fletched arrow with his left eye, with all the results one might imagine. Though the assault was repulsed with some loss, a party came forth in the evening to negotiate a surrender. Thus Kapisi became the quarters for the remainder of the Hephthalite army without suffering a sack.

Oghuz Turk Realm - socii populi Romani

(Monophysite Christian Nomadic Open Empire)

Khan Sonqur, Rex Turcorum and Magister Equitum per Orientem

Diplomacy: Blue Turks (FA), Otrar (F)

Attempting to institute Daily Holy Offices at court failed when courtiers took to hunting on a much more active basis in order to escape this bit of tedium. Sonqur gave up the effort, after which his people took the lead of the nobles and held their holy men in somewhat less esteem. Disregarding this omen, the Khan decided that the decadent and dangerous life in the Land Between the Rivers was breaking the spirit of his people. While the younger folks largely objected to leaving and returning to a steppe they did not know, the elders agreed that a move would be prudent.

Thus the tribes gathered, and by Spring wagons trundled north. Across the Tigris and up into the Zagros highlands, the Oghuz marched inexorably, the locals and garrisons on the way quite happy to see another barbarous people leave Persia. En route Tamil the *Ilkhan* died when his horse slipped on a rocky slope while scouting ahead of the main body. He was unfortunate enough to land on a razor sharp piece of rock and died instantly. Ironically the death of the heir was followed three months later by the birth of his son to a concubine.

Passing the winter in Persia proper, Sonqur discussed at great length the possibility of the Blue Turks joining in his migration away from the decadent miasma of the soft southern lands. These tribes, originally from Kama Bulgar, Kazan, and elsewhere, had left Sonqur after his conversion to the Monophysite

Church, outraged at this betrayal of his roots. Time had cooled their passions, and the approach of the Khan with what was essentially an admission that he had erred led to their admission that they missed the steppe itself.

Thus in the spring of 430 a much larger horde travelled the Silk Route, temporarily causing panic in Margiana as the Kushans besieging Merv feared they were a Sasanian relief army (see *Kushan Empire*). Similarly, the Khwarizm Hunas in Sogdiana went on alert, thinking the mass of nomads to be the Hephthalites come to finish them off once and for all. On the shores of Lake Balkash the people halted and decided to remain for a time. As if he had waited for this moment, the khan of the Ob tribes, Tarqat, saw the blue waters and fell from his mount, dead at the age of 39. His people of course interpreted this as a good omen and decided to remain loyal to Sonqur. And in the same vein the long efforts to win over the Otrar fully to the Khan's tent succeeded.

Juan-Juan Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

P'ulochen, Khakhan

Diplomacy: Shan'si (P), Tai'yuan (C), Kansu (P), Yanzhi (P), Tai (P)

Like a snow leopard pair among the yaks, the Mongols and Turks of the Juan-Juan federation looked about for new prey. Upstream was the "Empire" of the Western Ts'in, a small realm ruled by a decadent caste of barbarians, a fat straggler in the herd, so to speak. P'ulochen listened to his advisors, including two Han bureaucrats who had worked for the Toba, and was well pleased. Further joy was derived from the cession on the part of the Hou-Yen emperor of the conquered province of Shan'si and the "title" to the city of Tai'yuan. Even the death of the old khan of the Dzamin Uud clans went smoothly as his son remained in the Khanate.

April of 429 saw a lifting of the rains and a drying of the roads - or at least less mud - and the horde decided to move, and to strike. Travelling across Huang, Ningsia, and Wu Hai over the summer, the host massed at the border of Yanzhi by October. With a nod, P'ulochen ordered his men forward, and the Juan-Juan, flanked by the Eastern Turks and Eastern Mongols, fell upon the province. The defenders, many of them Han levies with spears or crossbows, were outnumbered in the battle of **Jingtai** by more than three to one, and on seeing the first charge of the nomads broke and fled. They were cut down with a barbarian's usual lack of compassion, though some of the ruling class counterattacked and caused casualties among the nomads.

But by nightfall of 22 October a vast cloud of crows and other carrion birds had descended on the battlefield, 20,000 bodies on which to feast. The Western Ts'in emperor Chow Lu and his aids fled into the city of Yuan-Chu'an where they urged the citizens to resist the invaders at all cost. This plea was heeded, and thousands volunteered for duty.

As it happened, this was a wise move, though most did not consider it so, even those working spades to start tunnels for sorties. For P'ulochen had not counted on the Hou-Yen tending to their own policies and ignoring his request for siege troops. The young Khakhan furthermore became jealous of his popular uncle the *gurkhan* Kutelburi, and rejected his advice. Thus the host marched on into Kansu, leaving Kutelburi with a small force charge with starving out Yuan-Chu'an. While not on a par with Merv far along the Silk Road to the west, this capital of the Western Ts'in still boasted defenses adequate to distract the circumvallating nomads, giving Chow Lu time to consider his next move and send out missives for aid

throughout the Middle Kingdom and beyond.

Spring saw the horde come down from the mountains and into the fertile valleys of Kansu province. There was no resistance. Over the summer huge raiding parties crossed the mountains near Taibai Shan and into Lanchou, devastating the relatively poor countryside. The Temple of Hua Shan, rumored to be rich beyond measure, was oddly never found by the barbarians, though some of the Eastern Turks returned to their yurts with tales of odd mists and strange noises from the hills. Several of their lesser khans as well expressed their disappointment at riding through rich lands yet not taking them for their clans.

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

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Component Nation)

Khan Juchin

Diplomacy:

When the Juan-Juan showed up entire, Juchin knew that he must obey the Khakhan and ride with him (see *Juan-Juan Khanate*).

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

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Component Nation)

Khan Alptekin

Diplomacy:

Alptekin joined the march westward (see *Juan-Juan Khanate*).

Tu-Yu-Hu Kingdom of the Aza

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Khanum Goland

Diplomacy:

The Aza continued to consider their fate. With the Hsiung'nu gone an easy path to glory seemed to have ridden off with them.

China

Chinese Buddhism

(Chinese Buddhist Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Master Lo-Wang II

Diplomacy:

Lo Wang II died peacefully in his sleep, to be succeeded by his pupil, Lo Wang III.

Chinese Kingdom of Annam



(Daoist Civilized Open Empire)

King Wei-Chou Su

Diplomacy:

The kingdom was at peace, the only disturbance being the arrival of Vis'vadeva in 432 along the trade route through Nan Chao.



Daoism Temples

(Daoist Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Ko Chao Fu, Ling Pao Master

Diplomacy: Koueichou (MN), Chi (CA)

"Wisdom is highly overrated," said the Ling Pao Master, and dismissed his minions to teach the Way across the Middle Kingdom. The scores of plainly clad men, and a few women, set forth, mostly to the north, and found many converts in barbarian lands.

Eastern Ts'in Dynasty

(Daoist Civilized Open Empire)

K'ung Ti, Emperor of China

Diplomacy: Funiu (F), Lingnan (FA), Kienchou (A), Fukien (A)

After a long illness, the past emperor's consort Cho died at the age of 41 on January 26 of 430. All mourned her as a compassionate voice at court. She had in fact managed family matters for some years, and some said that the death of Chein Hua, wife of K'ung Ti and princess of Chiennan, in childbirth, along with the loss of the infant as well, was too much for her.

Despite this the empire worked and worked. Roads were built, Fukien was tilled, and Kwangchou was founded. Events in the barbarian north certainly gained the attention of the emperor (see *Juan-Juan Khanate*). Chiennan received many embassies, but held that unless the Emperor recognized the importance of the Enlightened One the province could not serve more fully. On the other hand, the Daoist priest Mi Zhu toured the whole Fukien province and convinced the locals to make common cause with the Emperor.

Khanate of the Hsiung'nu

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Bulinger, Khagan of the Hsiung'nu

Diplomacy: Manipur (PT), Tz'uk'an (FA)

The peripatetic Hsiung'nu named Alagh as the heir to Bulinger. The Khagan had tired of sitting in Tsaidam for years, eating dust and mutton. He called a council of the khans and asked for news and advice on a next move. All agreed that they needed to take their destiny in their hands, but argued long into the night on which direction held the most promise. To the east the Juan-Juan were rearranging China, but many feared their might (see *Juan-Juan Khanate*). Others noted that the Hephthalites (see *Hephthalite Khanate*) were moving west, and the Hsiung'nu tribes might follow in their wake. But again many cautioned against facing their ancient adversaries.

Most settled, then, on a general progression towards Southeast Asia, to warmer and richer lands. The khan of Tsinghai resisted this, and by summer Alagh had his skull for a drinking vessel. A cold winter was passed in Qinghai. When the snows melted the horde crossed into Pat'ang, Om'chu, and Tz'uk'an. The king of this last mountain region had long coveted the lands to the south, and agreed to join the Khagan and move south.

By autumn of 431 the nomads had come down from the mountains and fallen upon Manipur, a land wholly unprepared to "receive" them. The region was conquered and the nomads decided to pause in this pleasant place to consider their future. To the west lay India, strong yet wealthy beyond imagining, to the south lay the Pyu and Khmer, and to the east lay Annam. Bulinger was well-pleased with this move and promised glory and wealth to his warriors and their families. Needless to say, neighboring nations were not happy at the news of their new neighbors.

Korean Kingdom of Koguryo

(Chinese Buddhist Civilized Open Empire)

King Changsu

Diplomacy:

The Koreans considered a change in foreign policy.

Later Liang Kingdom

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Lu Ssu, Emperor of China

Diplomacy:

Lounging with his concubines, Lu Ssu was enraged to receive a messenger. Fortunately for the man, who had killed two horses bringing the news quickly, the emperor said, "Wait ...," to the backs of his guards bodily carrying the scout out to the square for immediate decapitation. Lu Ssu had read the note, then dropped it. For the news was from Yuan-ch'uan and in the hand of the Western Ts'in emperor, asking for an army to drive the barbarians (see *Juan-Juan Khanate*) from his lands and restore his throne. Lu Ssu did not return to his private quarters for many days ...

Uighur Khanate

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Component Nation)

Hsiao Hsin, Khan

Diplomacy: Gurvan (UN)

The khan of the Gurvan was struck down by a heart attack in February of 429, and his successor decided that the Uighurs and their Liang masters were lame. On the plus side Hsiao Hsin sired his fifth son.

Hou Yen Dynasty

(Daoist Civilized Open Empire)

Mu-jung Ch'uei, Emperor of China, Later Yen Dynast

Diplomacy: Chi (F)

A deal was struck with the Juan-Juan and the nomads marched off to the west, to the relief of the Hou Yen. The prince Mu-jung Shen-qu sired a boy via his secondary consort. And the captured Toba troops were settled in the easternmost part of the empire, where they and their sons vowed to protect the realm.

In the south, "brigands" were suppressed by an army from the city of Ch'ang-tzu, aided by Gukuma Wei. This police campaign was so mismanaged that the entire province rose in a revolt which was put down with difficulty. The city of Chi was convinced to join the empire fully, in part because the Mu-jung clan has managed to keep (other) rapacious barbarians at bay.

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

(Daoist Civilized Component Nation)

Ma Ch'in, Sung King

Diplomacy: Shentung (F)

Happy under the Eastern Ts'in wing, the Sung built a road from Honan to Tangchou. Ma Ch'in was otherwise kept busy trying to keep track of his triplet daughters while negotiating with the Duke of Shentung. The province was happy to join fully in the kingdom, especially given the chaos across the river (see *Hou Yen*).

Western Ts'in Empire

(Asiatic Pagan Civilized Open Empire)

Chow Lu, Emperor of China

Diplomacy: Yuan-ch'uan (UN), Lanchou (UN), Ts'in (UN)

Chow Lu was an emperor without an empire, thanks to the Juan-Juan (see *Juan-Juan Khanate*) nomads. Stuck in Yuan-ch'uan, without an army, he could only hope that someone would rescue him. On 17 October of 430, while once more bserveing the small barbarian force beyond the city yet again, the emperor suddenly keeled over, dead. Without an heir, the dynasty came to an end. Lanchou had been laid waste by the nomads, and decided to abandon the Western Ts'in. The remaining lackeys of Chow Lu were hired on to manage the defenses of Yuan-ch'uan, which despite the demise of the empire decided that neither did they wish to allow vile and smelly barbarians with poor credit ratings into their city.

South East Asia

Cham Kingdom

(Hinduism Barbarian Open Empire)

King Samudravarman

Diplomacy:

Pass the soup.

Chen-La Kingdom

(Hinduism Civilized Open Empire)

King Pendravarman

Diplomacy:

The death of aged prince Bhavavarman surprised few, and his funeral was well-attended.

Khmer Kingdom of Funan

(Hinduism Civilized Open Empire)

Korn Danh II, the Great, King of the Mountain

Diplomacy:

While the court fretted at the activity of Pyu, the King of the Mountain remained serene. A new fascination with imported Roman vintages - taken up after the death of his 22 year-old daughter Dharini - may have induced his calm. The atmosphere once more shifted a bit on the death of his wife, the Kedah princess Saru, on November 12 of 431 at the age of 49. Korn Danh II became yet more at peace without her "intense" voice echoing through the palace. His other wife Chekriya was a bit more upset.

Kingdom of Aceh - *Subjects of Pallava*

(Oceanic Pagan Seafaring Component Nation)

Suharu, Raja

Diplomacy:

The Acehnese receive yet more local autonomy from their distant Pallavan overlords (see *Pallava Kingdom*). Suharu is chosen in a rigged election among the high and powerful to lead them, whereupon everyone went back to the usual business of fishing, farming, and doing a bit of piracy on the side.

Kingdom of Tarumanegara

(Buddhist Seafaring Open Empire)

Purnavarnam, Raja

Diplomacy:

Java remained at peace, much to the irritation of the young men.

Malayadvipa - *Gupta Tributary*

(Buddhist Seafaring Component Nation)

Sripanasan, Regent for Crown Prince Varanavendra

Diplomacy: Wangka (EA)

Wili of Wangka listened to his scribe read the dispatch from the Great Gupta Raja, declaring the lowering of duties for this distant island, and wept. The tall slim leader of his people walked the shore alone in the morning, prayed, and returned with the inspiration to increase the status of his people. The next day workers raised the first of many small buildings, a new factory specializing in candies, sweets, and other treats for the export market.

Pyu Kingdom

(Buddhist Civilized Open Empire)

King Kyanzittha

Diplomacy: Burma (F)

Thousands of peasants paid their communal labor and received free spades and buckets for creating new farmland, levees, and roads in Burma. The results were clearly of great benefit, and the various minor kings decided to join fully with Pyu. News from Manipur caused great consternation among the peasantry (see *Khanate of the Hsiung'nu*). Finally, attempts to improve the level of horsemanship failed utterly.

Japan



Emishi Lords

(Asiatic Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

King Ashitaka

Diplomacy:

At long last a son was born to the King, a sign of hope for an embattled people.

Yamato Japan

(Shinto Civilized Open Empire)

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

Diplomacy:

After a series of negotiations Jingu agreed to send a small subsidy to the Southern Mountain Clans, claiming this was a subsidy to a vassal. Another international effort was the trade fleet of Hiroaki *Protagonist* arriving in Tsingtao to negotiate deals with local merchants. Finally, the sparse population of Nigata chose to reject proposals to establish temples in their land, and held to their gods of river, forest, and sea.

The Society Pages

Court society is abuzz with two weddings in the Royal Family. First prince Okinagatarashi-Hime No marries the well-connected (literally and figuratively ...) and wealthy Sakura Maiya in a lavish Shinto ceremony. Much *nihonshu* [sake] was consumed, and some had headaches the next morning.

Naniha was beautiful in the spring, with cherry blossoms strewn around the grounds of the palace. Sakura means cherry blossoms, so the petals are so redundant, cattily thought Jingu. No royal transports meant no trip on the Inland Sea, so the couple took a quick trip to Mt. Miwa.

Wags said that the Kima spent more time in meetings with the priests and rice board planners than with his new bride. Jingu noted that the Kima surely must have a plan of action and milestone scroll for his marriage, just like he insists on that during rice board meetings. He may be cold, but he likes meeting to be productive, thinks Jingu.

Matsui Kazu spites his younger half-brother by marrying a rice farmers first daughter, Aneko Tamura, in Edo. The family had little warning, but is happy she is so tractable. Glad Matsui left all those musician ways behind him. True wealth is grandchildren, thought the older members of the royal clan, and indeed within a year she had delivered a daughter.

Kazu matures with the assumption of new responsibilities, as he protects and guides the building of the new port city of Edo. He enjoys the first fruits of marriage, but after a quickie for lunch becomes a drink of *nihonshu*, he returns to training the Fuji Banner in anticipation of action.

Jingu Koga was wistful at the wedding of Okin, smiling at all the young children. She looked oddly content near Hiro Protagonist, given their differences in age and temperament. But her troops noticed a new edge on her return, as she trained them harder and harder. "Can she ever be satisfied?" a weary trooper (who refused to give his name) in the Kabane Horse Regiment said.

Hiro Protagonist leaves Mt. Fuji on his right side as he leads the Tori fleet down Edo Wan. Skirting past the lee shore of Ken Zaki, his ships buck the current as they tack south to Naniha. Once in port, he tasks the lighter ships to escort the Korean trade ship. After a pleasant time at the Royal wedding, he bids *sayonara* to Jingu.

He oversees the loading of milled rice, rice cakes, and other enticing trade goods in a group of large ships. Hiro, the flagship, and the lead company of the Marine Foot Guard, known as the Gems or derisively as the Rainbows, and the Tori Fleet escort trade ships and lead a trade delegation to the Eastern Ts'in at Tsingao.

New rice paddies are placed into production along the banks of the Tama Gawa and Ara Gawa in Kwanto, and near the waters of Biwa Ko in Yamato. And as part of what some call tribute and others say is vassalage, japonica rice milled from the Royal rice field is placed inside the highest quality pottery container, wrap in dyed rice paper, and sent by Royal messenger to Koji Jutaro, Regent for Akihito Jutaro, as a token of Nihons esteem.

Southern Mountains Clans

(Shinto Barbarian Open Nation)

Koji Jutaro, regent

Diplomacy:

Talks over several months lead to the Yamato paying Koji Jutaro a small amount of gold, which the latter claimed was tribute paid by the northern neighbors. He received this payment dressed in mourning clothes, as a few days earlier his wife had died in childbirth, taking the offspring with her into the other world. The pre-teen prince Akihito, meanwhile, is known to cause have caused same-age girls to faint when seeing him for the first time.

Western Europe

Alamanni

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Galindus, king

Diplomacy: Saguntina (UN), Valentia (UN), Baetica (UN)

While deer hunting in March Arbogast fell into a pit trap. Fortunately the spikes at the bottom were weak, apparently the forgotten work of some poachers, and he was unharmed by the mishap. The king was free to continue planning his counteroffensive against the various Rugians, Gallaecians, and Vandals who were lately impinging on his domain.

He was oblivious to the realization by many of his fellow Germans that, gee, the court had gone Latin some time ago. This bit of civilization did not sit well with large segments of the barbarian overlord class out in the countryside. Galindus, who had been managing the books from Astigitanus, declared his outrage and raised the banner of rebellion on March 29 of 429. Local lords in Saguntina and Valentia also declared their independence, and the Germans of Baetica gave up all hope for rescue by Arbogast.

Wulfgar, the heir, was anointed king on 12 April by Bishop Lucius, and quickly set about speaking to all the *thiufans* of the army in Hauptland. Unfortunately for him, Galindus was already working the warriors, winning their trust and their allegiance with his reactionary message. Lucius managed to escape into Gades, though wounded while fleeing on horseback. Wulfgar was captured and Galindus was loath to spill royal blood, for now, and so the young man was forcibly added to the usurper's court. From his sickbed in the priory of a church Bishop Lucius fulminated against the new regime in Hauptland, whom he claimed to have slid back to the unspeakable horrors of their pagan past.

One factor aiding the quick reorganization of the Alamanni court was news that the Vandals were about to reach **Corduba**. A large army of Siling Vandals and Rugians had crossed the Mariani Montes and was marching down the Baetis river, causing the usual disruptions and chaos en route. The 13,000 warriors and countless families ate everything in their path, and the Alamanni army quickly organized itself to meet them about two leagues east of **Corduba**.

The rumor had spread that no army would meet the Vandals, and that instead the chaos of the last months had left the enemy wrongfooted and holed up in the city. Thus when a few thousand Alamanni foot and horse formed a line across the Roman road, the Vandal heavy cavalry in the vanguard charged immediately. Surprisingly, the Alamanni line held, leading to a melee, with scattered units of Vandals and Rugians rushing forward to reinforce the attack. It was at this point that the bulk of the Alamanni warriors appeared from a wood some distance to the right rear of the long line of march of the invaders and fell upon them. The Vandals and Rugians broke and fled almost immediately, and thousands died on the *via*. Seeing his men falling like rye before a scythe, Araharius, the Rugian king, charged with his small guard into a flank of Alamanni warriors. He was quickly surrounded and a stalemate ensued as more and more Germans became distracted by the prospect of looting bodies and wagons nearby. Eventually Araharius surrendered and was given quarter in recognition of the bravery of the old man - and perhaps his family connections to the Huns (see *Empire of the Huns*).

This broke the back of the invasion, and Galindus was able to settle matters at home, though that took several years to achieve. His long-time consort delivered to him a daughter, which gave the king thoughts of dynasty.

Kingdom of the Alans

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Arlon, Shah

Diplomacy: Thuringia (PT), Bohemia (PT), Lausatia (PT), Meissen (PT), Meissenburg (P), Austria (EA)

While ice fishing in January Thiudmir, king of Austria, was wrestling with an unusually strong water creature at the end of his thick line and was pulled in. Unwilling to let go of his prize, he quickly succumbed. His body was recovered some days later after frantic efforts by his best warriors, who were convinced a water spirit had kidnapped him. This was taken as an evil omen, and Austria once more decided to go its own way.

Arlon had big plans, and was not about to let the death of his friend and one of the best generals of the age dissuade him. Interestingly, some weeks later a short scarred man of advanced age, though yet robust, rode to the main hall, dismounted, and told the guards that he had some information of use to their ruler. The man was brought before the Shah, and Arlon's shaman exclaimed that this was the Lombard king's chief warleader. Four spears were at Wacho's throat within a heartbeat, but the man only scowled. "I have no love for Autharii, and he none for me," he said quietly. "Or had you not heard my king's betrayal of his people and his loss of their affections?" The court had of course learned of the near-collapse of the Lombard realm, an event which surely was a sign from the gods. The Shah took the appearance of Wacho as further sign of his blessings, and placed him at his right hand in the coming war - under close watch, of course.

The Alan host was mustered in the Spring, and in a famous address the Shah reviled the Lombards as "pathetic" and unworthy of their realm. "Let the wealth of the north pour into the rightful hands of the Alan tribes," he bellowed across the muddy field. Wacho kept silent, as Arlon had promised him a high role in the new realm - and revenge. As one the warriors roared back their approval and the campaign was underway. His heir, Artaxerxes, remained to organize their conquests and managed tax collections.

The horde crossed into Bohemia in May and began campaigning there. Unfortunately for the Alans, the rebellion of many lands from Lombard rule meant these kings were responsible for their own defense, and they did so with enthusiasm - but not with competence. Bohemia submitted within a month, and the Alans rode on to Meissen, the enemy homeland, over the high Harz. Despite the fact that it was his homeland Autharii made little in the way of defense, instead choosing to shepherd the many unsettled tribes to safety in strong positions, making it hard for the Alans to get at their enemy. By the first snows each side had casualties but the Alans were forced to retire to quarters in recently conquered Bohemia.

Spring of 430 saw a resumption of campaigning. This time Wacho had a chance to gather information on the Lombard plans for the coming year by kidnapping locals, and the war was much more intense. Autharii was brought to battle just outside the walls of **Meissenburg**, where he hoped to anchor a flank of his small army, the other resting on the fortified encampments families had built nearby. This plan failed, and less than half the force managed to escape into the city. Autharii and Aistulf were both severely wounded in a final struggle at the city gates, where the Alans were pushed back before they could pour in.

The very next day some men were detailed to look after the captive Lombard tribals, and most began to invest Meissenburg with trenches, others felling trees for siege engines. The curtains and bastions were substantial, though not up to Roman civil standards, being made of earth and rock with log palisades used for the upper few meters, and Autharii had some hope of repelling the nomadic foe, nearly all of which was ahorse. But the Alans showed energy in the attack, fashioning a large number of pavises behind which they approached the city. On hearing a horn blast thousands rushed forth from these, while others merely stood to rake the parapets with arrows. The two city gates were felled by rams within the hour and the city was captured on May 29 of 430. With that the Lombard kingdom collapsed, king, heir, and royal family lead away in fetters. The city was left intact and garrisoned, and the horde moved on.

The next months saw Arlon and Wacho campaigning on both sides of the Elbe, conquering Lausatia and Thuringia. By 432 the army was in Austria so that the Shah could attempt to convince the natives to rejoin his expanding kingdom. The new king, Barana, was enthusiastic, but the Arian Christian bishop warned of grave consequences if Austria drew too close to these pagans. Arlon and Barana's niece Floy were wed just outside a church amid some small amount of joy. He was, after all, nearly old enough to be her grandfather.

Angles and Jutes

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

King Aethelred

Diplomacy:

These were cold years in the far north, and most people farmed when they could and stayed warm when possible.

Asding Vandals - Hun Vassals

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Oebersius, Rex Vandalorum

Diplomacy:

Gunderic was pleased to see his daughter wed the most powerful man in Europe, the Hun Balamber (see *Empire of the Huns*). Furthermore Gunderic's son, Edeco, married and became a Hun Prince, tying yet tighter the knot between them all. Sadly, Gunderic died in a riding accident in July of 430. A period of intense politics followed, uncharacteristic in its lack of violence, and within a moon Oebersius, the extremely smooth son of Godegisel and Heletradana, rose to power. He would soon have much to prove ...

Burgundians

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Gundioc, King of the Burgundians

Diplomacy:

Gundioc began to pine for his beautiful Roman-free homeland of Alsace, and marched his tribes back north. Later a son was born to him and the *volk* took it as a good omen.



Classical Pagan Oracles

(Classical Pagan Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Hecate, Sibyl

Diplomacy:

In Roma a conclave was held to reify conceptual etiologies for the workers, peasants, and students. A good time was had by all.

Eire Kingdom of the Scots - *Diocese of Hibernia*

(Keltic Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

High King Brian I, Rex Scotorum, Vicarius Hiberniae

Diplomacy:

Pointless. Peasants in Britannia II one spring noted that word, spoken by an old woman hauling dirt away from Hadrian's Wall in a maintenance project. Those within hearing paused, and one by one dropped their burdens and walked home. Freezing, thawing, rain, and plants did the rest, and that section of wall was compromised.

Meanwhile, "the" Donald hired scores of scribes and flunkies and used them to more directly extract taxation from hearth and manse. Given the benefits to those at the royal court, few objected to the increased power the High King wielded.

Some who did object were the citizens of Deva. Thousands of Scots were sent to settle there, to expand the city. But they were not well received by the locals, who shut the gates and refused to allow them in. Within a few years the would-be settlers had built a town attached to Deva around the eastern gate, and at last the local senate relented and allowed as the city could expand.

Starting the summer of 430 a plague spread across the British Isles (see *Pictish Kingdom of Alba*) from south to north and east to west. Old and frail, Donald I passed on after a fever of a few days in September of 432, and his heir Donald II the Red was crowned that week. But within a moon he was also buried.

While one might have thought that a clever man like Donald might have named an heir, one would be wrong. A struggle erupted between the son of Donald I, Brian his natural son, and the son of Donald the Red and Rhianna, Princess of Midhe, Jarellian, over the throne. While most agreed that the latter had as

good a birthright, they also agreed that his handsome cousin just looked keen in a gold crown, and Brian was acclaimed High King on All Hallow's Eve. By Christmas the teenager proved himself to be an inveterate party animal, drinking and carousing all night and at the (other) hunt all day.

Franks

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Childeric, Rex

Diplomacy: Belgica I (UN), Belgica II (UN)

The death of Bishop Ricimond troubled only the king, who had valued his advice on matters of strategy and hunting. More serious was succumbing of Clodius himself to gout on November 28 of 431. Allaert, the *reges* in Belgica I and II took the opportunity to leave the kingdom. The teenaged son of Clodius, Childeric, was quickly crowned king and just as rapidly took the reigns of state into his rather large 18-year-old hands.

Frisians

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

King Jentze Wolfsen

Diplomacy:

The rapid collapse of the Lombards (see *Lombard Kingdom*) was a matter for discussion at nearly every session of the royal court. A joyful distraction was the birth of a son to the aging Jentze.

Lombard Kingdom - *Societas Imperii*

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Autharii, Rex Lombardorum

Diplomacy: Bohemia (UN), Lausatia (UN), Thuringia (UN)

In February of 429 Autharii called together the *thiudans* and other leader and informed them that their loyalty would now be to the kingdom as represented by him, and not to him personally, and that his own tax collectors would be setting annual revenue goals. This bold move by the king backfired utterly, as most of the gathered men stormed out of the hall, and out of the kingdom.

Watching this was Autharii's general, Wacho. The same age as the *rex Lombardorum*, he had never liked his king, and Wacho's wish had always been to oust the overbearing Autharii. Wacho managed to catch up to the disaffected leaders from Bohemia, Lausatia, and Thuringia and explain his plan. They were receptive, and gave him a bit of gold and encouragement. On the night of May 3 Wacho and a score of warriors burst into Autharii's rooms intent on murder. But the king had been warned by a small girl who had overheard the plotters and a large body of men awaited the would-be assailants. In the scuffle that followed Wacho's men fell, and their leader managed to escape into the night, an arrow in his shoulder.

The assault of the Alans (see *Kingdom of the Alans*) further challenged the rule of Autharii. The sole good news was the birth of a daughter to his older brother and heir, Aistulf, small comfort indeed. Still of less comfort was his position as *Rex Lombardorum* as he could imagine no Roman army rushing to his aid. Only Silesia remained of his once-large kingdom.

Pictish Kingdom of Alba

(Roman Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Miranda Mac Aniel, Queen of the Cruithni, Princess of Flavia

Diplomacy:

Looking over a Roman map of Britain, talking with his lords and bishops, Sean could see that now was a good time to finish his conquest of the imperial remnants. The spring tax revenues were good, allowing him to import hundreds of German and Alan mercenaries.

Mustering the Pictish army in April, the king and his trusted mentor Padrig rode south through the Wall and into Maxima Caesarea and then Anglia. Here the army of Archibald, *dux Anglia*, joined them, while in Flavia the local garrison troops were gathered up as well. This motley force then crossed into Britanniae in Atrebatia via Stane Street and to the coast at Noviomagus.

Sean knew he could not hope to reduce the province while the fort at Portchester commanded the southern waters and the approaches to Venta, the major city. However another king had other ideas, as Volusian, *vicar Britanniae*, was in Venta visiting his good friend Castor the local despot. Together they marched forth to oppose the barbarian host.

The Picts clearly had the Britanniae force outnumbered, so the latter fell back to the coast town of **Claesentum**. On August 29 of 429 the two armies clashed. The shorter but well-dressed line of the Brits threw back several wild charges by the Picts, who suffered hundreds of casualties in just the first half-hour of the battle. But the Alans and Anglians managed to turn both flanks and threaten the rear of Volusian's position, and he was obliged to order a retreat. A few hundred of his men fell in the withdrawal, but the Picts dropped even more rapidly. So it seemed.

It was then that Castor and his Venta city militia sprang from a copse to the left of the line of Pictish pursuit. Shocked, the barbarians fled and were cut down by horse and foot alike, including a knot of Alans and Germans who were wiped out. It was at this stage that Sean Mac Aniel, while attempting to rally his men, was struck in the eye by an arrow and slain instantly. At this all thought of resistance vanished and the northerners routed. Several mercenary captains surrendered, whereupon they and their men were paroled.

The death of Sean, with only a girl child, caused a crisis back in Valentia. Forceful and quick work by the young wife of the dead king, Miranda, put her on the throne. Support from her mother-in-law, Drust Mac Erp was essential. The offensive was over, and the army returned to Flavia. But the following year Padrig died there of dysentery, on the very day that Balimber the Hun also ended his life (see *Empire of the Huns*), and the year following Archibald passed away. His successor maintained their allegiance.

And so a bit more life was yet in Roman Britain, but for how long none could say.

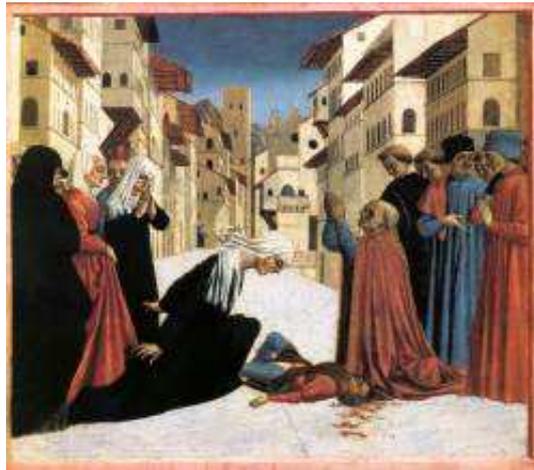
Quadi Clans

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

King Vitalianus

Diplomacy: Pannonia I (UN), Slovakia (HM)

The Quadi followed their masters and took to the open road (see *Empire of the Huns*), bringing Slovaks with them. The vibrant and vivacious Vivian was married to Edeco the Vandal, who was elevated to be a prince of the Huns. This position was of course merely a stepping stone for him, but not a stable one. In the course of events Vitalianus freed himself of the Huns, not entirely willingly. The Quadi decided to return home to Slovakia, where at least they knew the land and way of life. But the clan leaders had seen the wealth of Italia, and before the fireplaces of their wooden halls they told adventure tales to the young of life in the empire.



Roman Christian Church

(Roman Christian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Sixtus III, Bishop of Roma

Diplomacy:

Following a seizure, Celestine lost the use of the right side of body starting in 429. His condition continued to deteriorate, leaving the See in a state similar to that of its leader - mostly paralyzed. Finally he ascended at the age of 58 on December 19 of 430. This caused the continuing controversies within Christian thought to come to a head as the cardinals could not come to an agreement on a successor. After more than a month of wrangling the group chose Sixtus III to lead them. His gentle yet authoritative nature seemed to calm their rancor on the issues of the day.

Sixtus set about attempting reconciliation with the Nestorians, while overseeing the restoration of many facilities in Roma proper. Many discussions were held with Julian of Eclanum, a famous Pelagian tolerated by the emperor himself. A priest named Patrick was sent off to see what might be done with the Scots. Bishop Paulinus of Nola was given especial praise by Sixtus at his funeral in 431, much cheered by Gauls.

But more significant was the memorial in 430 for Augustine of Hippo.

Siling Vandals - *Diocese of Spain*

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Gaiseric, Rex Vandalorum, Vicarius Hispaniae

Diplomacy:

The campaign in concert with the Rugians against the Alamanni did not go well (see *Alamanni*).

Suevi Kingdom

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

King Korga

Diplomacy:

Mighty events swept by and through this kingdom and left it untouched (see *Empire of the Huns*). But the warriors were not pleased that other barbarians were well-fed and had the chance to go on looting expeditions while they continued to stare at the walls of Aquileia. The passage of the Hun host quelled this nascent mutiny, and the young men resumed their sulking. 431 saw the death of old Agnar as well as his 19-year-old nephew, son of Korga, of a minor plague that swept Venetia. Korga was named king, and he in turn was sadly forced to appoint his nephew Hermeric as his heir.



Western Roman Empire

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Marcus Traianus Marcellinus, Augustus

Jovius, Caesar Diplomacy: Genua (UN), Campania (OC), Viennensis (F), Lugdunensis I (F), Belgica I (NT), Rotomagus (EA)

Given the authority to do so, the Augustus Marcus concluded a treaty with the Hun leader Balimber. Peace was declared and the nomad army encamped around Liguria picked itself up and rode away. Citizens in Italia were pleased, and the potential oppression of those in the distant West was not something that troubled them overmuch (see *Empire of the Huns*). Further, the Gepids were given their freedom which they immediately took to heart (see *Gepids*). Grain was purchased from several quarters.

As part of the imperial reorganization, Eric the Burgundian was hired to oversee the resettlement of Ligurian refugees who had holed up in Mediolanum. They were ordered to move across the mountains into Alpes Cottiae. At first they dutifully placed their belongings on their backs, donkeys, or small carts and filed out of the capital city. But a sudden rainstorm and the news that the Gepids were no longer imperial clients caused a sudden change of heart. A citizen's committee, including prominent Ligurian landowners, demanded Eric allow them to move back into whatever was left of their own farms and towns. While not in his brief to give such permission, the clever barbarian general realized that he had nowhere near the raw force required to enforce the imperial edict to the letter. Eric managed to smooth

things over with the citizens while making plausible excuses to the imperial bureaucracy for the change in plans.

In fact, none of Marcus' schemes for repopulating the barbarian "infected" lands in Italia went well. Aemilia was settled by Slavs, who set themselves up as a kingdom there (see *Slavic Kingdom of Aemilia*) including Verona. Unsure as to whether these long-time vassals of the Huns were yet within that orbit the people to be sent there did not choose to take any chances. Similarly, Flaminia was not evacuated by the Taifali (see *Taifali Tribes*) and the peasantry was unwilling to travel there, especially in the midst of barbarian unrest there (see *Empire of the Huns*).

A hard double blow was the conversion of the Ostrogoths, thus depriving the empire of the *cassus belli* of Defending the Faith, and conquest by them of Campania (see *Ostrogothic Kingdom*). Marcus cursed, but kept the imperial army in Mediolanum lest the barbarians destroy it. Better news came from Jovius, *Caesar*, who convinced Viennensis to rejoin the empire fully. The offer to wed one of the fine noblewomen of the land, and the peaceful passage of the Huns, convinced the magnates that their future lay with Mediolanum. Similarly the emperor's agent Caracalla coaxed Lugdunensis I back into the fold. The priest Thomas attempted to win over the Diocese of Africa, but the influence of the Donatists was too great, and they regarded him with some contempt as a part of the impure Empire. And a fluke storm kept the *comes sac. largitionum* in Roma, thwarting his mission. Finally, instability in the Frankish lands (see *Frankish Kingdom*) led to the citizens of Belgica I asking to rejoin the empire, while those in Belgica II chose full independence. The city of Rotomagus also hoped the joining the imperial trade network would lead to progress and growth.

Holy Empire of Rome

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Sextus, Augustus

Diplomacy:

Amazingly, Pentadius realized that his greatest challenge was paying the scribes and clerks in his employ. His shrinking realm was just not generating enough taxes. He discussed this with other leaders at the funeral of Serena, the aged widow of Stilicho, on June of 430. No conclusions were reached, though Pentadius did gain a lot of weight. So much in fact that by 431 he was bedridden. By August he had died in agony.

A short bit of politicking on behalf of the bastard fraternal twin sons of Eucherius ended with the accession of the teenager Sextus "the Unwanted" to the throne. One Cassian had hoped that his help would lead to his posting as regent. But on a muggy August evening he was kidnapped and shipped off to a monastery just outside Aquincum, and the young man took power in his own right. Sextus' brother, Delmar "the Bastard" was named a *flavius* and kept at court - and watched closely. Delmar did not mind, much, and was soon attempting to find suitable husbands for his younger fraternal twin cousins, Aqua and Cerelia.

Ostrogothic Kingdom

(Roman Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Tamora, Queen Mother and Regent

Diplomacy: Tuscia (F), Aemilia (UN), Campania (P)

Theodoric was happy with his mission, settling the People in Aemilia, a rich and well-watered land. He rode into Tuscia with his queen in March of 429, planning to march onward. He was however taken by surprise when Tamora took this time to declare that the Kingdom would henceforth be a Christian one. Surprised only by the timing, for most Goths had been either anticipating or dreading her official announcement of this change. For their part, the settlers in Tuscia were not pleased. They had long regarded the Dead God as the *prima facie* inferior religion of their peasantry and were not about to be lowered to their level.

Tamora, however, had anticipated that these hard men would be displeased and immediately began a charm offensive in Tuscia. This was in fact the reason she had marched into their lands with the host. Spending most of 429 the queen managed to win them back into the realm. The garrison of Aemilia was alarmed at the coming of the Huns and at the uproar over religion back home, and they fled the nearly deserted landscape for home.

This task was not without peril. One hot summer night the cry of fire arose from the villa she was visiting on her tour of the Tuscan countryside, owned by the *thiufan* Eberhard the One-Armed. Tamora awoke immediately and ran to the room next to hers, where her young son Amalisigrun slept with the unconcern of children. Dagger in hand she stayed there while the sounds of a struggle erupted from next door. A few seconds later she heard her guard captain, Abarsus the Skythian, shouting in Gothic for his men to find her. Tamora then emerged to see him in the hall, lit by a torch in his one hand, the other holding a severed head. A pair of assassins had attacked her room through a hole in the ceiling. Not finding her in the chamber, they were fallen upon by her husband, the Roman bishop Paulus, who had raised the alarm and run one of the surprised assailants through with his antique gladius, a family heirloom. The other man then stabbed Paulus and fled, running into Abarsus and his unsheathed blade. Tamora's consort did recover from his wound. An extensive investigation by Paulus himself could turn up no clue as to who had sent the two men, but most assumed they had been hired by someone in Mediolanum.

On Easter Sunday of 429 Paulus himself oversaw the baptism of the entire Ostrogothic army, a huge effort, made more difficult by the fact that the most of the priests pressed into service resented his marriage to Tamora as treason. Despite rumors to the contrary the process did not produce and immediate disfigurement, curse, or other horrible change among the first few communicants, and at this the remaining thousands shrugged and queued up, cursing the inconvenience - usually by invoking the old gods by name.

The mission of Theodoric was of course delayed, and the lack of a garrison in Aemilia proved an inconvenience since the moving clans were not convinced of their safety on arrival. By the Spring of 430 they began crossing the Appenines into the valley of the Po, amazed at how wild the place had become. They were also extremely nervous at the proximity of the Hun host, and were cautious in settling the land, many choosing to remain in temporary encampments and keeping their options open. By October about half had created farmsteads, when word arrived that the Huns were coming. At this they demanded to go back to Latium. Theodoric could not refuse in the face of unanimity and they packed up and headed back over the mountains. The fact that the Slavs, and not the Huns proper, were on the way did not matter to most of the jittery Goths (see *Slavic Kingdom of Aemilia*).

While Theodoric was handling a subtle situation, Tamora herself had a more direct plan for 430. With her handsome son Marcus Atilus leading a wing of cavalry the Gothic army left Tuscia, marched through Latium and on into Roman Campania, recently home to the Red Huns. Now back under imperial

protection the local *dux* was unprepared for yet another set of barbarians. Within a few weeks the landscape was under Gothic control entirely. Tamora next attempted to convince the senators of the local smaller cities to join the growing Ostrogothic realm. Cowed by the latest mass of barbarians they only agreed to pay taxes to her and not Marcus, but otherwise longed for an imperial army to sweep away the filth.

In distant Aquileia Tamora's "divorced" husband heard of the conversion of his people to Christianity. At this, the imprisoned prince renounced his allegiance to the Ostrogoths and wept bitterly over the fate of himself and his people.

Also with cause for remorse was Froederic the Black. Ordered by his queen to shake down the rich sea traffic passing off the coast, he ordered a fleet of monoremes to be built, and confiscated a variety of local shipping, from fishing boats to a few huge grain vessels. Setting out to gain easy money, he soon found the Goths ill-prepared for naval warfare. Time and again the merchants sailing by would outstrip their pursuers. This continued through 429 and 430, until finally the ineptitude of his fleet meant that the Romans began outfitting their vessels with hired men, and the merchants slowed down to be "boarded" by the barbarians. Invariably the Goths would be captured, slain, or tossed into the sea, their ships boarded in return and taken as prizes. A few merchant captains became quite wealthy preying on the Ostrogothic fleet. By Christmas of 432 the pitiful remainder of Froederic's fleet was beached, confirming in most the fact that the Goths were warriors of the land, fierce on a charging horse but literally at sea in a boat.

Dalmatia - *Civitate Foederatae*

(Roman Christian Civilized Component Nation)

Ariadna, Regent

Diplomacy: Illyria (UN), Salonae (UN)

The death of Polyanthus caused a dreadful amount of fuss. He had left two daughters, no sons, and no declared heir. The elder daughter, Ariadna, had long ago given up on her father politically and on his death worked the connections she had long established among the merchants and the priesthood. By May of 429 Ariadna was anointed as regent until a suitable man might be found - which may of course never occur. The princess was disappointed that she would not have a more impressive title, but so long as real power lay in her hands all was well.

Her teenaged sister Amaryllis was pleased to see the success of her sibling. But the farmers of Illyria were not happy at this affront to all right-thinking folk, while the shipping magnates of Salonae decided to give up on the "state" of Dalmatia as a bad deal, hoping the Empire would come to court them.

Kingdom of Britanniae - *Diocese of Britain*

(Classical Pagan Civilized Open Empire)

Volusian, Rex Damnonia, Vicarius Britanniae

Diplomacy:

The Picts were on the march, and Volusian's was apparently the only civilized force left to face them (see *Pictish Kingdom of Alba*).

Kingdom of Roman Gallaecia - *Diocese of Lusitania*

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Gaius Carpus, Rex Gallaecia, Vicarius Lusitaniae

Diplomacy: Gallaecia (T to Scallabitanus), Astigitanus (P)

Sometimes people need just a small opportunity. This was how Octavius Petrus, self-proclaimed king of Lusitania, found himself riding into Emeritanus through a short but chilly March rain. Spending the spring travelling the land and waving the banner of war proved a good investment. Sons of legionaries, landless men, and those simply seeking adventure were allowed to sign up with Gaius Carpus' army. By the autumn he was signing up men in Baetica, many clearly sent from families worried about a resurgent Alamanni nation. Octavius now rode at the head of nearly 7000 men and felt himself quite important.

November saw the arrival in Baetica of John Flaccus, king of Scallabitanus, and his small army. The "Gallaecian" host now numbered nearly 9000 plus an inordinate number of camp followers, merchants, and other hangers-on. Winter quarters were in the countryside, and in the spring an offensive was organized against the Alamanni oppressors in Astigitanus. For those in the army who considered such things - a decided minority - they were on a mission to rescue first Astigitanus, then all of Iberia, from barbarian enslavement. They were organized into *numerii* and marched under tribunes, desperate to retain their claim to superiority and civilization.

In the event, a sunny spring dried up all the roads and the army marched in high spirits into Astigitanus. Word of the invasion spread quickly, and on the one hand thousands of Germans fled north, while many more natives jeered, looting manor houses and stoning the few who dared travel alone on the *via*. They were not, however, ready to cheer the Gallaecian-ruled force under John, and only sullenly accepted foreign rule. He spent the autumn of 432 explaining that they had truly been liberated, and they acceded to his request they support his fighting the Alamanni.

Meanwhile, in the north, Gaius had sired yet another son, and in 432 travelled to Cantabria to raise another army. The Basques were hard to win over, but their poverty and their need for travel overcame their distaste for Romans. Over a thousand of them joined the Gallaecian cause.

Taifali Tribes

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

King Vallia, Rex Taifalorum, Vicarius Belgicae

Diplomacy:

The province of Flaminia played host to historic events, while Vallia and his people kept their heads down (see *Empire of the Huns*). The king did manage to father identical twin daughters, much to the amusement and joy of all. He also showed a great deal of courage in rejecting Balimber's enjoining him to move to the lush West. Vallia showed the Khakhan the view of the Adriatic from his villa one summer evening and replied that while he respected the Hun leader, how could he be asked to leave what the Christians might term Heaven?



Kingdom of the Red Huns - *Diocese of Gaul*

(Asiatic Roman Christian Nomadic Open Empire)

Edeco, Rex Hunnorum, Vicarius Galliae

Diplomacy:

Grumbling over the budget led to the Red Huns choosing not to give tax breaks to citizens to encourage them to maintain the roads. The locals complained, to each other, but continued their monthly work out of habit. To improve matters, Edeco chose to settle thousands of his men in Parisii, splitting up estates and giving each the plot of a Gallo-Roman farmer. These warriors took to the stable life and the province became prosperous.

Gepids

(European Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Regent Gorm, Steward of the Gepids

Diplomacy: Alpes Cottiae (HM)

While offered a chance to migrate with the mass of Huns and their allies, Gorm decided that his people would rather strike their own path across history. Having settled in a beautiful and fertile place, the Gepids were pleased to simply live. As a part of this policy the Steward made many trips to the port city of Genua. He apologized for the depredations of the Huns in the previous decade, which mollified those citizens who had fled behind the walls of the city in 415 before the barbarian invasion. Those had now settled in the city and many yet urged caution in dealing with these non-Christians. The senate was convinced over time to leave the Empire and hew to an independent path. Mediolanum was not pleased, yet her men were unable to make convincing arguments given the relative isolation of Genua from the rest of Italia.

North Africa

Berber Kingdom of Tingitania

(Roman Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Flavius Juba, Rex Tingitaniae

Diplomacy: Maghrib (UN), Zirid (UN), Rusaddir (UN)

Gathering more power into his hands, Juba ordered a meeting of the leading magnates, senators, and landholders on 16 February of 429. The *rex* declared that his own tax-collectors would now be gathering revenue directly, and that their authority would flow from him. Chaos in the provinces and cities followed, but his lieutenants remained loyal and life at court did not collapse. However Maghrib, Zirid, and Rusaddir abandoned Juba. As well, trade with Roma was lost, leaving the kingdom in a precarious situation.

Donatist Christian Church

(Donatist Christian Church Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Archbishop Primian

Diplomacy:

Gaudentius passed on quietly in 431 at the age of 79. The death of Augustine of Hippo was greeted with some relief, as he had been their most successful local opponent.

Eastern Europe

Arian Christian Church

(Arian Christian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Vandalarius, Pontifex ipseque Primas Gothicus et Germanicus

Diplomacy: Histria (CH), Thuringia (CH)

Missionaries were dispatched to Franconia and Alsace, where they met with some modest success. Meanwhile, Pontifex Vandalarius himself attempted to expand the church in Bochnia and Bohemia. Turbulence among the priesthood due to the migration of thousands of the faithful (see *Empire of the Huns*) and the deaths of many of elders, including Sunagamus, Cantarus, Christophus, and Argentius, meant little was accomplished. Finally, on March 9 of 432 Vandalarius died during a hunting accident, as he was famous for maintaining a noble culture at his court.

As most of the leadership including the handpicked successor to Vandalarius, Sunagamus, had passed away, the Church ceased having direction and drifted for the rest of 432.

Khanate of the Tyrasean Alans

(European Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Respendial, Khan

Diplomacy:

The hunt was good.

Empire of the Huns

(Asiatic Pagan Nomadic Open Empire)

Oebarsius, Khakhan

Diplomacy: Carpathia (UN), Volhynia (UN), Slavs (UN), Quadi (UN), Galich (UN), Carpathia (UN), Ialomita (UN), Liguria (UN), Moravia (UN), Narbonensis (P)

The long war with Rome seemed to be going nowhere, and Balimber was not feeling so young these days. Thus he listened intently to the Roman embassy, nodding frequently, yelling only rarely, and generally treating the envoys well. On 14 February of 429 they agreed to a peace in exchange for lands and titles, and mustered the horde for a march to warmer climes. Onoulph's and Magar's contracts were renewed, along with all the mercenaries under their commands.

At the equinox the Huns and their vassals left Aemilia for Liguria where nervous Latins watched the large army around Mediolanum decamp. The horde then headed across Italia again, through Aemilia, Venetia, and into Pannonia I. Here the offer is made to the Asding Vandals - join us in a glorious adventure west. As proof of his friendship and commitment, he offered to marry Gursula, the 24-year-old daughter of Gunderic and Ursula Princess of the Rugians.

Oddly enough, the young and stunningly beautiful Gursula - concerning whom several popular poems were in circulation, sung around barbarian campfires - was quite charmed by the rustic old Hun, and despite reproofs from the clergy about marrying a heathen, they were wed on All Saint's Day of 430. By the September of the next year she had given birth to a son, and event which caused great rejoicing throughout the Hun clans, as Balimber had had no heir. Also wed on that day were: Edeco the Vandal and Vivian, daughter of Vitalianus king of the Quadi; Rua the Vandal and Araharius, heir to the Quadi; the very young Ostar, daughter of Godegisel and Heletradana, and prince Vivian the Quadi; and Bole, King of the Slavs, and Gunver, khakhan Uldin's widow. Thus was the Hunnic empire more tightly knit by matrimony.

Next it was south to Flaminia for a chat with the Taifali. The Khakhan's goal was to convince the Taifali to join the jamboree, as it were. In this he failed utterly, the Taifali choosing to take offense at the hundreds of thousands of wanderers camping out in their fields, eating their bread, and eyeing their livestock. A bit deflated, Balimber made to leave. It was then that Gursula begged to stay a while to ensure that her son could be baptized in Ravenna. The Khakhan relented, a wise move given that their child was born the following day. Great partying ensued, which the leader of the Huns was obliged to fund and organize, a tough task for a tough 55-year-old. The festivals continued for a week, and then the infant was brought to Ravenna for baptism.

Nobody is quite sure what happened on September 2 of 430. Some say that as the baptismal water was sprinkled on the parents Balimber dropped dead on the spot, screaming, "I'm melting! Oh what a world!" Others claimed the bishop somehow poisoned the Khakhan, while most assumed he had partied fatally, a common enough problem in the Hunnic ranks. Regardless, the leader of the world's mightiest fighting force was dead, with only a new wife and baby as his patrimony and family.

Put simply, everything fell apart.

Vallia, king of the Taifali, was an astute man. Having tens of thousands of warriors from various lands encamped in his small kingdom was a concern, and he monitored as closely as he could the rumors coming from his guests. When a potter came to him with word that Balimber had died Vallia was ready. His subjects were ordered to act as if Flaminia had been invaded, to move into whatever stronghold was handy, and to generally beware. Thus the Taifali and their Roman subjects were spared much of the anarchy which was to follow.

For many of the prominent leaders within the Hun orbit saw their chance at great glory and wealth. The *ilkhan* Mundzuc was the Hun of highest rank, and declared he would rally men to him and press a claim to the title of Khakhan. Edeco, who though a Vandal was sole prince of the realm, countered this with rumors Mundzuc was a toy of the Romans, and began a set of meetings aimed at winning the throne for himself. Wences, prince of Volhynia and long-time friend of the Huns could see where politics might lead and swiftly marched his men home. The Armenian mercenary captain Magar had many friends among the Huns, who told him that a non-Hun had a decent chance to be chosen khakhan.

One of the most promising contenders was the very young new king of the Asding Vandals, Oebersius. All who met him were impressed with his confidence and bearing, his ability to think on his feet, and his willingness to compromise. He was the brother of Gursula, the new widow, and thus had a natural position as protector of his infant nephew as Balimber's legacy. Gursula, however, did not trust her sibling and actively sought out other men to press her case, using her own wit and charm, which were on a par with those of Oebersius. Leading her party was Lord Octar, confidant of Balimber and a man whose devotion to him was above reproach. He brought in the Gothic sellsword and *thiufan* Onoulph and his men, along with the Quadi king Vitalianus and a number of lesser lights.

As a very new king, Ladis the Slav had no real position and no more ambition than to awaken the following morning. The child of the dead Bole was now a Hun and as such Ladis decided to press that child's tenuous claim to be Khakhan many years hence. Within a few days he realized that there was no hope of this, and in the middle of the night the thousands of Slav families with him decided to march home - though they did not quite get there (see *Slavic Kingdom of Aemilia*).

As one of his first moves, Oebersius offered the title of *gurkhan* to Magar the Armenian. Knowing a good deal when he saw one Magar abandoned his own dubious claim to rule the Huns and joined the Vandal cause. At this Mundzuc was outraged and attempted to make a raid on the Armenian camp in order to remove this upstart and traitor. The "princes" were ready for such a move and the Hun barely managed to escape with his life. Mundzuc fled into the Appenines and later found himself leading a mercenary band himself. A simple man, he never appreciated the irony of his situation.

Thus after a week of politics, negotiation, and sharp knives, the party of Oebersius was ascendant. Opposing them was what might be called the party of Gursula, as lead by Lord Octar and supported by Vitalianus. And then there was Edeco, Prince of the Huns and Vandals. As the sister of Gursula and the brother of Oebersius he might have fancied himself in a good position to rise to the top of the Hun leadership. Unfortunately for Edeco nobody much cared for him. He owed his position solely to the political machinations of his sponsor, Balimber, who was now dead. Invited to a meeting with his sister, he was captured without a struggle and imprisoned in an iron cage fitted with wagon wheels.

The very next day a strong force of Huns and Armenians under the command of Magar raided Gursula's camp, ostensibly with the aim of rescuing Edeco. A fierce and short struggle lead to Oebersius capturing both his brother and his sister, while the Gothic mercenaries and the Quadi fled out of Flaminia. Oebersius might have caught these and brought upon them severe retribution, but he knew that they were no threat, and concentrated on shoring up his position among the Huns. Sensitive to matters of lineage, they would not tolerate the killing of Balimber's infant son, thus sparing Gursula and the child from death. Oebersius was named khakhan, handed out many favors and titles, and spent several weeks in Italia. Octar was quietly strangled, and most people understand the message that this sent. Oebersius intended to rule as a Hun ought.

Sadly for the Huns, many peoples took the opportunity to rid themselves of Hun tax collectors and other sources of oppression, but this did not trouble them overmuch. For the Roman emperor had given them rich lands in the west as tribute, and these they would claim soon enough. In October the horde left Flaminia in several columns over the mountains into Tuscia and then up the coast to Alpes Cottiae. Here Oebersius attempted to woo the Gepid leader Gorm, to get them to join the Hun migration. While intrigued at the idea of leaving for new lands, these barbarians decided against moving.

Come spring the horde continued on into Viennensis, Roman cities having been warned ahead of time to close their gates. Summer saw Oebersius lead his vast host into Narbonensis, where he declared the Hun intention to settle. The locals were of course outraged at this betrayal from Mediolanum, but the prospect of opposing hundreds of thousands of well-armed barbarians quelled any opposition before it really had begun. The sullen citizens cowered in fear at what the future might hold. Most expected the worst and local churches scheduled extra masses.

Orthodox Christian Church

(Orthodox Christian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Patriarch John Chrysostom

Diplomacy:

Great and mighty events shook the land, while the Patriarch debated with Pelagians, Anastasians, and other party guests.

Rugian Tribes

(Arian Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

King Sigeric

Diplomacy: Edetania (HM)

The invasion of Alamanni lands and its culmination in the **Battle of Corduba** (see *Alamanni*) led to instability. The capture of Araharius and the defeat of the army was too much for the people to take, and as one they revolted. Furthermore, Araharius had neglected his family, unwilling to find good matches for the many children of Nevitta and himself. Matasuntha, Nevitta's widow, organized a caucus of nobles in Edetania, at the city of Contrabia, for 9 August 429. Shade-tree deals were struck, and broken, between adherents of Gotedala and Nevitta's eldest son Sigeric, and the two elder sons of Matasuntha and Nevitta, Eboric and Agila.

This three-way struggle was over just a week later when Sigeric was acclaimed king, and Eboric and Agila swore their allegiance to him. His first move as new ruler was to affirm the ties with the Siling Vandals which had brought the Rugians to Iberia. When, however, Araharius died in Alamanni captivity on November 21 of 430, Sigeric renounced that allegiance. Few were surprised at this, since his mother had been an Asding Vandal princess. The remaining Rugians settled in Edetania.

Slavic Kingdom of Aemilia

(Slavic Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

King Ladis

Diplomacy: Goryn (UN), Lithuania (UN), Little Poland (UN), Poland (UN), Pinsk (UN), Turov (UN), Verona (A), Aemilia (HM)

Heeding the call of his master, Old King Bole migrated his people (see *Empire of the Huns*). Sadly for him no other tribes came along, and the kingdom disintegrated as Slavs and others rejoiced at the lifting of the Hunnic bootheel. Many had objected to his marrying the aged Gunver, widow of Uldin, while others took it as a mark of regard from the Huns. While on the march Bole at last succumbed to a cough in April of 430. Shortly thereafter a son was born to his concubine and taken by Gunver as her own to ensure her

future. The "kingdom" essentially dissolved, but with so many thousands on the move and surrounded by warriors of other nations, the peoples deemed it prudent to remain a distinct realm to avoid enslavement. Bole's brother and heir, Ladis, took over the leadership of a committee of elders.

In the chaos ensuing on the demise of Balimber (see *Empire of the Huns*) the people migrated to the valley of the Po, which they found virtually uninhabited and quite pleasant. Ladis decided to settle here. Coming upon the walls of Verona he politely enquired whether the senators would rather be his friends than whatever slaves of whatever tyrant would next rule the Hun horde, and to his great pleasure they agreed. The young leader of the city, Hector, impressed the Slavs and seemed to be a fine gentleman.



Eastern Roman Empire

(Orthodox Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Theodosius II, Emperor

Diplomacy: Alexandria (C), Palmyra (NT), Egypt (EA)

Interruption in the grain shipments in Egypt due to the Arab invasion of the Nile caused loud grumbling and a bit of shoving in the markets of Constantinople, but the factions remained loyal to Theodosius. Doubtless they were too busy laughing at rumors that he was mad with syphilis and was planning a return to Pagan rites in the cathedral at the capital and elsewhere. Eventually these were traced to an Armenian spice merchant in Ephesus who had disappeared from his stall overnight. Yet it remained a fact that the loss of Alexandria was a deep wound to the Greek psyche, and citizens looked to the Empire to restore their honor.

Yet more concerned were those in the cities and villages of the Upper Nile. Local *duces*, *vicarii*, and other officials met in the cathedral at Philadelphia in the spring of 429. Wrangling, argument, and tax-supported lunches ensued for several months, concluding on July 4 with the signing of a document requesting imperial aid and pledging their loyalty to the crown. The enlisting of hundreds of new *foederatii* into the local army of Faiyum was, of course, discussed.

And indeed the Emperor was listening. Hundreds of grain ships which had carried the produce of the Nile to the capitol were refitted into troop carriers. The old walls of the city proper were shored up, repaired, painted, and the guard expanded. Many of the new guard were from the immigrant Cherchen community, highly motivated to not lose another Hellenic outpost to barbarians. Those not recruited were given new fields in the Horn to plow, and with the new wells and canals more fresh vegetables and swine were available in the city than ever before. Estates outside Attica were similarly bought up and redistributed to landless serfs, while new irrigation projects repaired Gothic damage from decades past. Thousands of new recruits were assigned to various *legio*, *vexillatio*, *alae*, and other units, and began training hard in the cold rains of March. Lacking men to aid the empire, Palmyra was given more autonomy.

Theodosius, too, was busy. His doctors pronounced him recovered from his long bout with dispiritedness and general lethargy. No longer a youth it was decided he needed to take a wife. His mother's handmaiden, the beautiful but dull Felicia was given a small estate in Phrygia where she could raise their son. At court coming-out parties over the first months of 429 scores of young noblewomen met the notables of the realm. For the Emperor had announced his intent to wed a citizen, to prove his loyalty to the Empire and to show barbarians everywhere that he for one would not find their ladies acceptable. This won for him some esteem among the more intemperate in the citizenry, those who would recall fondly the massacre of Goths some decades before as a high point in city life.

Tired of the dancing and late nights, Theodosius - against strenuous objections all around - called upon several of the ladies to compete a unique gladiatorial event. Each was allowed to hire a dozen men to fight for them in a specially constructed terrain in the arena. The ladies would not of course see battle themselves, but were charged with doing whatever was needed to assure that their opponent was defeated. Most women gave the Emperor up as a hopeless cause and their families brought them home. Four of them were game, and the games were on. This contest was public, further raising the public image of the emperor among most of the population, though many were aghast at the very idea.

One woman was sent home after attempting to poison her opponent before their contest, not merely because of the attempt but rather its failure. In the other initial battle the warriors hired by a lady from Pontus were quickly defeated by those of a very young Cypriot noblewoman. The former had hired a motley gang of ruffians armed as they saw fit, while the latter had carefully armed and armored her men and lead them in drills the week before. The final battle was over quickly, and on Easter Sunday of 429 Theodosius II was wed to Vigilantia Atrophes, daughter of a wealthy Cypriot shipping financier. Before the summer she was advising her husband on campaign plans, much to the dismay of the Imperial staff officers who thought her fat, plain, and, well, female.

Their views softened a bit when in December of 429 she delivered a son, an event of great aid to her husband and, given the harsh nature of the imperial court, herself. In 431 twins were born, a boy and a girl. Despite claims from some that he was a usurper it appeared a dynasty was in the making.

To keep that dynasty going Theodosius had to make an effort in Egypt. Thus general Narcissus, a promising Phrygian of Galatian descent, set sail with a large fleet for the Nile. True to his name, the officer spent much of the trip looking into the water, seasick. On arrival in Alexandria Narcissus finds the reports to be true - the city is no longer willing to harbor imperial fleets. Looking over the defenses, he decides against the advice of his staff to refuse an assault on the Queen of Cities by sea. Other options are discussed, and the fleet heads west to the peaceful port of Kyrene. The local dignitaries are surprised by the visit but quickly arrange supplies for this force, the "Army of Aegypt."

While the rufous general Narcissus was yet at sea, the Proconsul of Faiyum, one Zenon the Spartan, had mustered an army and was probing into Lakhmid territory in Egypt proper. Already he had shown his harshness by the manner in which the Arab lord Itlaf ibn Na'im had been treated after a squad of *comitatenses* had caught the man attempting to slip across the Nile aboard a cotton barge. Zenon had personally put the hapless nomad to "the question" and talk spread that the proconsul's cruelty had lead to the death of his captive. The Faiyum army marched downstream and quickly reduced the scattered strongholds left by the Arabs. While grateful for their liberation, substantial numbers of Egyptians were leery of Zenon and the possibility of his leading an army loyal to the Orthodox emperor. Frustrated, the proconsul assigned a tribune to oversee the province and set up camp outside Alexandria, awaiting the

arrival of Narcissus' force. Besieging the city was not on his "to do" list.

It was April of 430 before the two leaders were together outside Alexandria. Immediately they assigned routes of march to several columns and headed east. Narcissus with his fleet detached marched along the *via* to the crossing at Busiris, while Zenon headed cross country to the south. Sheikh Amr al-Qays knew that his migrated kingdom was in deep trouble, and resolved to face the Romans across the Nile and make a fighting retreat. Augustamnica was now his home, and was well-fortified, providing some hope against the invaders. While the Arabs could call on some 30,000 warriors, the Army of Aegypt boasted twice that, and was generally a better force all around.

For their part, the Roman command was confident. Narcissus had placed part of his force on ship and sent them to land up the Mendesian Mouth while the remainder forced a crossing of the Nile and began reducing the many fortified towns. Zenon had meanwhile crossed the Nile, with some loss, and was engaged in tracking the Arab army. Staff officers were pleased to have outflanked the Lakhmid force and looked forward to defeating it in detail, ravaging the land, and leaving the insect-ridden swamp through which they had been fighting - and this was only Spring. The Faiyum officers chuckled at their cold-weather friends, confident that should the battle rely on them alone the invaders would be sent scurrying.

In the event, the hottest months saw thousands of casualties on both sides. The Romans decided to withdraw, while the Arabs were in no condition to chase them out. One big reason for this was the death of their beloved leader, Sheikh Amr al-Qays, Rex Aegyptus, who succumbed to a fever while campaigning near Phacusa. His youthful successor ended all his father's elaborate plans and instead watched across the Nile from the walls of Memphis.

Theodosius also decided the war against Persia should once more be pressed hard (see *Sasanian Persian Empire*). In preparation, the Gothic Legion under Athaulf doubled the garrisons in Asuristan, and Mosul was given a legion with which to defend itself in case of reverse and to protect Roman supply and communications. In the end this proved a wise strategic move.

While enormous armies campaigned in Mesopotamia, the empire made a thrust to the north. Georges, *comes* of Lazica, took his 1500-strong army across the border into Osrhoene hoping to vastly increase his little domain under the imperial umbrella. The effort was a dismal failure, with endless skirmishing leading to no battles, while hundreds of his men succumbed to plague and more hundreds deserted to enjoy the easier life and better soils of the south. By the summer of 430 Georges was back on the Black Sea, spinning stories of glory and adventure - and explaining why so few returned home with him.

The Duchy of Moesia - *Civitate Foederatae*

(Orthodox Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Melchiades, Dux et Praefect

Diplomacy:

While massive armies tore across Egypt and Mesopotamia (see *Eastern Roman Empire*) and barbarians marched hither and yon (see *Empire of the Huns*) Moesia was neglected. No coin was forthcoming from Constantinople, so intensely was that city gazing south and east. On May 14 of 429 the troops of the *civitate foederatae* mutinied, demanding back pay and better housing for their families. Melchiades was able to talk them down, finding a few houses, and donating some church lands and materials for family

housing. It was a near run thing, and the *dux* fired off several scathing reports to the empire about conditions on the frontier.

Middle East

Ghassanid Arab Kingdom

(Monophysite Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

King Timotheus

Diplomacy:

Most of the nobles enjoyed racing their horses, engaging in a bit of minor raiding, and generally making nuisances of themselves. The demise of their nemesis al-Qays cheered them, leading some to hope for a return to Petra (see *Eastern Roman Empire*).

Kingdom of Yemen

(Judaism Civilized Open Empire)

King Ishmael ibn Yahsub

Diplomacy: Asir (FA), Socotra (A), Qana (A), Madina (FA)

Rabbis spread out across Sheba, reminding the people of their roots, pointing to the chaos in Egypt, and the appeal of the pre-Christ faith and the reforms of the synagogue. Thousands converted and the whole land saw churches turned to new purposes. Ishmael spent at least part of each week on inspections, drills, and generally being a nuisance to his standing army.

The eldest son of the Sheikh of Asir, Masun, was wed to Elizabeth, daughter of Adam. The tribes pledged to defend the kingdom, a good thing since by then end of 432 Elizabeth had produced five healthy children. A number of clans converted to Judaism just on the strength of her apparent blessings. Along with busy emissaries meeting success all around, the Yemeni could be pleased with their state.

Lakhmid Arab Kingdom

(Monophysite Christian Barbarian Open Empire)

Sheikh Imru al-Qays, Rex Aegyptus

Diplomacy: Alexandria (NT), Memphis (A), Egypt (UN)

In a ceremony on the sands beyond the Nile, Amr al-Qays named his grandnephew Masud as a prince of the growing kingdom, and all cheered. More good news was to follow.

Bands of mercenaries were given new contracts, being thought of by now as just another tribe under the big tent of the Sheikh. At Passover of 429 a dozen Egyptian shepherds appeared in the square of Terenuthis, testifying that three angels had appeared to them in the desert, proclaiming Amr al-Qays as the Defender of the Monophysite faith. Hundreds heard the message, and rumors spread among the locals and beyond as quickly as only rumors can.

These were bolstered hugely when the Sheikh single-handedly slew two assassins. The black-clad sneaks had concealed themselves under the floor of his personal chapel which, in true Bedu fashion was a small tent outfitted plainly. Bursting up from under the rugs they set upon him with knives and chains. Within a score of heartbeats, and before his guards could even respond, the old man emerged from the tent, covered in blood and tossed two heads in the sand before the entrance. Word quickly spread that angels had slain the two, or that their weapons bent rather than pierce the skin of the Sheikh. The men were identified as imperial agents and their heads were packed in sand and shipped to Constantinople.

A few weeks later Amr al-Qays rode up to the eastern gate of Alexandria on his famous horse, Southwind, and asked the guard for the right to enter. By prior arrangement the massive main doors swung and the Sheikh and a few courtiers rode inside. They had little to fear, for the senate of the city, on the pleading of the Monophysite bishop, the petitions of thousands of citizens, and having declared Theodosius to be a usurper to the throne in Constantinople, accepted the anointing by Patriarch Luke of Amr as King of Egypt. The senate did, however, retain the city as a *polis* of the Empire, noting that the Lakhmid king ruled only in name in Alexandria as a *foederati* of Constantinople.

Having split the baby, as it were, the citizens feted their guests and generally felt as subtle and sophisticated as they truly were. Talk on the waterfront was not, however, nearly so positive, as shippers noted the news from Constantinople indicated Theodosius was not about to take the loss of Egypt with a shrug. A few moved their offices to other cities, in part because of the drastic fall-off in business. The empire was not, however, about to take this affront to honor without some sort of reply (see *Eastern Roman Empire*).

And so it came to pass that Imru al-Qays was elevated to *rex Aegyptus* and leader of the Lakhmid dynasty. His son Masud was named heir.

Finally, Ata ibn Sued had worked hard for years to convince the senate of Memphis that the Lakhmid dynasty was here to stay. This effort ebbed and flowed, but in the end the locals decided their future did not lay with the Empire or independence, and swore allegiance the al-Qays dynasty.

Monophysite Christian Church

(Monophysite Christian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Patriarch Luke

Diplomacy: Iconium (CH), Phoenicia (CH), Tyros (CH), Funj (CH), Sennar (CH), Soba (CH), Berbera (CH), Opane (CH), Adulis (AB), Axum (CH)

Sebastian, head of mission to Makuria, wiped the sweat from his brow. He did a lot of this, praising God for the test of preaching in a clime radically different from his youth in the mountains of Illyria. Just now, however, the perspiration was cold. The local shaman facing him across the village square was weaving his hands together, apart, up, and down, chanting all the while and staring intently at the ruddy minister of the Lord. For his part Sebastian was going over the exorcism ritual which had been passed to him by his bishop, Procopius, years ago. The priest was at peace, though his body was shivering.

The contest had been arranged by the local king and elders, who had been unable to decide on accepting Holy Baptism, the politically smart move which would however break with the faith of their ancestors. One young warrior had suggested that the decision be taken to the spiritual plane, and thus the two holy men found themselves in a "combat" this evening.

It was approaching the next watch, with several of the brighter stars visible in a violet sky against the glare of dozens of torches. Sebastian was beginning to tire, while the older shaman, N'yaga, looked fresh and intense. Suddenly the priest collapsed to ground, a small puff of dust rising around him. The crowd ringing the men yelled variously in despair or jubilation, the king rushing to the side of Sebastian. His doctor moved to the body, checked the neck and wrist, and roared out, "The man is dead - as is his god!"

People backed away from the body, while others raised N'yaga on their shoulders. He had to be supported by hands to his back, the effort of casting and maintaining the curse having sapped more from him than had been apparent. The shouting of the crowd seemed to buoy him, as nearly all the Christians in the crowd were clearly renouncing their beliefs and returning to those of their fathers. The party that followed was ecstatic and energetic - music, dance, and more than a little drink. The body of the priest was carried away in a cart by two young men of the town, unnoticed.

But as dawn approached, the noisemaking faded, then suddenly ended, people staring in amazement.

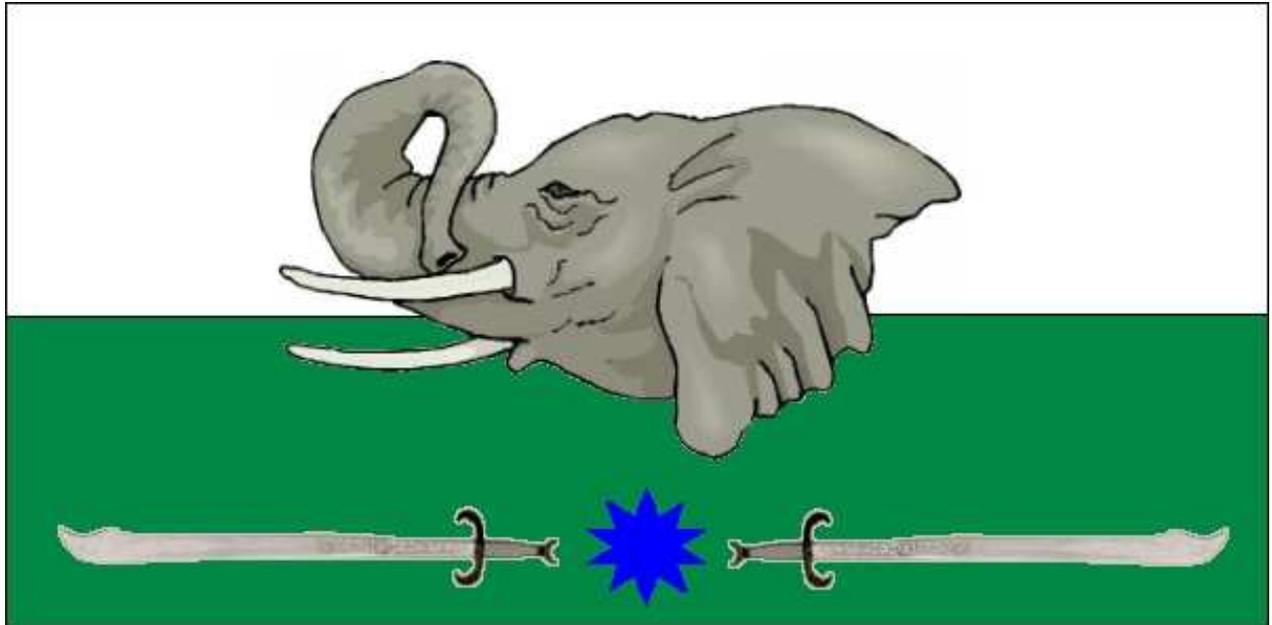
For there, a dozen paces away, was Sebastian. The Greek was standing, in itself unusual for those declared dead. But more, there was something else, something beyond definition, in his countenance as he looked into the eyes of N'yaga. Many present sank to their knees, while the shaman himself strode over to the priest. He hesitated, then placed his hand on the pink wrist of the man, felt the throbbing under the skin, and stepped back, shocked. This was no zombie. Confused, N'yaga fled alone into the night. Within the hour those who had left the Monophysite faith begged to be baptised once more, and the regional religious balance remained largely unchanged.

In Thebais Bishop Barnabas was chased out by an angry mob. One thrown rock managed to fracture his elbow, as the locals rioted against the perceived infidelity of the Monophysites to the Empire. Under this was the worry on the part of the Orthodox clergy that their bishops had proven ineffective over the years. To the south, in the Axumite homeland, raids left several facilities smoking ruins (see *Kingdom of Sindhu*), even as canals were dug in Syria and Adowa.

More alarming to imperialists were events in Alexandria (see *Lakhmid Arabs*).

West Africa

Moorish Kingdom



(African Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Sheik Sedray al-Kasurga

Diplomacy:

Young Sedray was pleased to rise each day to the sound of groaning slaves laboring away on irrigation projects. A complex of dams and aqueducts was turning Songhai into a Romanesque plantation - one with no export market. It was not for nothing the youth was called "Sedray the Cruel" behind his back. Of course he knew of this, but chose to rejoice in his reputation.

Despite this, his humanity struck back with vigor. Visiting estates in the country, Sedray was smitten by the Moorish daughter of a minor magnate, and within a month they were wed. His numerous beautiful concubines were cast aside and given small holdings far from court. Courtiers were mystified at the hold the woman held over their lord, as she was neither pretty nor witty and was older than he. Meanwhile, Sedray's teenage brother Madjer sired twin sons by one of his consorts. Shortly after this young prince Yuba died of a fever just after his 14th birthday, leaving only Sedray and Madjer as sons of Abdul.

General Sukman "the Subtle" led the army into Adawara and wiped out the local army which had been waiting for the Moors. Despite this quick and brutal victory the refugees from Jenne managed to escape into neighboring Segou, where the local king defied the Moors. Sukman had heard it all before, and was unimpressed. Rather than pursue the Jenne he had orders to procure more work units and so the army began to round up the Adawara peoples. Rather than go easily in to slavery they rose up to fight the Moors, and were of course slaughtered in several unremembered battles.

Having sent thousands off to toil in Songhai, Sukman then turned to the city of Kumbi-Saleh and began entrenchments to isolate and take it. From June of 431 to November of 432 the rapacious general laid siege to the place. He was, however, unfortunate in that the land about the city was flooded much of the time, leading to disease killing thousands of his troops. Furthermore the locals, while not sophisticated in the ways of siegecraft, were well-lead by their king, Qoswayo, who managed to foil the dread Moor at every turn.

The gods, however, seemed to have taken a cruel turn and Qoswayo was injured during a sortie, losing the use of his legs when kicked by a Moorish mount. For the first time in his life the king was thankful that he was short and slight of build, allowing his enormous cousin to carry him on his shoulders for extended periods. Despite his continued leadership the city fell, and the Moors swept in over the mud-brick walls to exact a vicious toll on the place which had dared resist them so successfully and kill so many of their brothers. Kumbi-Saleh was sacked and then the Moors retired to their lines before launching waves of burning arrows into the city. Thousands fled the burning ruins, only to be cut down as they ran from the rubble of the walls. Within a few days only a smoking raised area remained of the city, a city awaiting entire reconstruction. The crucified remains of the leaders of Kumbi-Saleh, including Qoswayo, rose above the ruins to warn against such a move.

East Africa

Axumite Empire

(Monophysite Christian Civilized Open Empire)

Emperor Tewodros Ella Asgad

Diplomacy:

A pathetic invasion of Indians and various other pagans did little to disturb the peace of the empire (see *Kingdom of Sindhu*). Happy at the performance of his warriors, the emperor was also pleased with the Church, which continued to pour benefits upon his people.

Blemmye Tribes

(African Pagan Barbarian Open Empire)

Zakarias, King of Blemmye

Diplomacy:

Under the orders of the king and queen Blemmye warriors began an organized series of raids into the relatively rich lands of Aswan, causing many along the Nile to despair at the prospect of civilization maintaining, given the assault by the Arabs downstream (see *Lakhmid Arab Kingdom*). With a cute daughter they named Andromeda the tribes were cheered. The death in February 430 of Queen Sinhuway drove the king and people to a deep funk from which it proved hard to recover. Raids into Aswan ceased, and it was many moons before life among the sand and rock resembled normality.

Nobades Kingdom

(Monophysite Christian Civilized Open Empire)

King Phillipus Silko, Basileus

Diplomacy: Nubia (F)

For the first time in centuries a new city was founded, Mergissa in Beja on the coast. The king hoped it would eventually rival Berenice as a source of trade revenue to the crown. While lord Pigol worked to make Mergissa as well a bastion against northern aggression, Prince Menas was supposed to take troops on maneuvers and generally work them hard. Instead, he allowed them to remain with their families on

pay, where they mostly lounged about drinking wine and chewing *khat*. One might have assumed he was distracted by his lovely wife Yoanna, and indeed a boy, Kurta, was born. As soon as he had a son to show the family and court, Menas spent no more time with Yoanna and instead spent all his time with a handsome Yemeni merchant. Naturally tongues wagged, but only in private as he was after all a prince.

Phillipus himself was at the court of Count Psakar in Nubia. The king proposed the Nubians join fully his kingdom, and after much effort - including tours of the great bounty from the new farms made possible by Nobades largesse - Psakar agreed.

Persia

Orthodox Zoroastrian Church

(Orthodox Zoroastrian Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Azargoshasp, Mobedhanmobed

Diplomacy:

Dasturs and Mobeds hold conclave at the imperial court on policy towards the various flavors of Christianity. This congress managed to avoid total disruption when the Zurvanites and Manicheans wanted to have their say.

The *gyanavspar* and other holy warriors performed well against vile agents of Ahriman the Destroyer, and all rejoiced (see *Sasanian Persian Empire*). Many of the top leadership passed away, including Xodamorad, Shehrevan, and the heroic Nabukudracara.

Kingdom of Persarmenia - Sasanian Persian Satrapy

(Monophysite Christian Barbarian Component Nation)

King Mazdak, Satrap

Diplomacy:

While Mazdak was naturally excited to be able to serve his lord the Shahanshah (see *Sasanian Persian Empire*) his vassal Prince Tigranes of Armenia was having none of it. On the march to aid the king news arrived of the major Roman advance and he decided that the Kingdom would be better served by his defending it directly. This allowed him to skim a bit of money off the top of some dam building in the mountains.

Blue Turk Khanate - Tribe of the Oghuz Turks

(Asia Pagan Nomadic Component Nation)

Tardu, Khan of the Blue Turks

Diplomacy:

After considering the emptiness of settled life, Tardu agreed that his people needed to move north (see *Oghuz Turk Realm*). The decision made the khan of the Kazan so apoplectic that he had a fit and died that very day. His clans saw that the power of the Dead God of Sonqur must be great, and agreed to migrate.



Sasanian Persian Empire

(Orthodox Zoroastrian Civilized Open Empire)

Varhanin, Shahanshah of Persia

Diplomacy: Harev (F), Parishkhwarger (UN), Persia (UN), Abarshahr (UN)

The King of Kings was worried. His satraps on the eastern frontier were on the edge of revolt, outraged at the inactivity of the Empire. One governor, Bendsuwan, went so far as to compare Persia to a bull set upon by lions while it slept. Thus it was that maps were drawn up, stores brought to the frontiers, and agents consulted late into the night.

In February of 429 Varhanin held a great muster of troops, reviewing them on the plain outside **Veh Ardashir**, meaningfully across the river from Ctesiphon. The next day a force of some few thousand foot crossed into Mosul under the *spahbad* Ariobarzanes with orders to liberate the natives from Roman oppression. Fog off a canal obscured the landscape, which explains how he managed to march his small army - entirely bereft of cavalry support - into the waiting arms of nearly 100,000 Romans. The *cornu* men blew a retreat on their horns, but it was too late. The Persians attempting to perform a quick-march retreat found themselves beset on the flanks by enemy horse pouring arrows into the now-running infantry. What followed was essentially a massacre. Ariobarzanes managed to slip out with a few retainers - they were on horseback - but his command was obliterated. The *magister militum per orientem dux* Verinian was well pleased with the opening moves of the war.

This was how Persian high command learned of the Roman offensive. Prince Darius' eastern expedition was called back to the capital, as was the army of *spahbad* Gaidam. Ironically the only mobile army on hand to support the fortifications in Mesopotamia was that of the Roman rebel officer Basiliscus and his hundreds of men now working for the Shahanshah. Highly motivated by the sure knowledge of how the Roman army treated deserters they spread out across the countryside to direct resistance to the invaders. No high-level defensive planning was possible, but the efforts of Basiliscus did at the very least prevent the garrison commanders surprise at the enemy offensive.

As for Bishop Iohannes Xiphos, commander of the "Army of Mesopotamia," the loss to the Zoroastrians of some thousands of infantry did not cheer him, for he knew what awaited him in the enemy heartland. For Mesopotamia was more heavily-fortified with keeps, clever canal arrangements, earthworks, and fortified villages than any place in the Roman Empire, East or West. The failed effort of Ariobarzanes had

in fact delayed the Bishop's plans and allowed the Persians time to organize a resistance.

Thus it was not until late July that the legions crossed into Mesopotamia. Following local forms the army was on the march before sunrise and camped most of the late afternoon, with some units sent out to forage and scout locally. The marching legionaries sweated, those wearing mail all the more so despite draping white tunics over their armor. Two months of marching and fighting, reducing strong places, and suffering raids all the while eventually brought the Army of Mesopotamia to Seleucia, a partially inhabited ruin. A short assault brought it into their possession, and the army set up its HQ in the city, the remainder of the troops forming a chain of encampments from there to the nearby town of Valahspat. Across the Tigris lay **Veh Ardashir** and Ctesiphon.

From the shore, Prince Darius observed the Roman disposition while disguised as a common *asvaran*, much to the shock of his staff. Weeks of skirmishing and small battles had brought wisdom in the Roman way of war that talking with Basiliscus and listening to staff lectures had not. The morning of August 10 saw the Persian army deployed for battle - or so it seemed. Cavalry superiority had given the young *eran-spahbad* the option of closing down the world of Bishop Xiphos, so that the army across the water thought they faced an army of horse. As expected, Xiphos had studied the classics, and knew that Alexander had bested his Persians in crossing the Granikos against a mounted opposition. The *magister* smiled at the thought of emulating the Makedonian, and the prospect appealed to his vanity. What he failed to note was that clawing its way to the gates of Ctesiphon had sapped the strength from his army, which needed a rest and fresh supplies denied them by the Persian defense in depth.

An assault force under the personal command of Athaulf the Goth, *magister officiorum*, was sent to disperse the enemy cavalry, which included the Armenian king Mazdak, Basiliscus the Roman, and the *spahbads* Rustam, Ephialtes, and Ariobarzanes, there to prove himself against the invaders after his loss of face in Mosul. Ironically, their orders were to fall back fighting, which they did superbly. Beachhead established, Verinian sent more troops across to reinforce success, floating on rafts made from hewn palm trunks. Athaulf probed ahead cautiously, not happy until his armored cavalry was entirely across the river. He established a hastily-fortified camp and awaited more reinforcements.

Romans continued to flow across the river, so that by the following morning some two-thirds of the troops had occupied the east bank of the Tigris and had set up a few ballistae to pick away at **Veh Ardashir**. Athaulf was as ever vaguely uneasy with his Roman commanders. Being in the vanguard could either be regarded as a sign of their trust and confidence, or as a signal that his Goths were regarded as expendable. But either way, orders were orders, and in that regard he had become quite the Roman.

Thus he was not surprised when the sun at its zenith was heralded by the sound of horns, coming from all directions. It was the expected Persian counterstroke. From the east came the armies described above, commanded by Prince Darius himself, while from the south and west could be seen the dust of troops from the divisions of Gaidam and, in a rare appearance under the *drafsh i Kavyan*, a huge banner encrusted in gold and jewels, the Shahanshah himself. When word spread among the Romans that the Persian emperor himself would take the field, there was great surprise, a rush of greed at the prospect of total victory, and then a gnawing worry that Varhanin would not risk himself unless he thought victory was assured.

The Roman army at its various camps turned to face the opposition, turning, facing, and marching as smoothly as a den of snakes untying for the evening hunt. The Goths, as was their wont, charged immediately and thus slowed the advance of the enemy from the east. In the west Roman *levies* began sniping with bow and sling from prepared positions, causing the Persians to assault each of these in turn.

The Bishop thus had some hope that his army, diminished by weeks of struggle just to get to this point, would be able to overcome the Persians before the walls of Ctesiphon just as had Julian decades before - without Divine help, of course.

It was then that the forces of the *mobedanmobed* Azargoshasp came into view, marching down the left bank of the Tigris. The *spahbad* and *mobed* of this army was Nabukudracara, a cousin of the Shahanshah, with Namirog *dastur* of Mosul, Xodamorad, Shehrevan, and other priests nominally at the heads of columns, though actual command usually devolved onto officers of the *gyanavspar*, *aswaran* sworn to never retreat in the cause of Ahuramazda.

From all sides the Romans were beset, nearly 100,000 of them. Roughly the same number of Persians charged into their ranks from several directions, and the sun-bleached soil was soon cast into the sky, a screen which to the combatants turned the Sun blood-red in a yellow sky. Arrows like flocks of crows flew this way and that, often followed by charges of *pushtigban* cavalry, elephants carrying howdahs full of warriors, or regular *aswaran* wielding lance, bow, and mace. The end of the day saw the Romans pushed back into Seleucia, where they could form a defensive position. To the south and across the Tigris tens of thousands of their dead littered the fields and sand. The Goths and other troops had been pushed back over the river with terrible losses. Night fell, the heat which caused both armies to suffer giving way, somewhat, the cries of wounded men fading as morning approached.

Most of his army intact, the Bishop decided to attempt a breakout from their position at dawn. Screened by the remaining cavalry the Romans burst forth towards the deserts of the west. Naturally they were chased down without mercy by the Armenians, religious troops, and ordinary *dihqans* looking for a bit of loot and glory. Over the next week tens of thousands were slain, and only the fresh reserve army of Demitri Khoury, Bishop of Tomi, kept Mosul from being overrun entirely. After regrouping, Xiphos learned the shocking news that as many as 80,000 of his men were casualties, a debacle worse than any other in the history of Rome's struggle against the Persians. His letter of apologia to the emperor was penned that very night, but Theodosius decided to pocket the document for possible later use.

Mobeds travelled across Oman and war-torn Margiana, to little effect, while those sent into free Bactria met with some success. More good news from the eastern frontier was forthcoming (see *Kushan Empire*), and Harev rejoined the empire once the Kushan bootheel was lifted. However the departure of the Turks left most of their former subjects disgusted, and Pariskhwargar, Persia, and Abarshahr left the empire.

South Asia

Lambakanna Sinhala - A Kingdom of Chera

(Buddhist Seafaring Component Nation)

Chandra, Raja

Diplomacy:

Hunger due to a poor harvest was alleviated by shipments of rice from Chera. The young wife of Crown Prince Dipak died in labor at the age of 15. Another noblewoman, more mature, was found and soon they had two healthy daughters to show. This bit of misfortune at court was followed by popular scepticism at an increasingly ascetic atmosphere in the palace. Most saw this as a weak attempt to counteract the ill-effects

of military efforts on Buddhist teachings, and monks were held in lower repute thereby.

Chandra lead his army and fleet down the coast to the Pandya city of Kalyani, where they set about isolating it with an eye to its submission. After several months of this it became clear that the resources brought to bear were not sufficient to the task. The first problem was inadequate land forces to complete the lines of circumvallation, such that communication with land beyond the Sinhalese army was fairly easy. The second and more important problem was inadequate warships to enforce a strict blockade. Pandyan ships were inconvenienced by the enemy fleet, yet not enough to substantially block trade. Frustrated, the *raja* lifted the siege in 430 and moved his army home, there to contemplate another effort.

Buddhist Stupas

(Buddhist Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Master Sanath

Diplomacy:

The death of Rugendra threw the priesthood into chaos. Only the timely appearance of the young Holy Man restored order and direction (see *Kingdom of Nepal*).

Chera Kingdom

(Hinduism Seafaring Open Empire)

Gaman, Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy: Nandagiri (A)

Attempts to enforce observation of Hindu rituals and practices met with serious resistance from the populace, especially among the merchant classes. The *rajadhiraja* restructured taxation and as a result scores of ships found use with the fishing fleets. Months of negotiations lead to Gaman marrying a very young lady from Nandagiri and that city lending its army to the kingdom. Within two years she had delivered three daughters, including two twins.

The *raja* Agriya went up into the hill country of Gangas and recruited a sizeable force for his lord. He also met with success in Malabar. Events on Sri Lanka were followed closely (see *Lambakanna Sinhala*).

Pandya Kingdom

(Jainism Seafaring Open Empire)

Mindha, Regent for the Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy:

A strongly-worded message from Mindha was sent to the Chera ruler over the siege of Kalyani (see *Lambakanna Sinhala*). The regent was clearly enjoying his role, and put off the accession of the teenaged prince Jahala. Few objected, as the youth clearly needed to spend more time in the monastery.

Empire of the Guptas

(Hinduism Civilized Open Empire)

Kamara Gupta, Maharajadhiraja

Diplomacy: Keldyna (F), Assam (A)

Yet another son was born to the *maharajadhiraja*. Many cities grew: Varanasi, Pryaga, Mathura, Barisal, Dasapura, Ankottaka, Pragjyotisapura, and Patiliputra. Trade burgeoned along the Sagala-Taxila paved road. Lord Asvaghosa convinced the *rajās* of Keldyna and Assam that their future lay with close ties to Patiliputra. Prince Samudra was admitted to court and given a posting, as was Chandra, Prince of Nadavaria. Within India, all was well.

Beyond the borders, however, Gupta ambitions were not well-realized (see *Kushan Empire, Kingdom of Sindhu, Sasanian Persian Empire*). The imperial army staff and its *mahasenapati* watched with alarm and horror as the Kushans fractured and the monstrous Hephthalites swept across the remains.

Kingdom of Sindhu - Gupta Tributary

(Hinduism Civilized Component Nation)

Rudradaman, Maharaja

Diplomacy: Sarapion (F)

Seeing how the war in Persia was dragging, the Maharaja ordered the fortification of Musama, the Sindhu outpost on the Persian coastline. More aggressive was the contracting of a number of mercenary armies, most importantly those of Purnavarnam and Yeshua the Beautiful, for use in far Africa.

Preparatory to action to the west, Jehangir Karamat sailed incognito to Opane to contact sympathizers eager from liberation from Axumite oppression. One of these furtive revolutionaries turned Karamat over to the garrison commander, Lord Kaleb, who took one look at this Indian and beheaded him immediately with his own sword. He had clearly heard enough from these South Asians, with his current prisoner, a *brahmin*, talking non-stop of the benefits of mercy to Kaleb's "*karma*" - whatever that was. He would learn soon enough, fading and dying over the course of just a month, at age 57 in January of 431.

Another voyage to Africa was that of the Sujaat Bugti's small fleet carrying mercenaries to the Promised Land. These were under the command of the Maharaja of Pattala and made landfall at Sarapion, where Abhayadatta worked on convincing the locals to pledge their loyalty to Rudraman fully.

The real action lay with Wasu, King of Scebeli. His leather bags full of gold Edrosian *dinara* rode north with his small army. In Ras Hafun he talked with the local clans, showed a bit of gold, and explained that Axum was ripe for the picking. Many young warriors flocked to his leopard banner and he marched for Berbera. Purnavarnam's mercenary army impressed the locals with their exotic weaponry and manners. The army of Yeshua the Beautiful had similar effects in Galla and Harar, and hundreds more younger sons joined up.

Thus the army entering Berbera numbered some 7000 men. More hundreds would be raiding into Axum proper as a strategic diversion - and of course to carry off some loot. February of 430 saw the Sindhu - if it could be called that - force make contact with Axumite outposts. From this they learned that the emperor himself was present with the imperial army entire. This gave some pause, but orders were orders, and they

had all been paid well, so they continued to march for Opane.

To put it plainly, they walked into a trap. From the edges of a wadi thousands of archers rose as one and poured arrows into the ranks of the Africans and Indians, killing hundreds in less than a minute. Another thousand perished before Wasu could organize a retreat, which turned to a rout. The invading force was left intact, but at a terrible cost. The mercenaries were shaken most severely by the reverse, but decided to hew to their contract since East Africa was not a situation from which they could simply march home. The warriors of Ras Hafun had on the other hand an entirely different appraisal of the situation, and scampered home, giving up the army as a bad deal all around.

Later, in the spring of 431, Yeshua and his motley army began raiding into Axum from Adal, into which they had slipped over the winter. Packs loaded with gilded crucifixes and jars of spices, the army decided to ignore orders and instead go south to enjoy themselves in the decadent "streets" of Nikon.

Hinduism

(Hinduism Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Virasenadeva, Guru

Diplomacy:

The role of Rama was a great topic of discussion at Mandor, Deoghar, and Dasapura.

Jain Sects

(Jainism Civilized Primate Religious Authority)

Sarvanandi, Acharya

Diplomacy:

Sky-clad priests became more influential at Madurai and Vidisa. The *vesambaras* sneered, as usual.

Kingdom of Nepal - Gupta Tributary

(Buddhist Barbarian Component Nation)

Biscotti Licchavi, Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy: Sikkim (F)

His nation called to him to wed, and while in turmoil yet after the death of his wife, he did yield to his duty, marrying a princess from Sikkim named Asenath. Surprisingly he found joy in this, and soon she was with child. However her nature turned ever more violent and cruel, until monks were summoned to treat the princess. Their diagnosis was demonic possession, where either she or the child within must die to satisfy the evil creature.

Vis'vadeva refused to accept this, and left immediately on his elephant to meditate in the forest. The following day he returned. At sunset he ordered Asenath bound and brought before him in the common room of his forest cottage. She screamed curses and spat at him, while he placed his hands on her head. The monks then were amazed to see him literally draw a small and slimey blue demon from her *Ajna chakra*. The prince threw the wriggling lizard-like creature to the ground and struck it with his sword. Its body exploded, spraying the room with ichor - none touching Vis'vadeva or Asenath. The woman was

then unbound, and she slept for three days.

Months later a beautiful son was born to her, on September 13 of 430, and all were amazed at this miracle. The powerlessness of the Buddhist priests before the power of evil dismayed Vis'vadeva, and he resolved to meet with their leaders. Jai Pratap wanted to journey there with him, but the prince reminded him of his duty to Biscotti. The man nodded, and left that day for Nepal.

In any event Vis'vadeva was unable to go until his son was old enough to travel, and so it was not until 431 that he and Asenath went south into India. When in Jaunpur they learned that the leader of the Buddhists was on his deathbed and monks and priests were debating the faith and its leadership. Though several days away, their party miraculously arrived within a few hours.

Vis'vadeva was alarmed at the doom that came to Sarnath. Monks from distant lands had formed "camps" within the city and would spit on those from the other camps in the street. No consensus had been found as to who the new leader should be. Asenath found rooms for them and their guard, while the prince toured the camps. Within a week he had found his candidate and pressed hard for the acceptance of a young monk by name of Prajnatarā. The force of the personality of Vis'vadeva was enough to secure his accession. Happy at his new prospects, Prajnatarā named the Nepalese prince as his second.

For a time Vis'vadeva was happy at this, and worked to restore peace at the headquarters of his beloved faith. In the spring of 432 he was walking in the bazaar when he came upon a Chinese seller of bronze bells. This man told him of the Five Sacred Mountains of his homeland, and the challenge they posed. Vis'vadeva resolved to make this his goal, and Asenath agreed to accompany him there. Their mountain origins made them choose against a sea voyage in favor of taking a caravan via Assam and Nan Chao to the Nan Heng Shan temple. So they set forth, Asenath, Vis'vadeva, their boy strapped to her back, the white elephant, and a number of guards and porters, joining a score of merchants headed eastward. These last were puzzled and pleased that on their departure passersby in the street often threw flowers in their path, dancing and singing.

Before leaving, Vis'vadeva penned a note to his father in Nepal, renouncing his crown and explaining that the Path of Enlightenment would lead him far from Gupta service.

Pallava Kingdom

(Hinduism Seafaring Open Empire)

Mahendravarma I, Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy: Malabar (A)

Difficulties in ruling distant islands to the east convinced the court that giving them more autonomy would be wise. Thus the Aceh Kingdom was created on Sumatra, though the city of Pallavan colonists was retained as a royal property, and all hoped to stem the tide of Gupta power in the region. On far Mindanao the tribes continued to raid around the rebel city of Yavadvipanam and still held many captives. In Malabar Mahendravarma himself lavished gifts and toured widely, eventually convincing the *raja* to serve him.

Vakataka Kingdom - *Gupta Tributary*

(Hinduism Civilized Component Nation)

Divakarasena, Rajadhiraja

Diplomacy: Kalinga (F)

The young ruler Divakarasena was distraught when his wife, an Asmaka princess, died in childbirth. For a while he could not look upon his new son, but eventually relented and claimed the baby as his heir. The brother of the *rajadhiraja*, Damodarasena, was pleased to have a new daughter. Engineers improved the paths from Ujjain to Pratisthana to carry the post faster, and the subject city of Kalliana received thousands of new citizens with more grace than one might have guessed. Charanjit Atwal, *kumaramatya*-at-large, managed to convince the Kalinga *raja* to accept Vakataka rule more directly.

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.

Be sure to include just the name of the city, not "London in Wessex" or similar. Use unit builds like "10HEC" not "10 heavy elite cavalry" or similar. Ask TH how to code for PWB builds?

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

A list of hints:

- Turn 7
- Turn 6
- Turn 5
- Turn 4
- Turn 3
- Turn 2