

LORDS OF THE EARTH
Campaign Twenty-Four
Age of the Crusades
Turn 26
Anno Domini 1131 - 1135



TURN 26 ORDERS DUE BY: April 6

Important Announcement:

I have finally gotten my act together and transported all email over to Throneworld. Thus, please send any and all Lords24 correspondence to lords24@throneworld.com.

Other New Announcements (in no particular order)

- **Intel reports:** Beginning this turn, I am including intel reports in the Player Notes section of each person's stat sheet. Generally, these will be a listing of each intel or assassin op that was undertaken that turn, and a note saying whether each op succeeded or failed. However, for some ops there may be a "NA" result: this means that success or failure wasn't applicable. Most likely because the situation that operation required did not obtain during the turn. For example, if you run a CA op to protect your King, but no one tries to assassinate him or her then the result for this op would be "NA." Furthermore, some operations will give you a brief report (but whether it is true or not remains hard to know for sure). Thus, RF operations may reveal some fact you were trying to find out, rather than simply "success" or "failure" results. Also, some operations do not give a success or failure result simply because you won't know

whether they succeeded or failed. CI ops usually fall into this category. For example, if you run a CI op to prevent infiltrations of your nation, then you won't know for sure if you've stopped any infiltrations or not, or whether anyone tried to infiltrate you or not. All you'll know is that you undertook the CI op.

- **Horde rules issues:** In the horde rules there are a few things that are awkward. To rectify the most egregious issues, I am instituting a simple change to the way Horde DP is recorded and maintained. Previously, when horde diplomacy was performed, the horde armies themselves might join the active horde and the regions became NT to them for one turn (provided their horde DP worked). However, the region was not recorded as such on their stat sheet. This will now change. There will be, functionally, little change to the rules (as described on 9.10.1 of the Basic Rules) but now, when a horde block joins an active block through Horde Diplomacy, their region will be listed on their stat sheet. It can, after one turn, be affected once again by horde diplomacy. Previously, the region went independent after one turn which allowed a few strange situations to develop. Of course, if "regular diplomacy" is done on a horde block region, then the region could become a status greater than NT (such as A, F, EA, etc...) just like any other region (although regular DP on horde blocks is notoriously more difficult than one regular regions). If a horde block region is integrated through regular DP into someone's empire it will cease to act like a normal horde block region (i.e.: they wouldn't ever increase or decrease in horde population as long as they are a part of a formal empire).
- **Horde Block info:** The horde block populations and regions will be posted on the website - please take a gander at them, especially if you're going to be doing any traipsing around the steppes! Nasty surprises might await otherwise...
- **Player Notes:** Please read the "Player Notes" section in your stat sheet. If you submitted questions to me with your orders, this is where you should find an answer if I didn't give you one via email earlier.
- **Orders:** If you have later revisions to your orders, after you've submitted them, please put them into your orders and *resubmit the whole thing* once again. I find I am bad and keeping track of lots of different emails or note but I am good with keeping track of orders (since I just put all orders in one big pile until I start processing the turn). Thanks!
- **Troop builds request:** When you build troops PLEASE PLEASE indicate what leader they are for and please indicate clearly when you are transferring troops among different leaders. It's tough having to try and figure out where people are getting their troop totals from. And it really slows down the processing of the turn. Thanks!
- **Saved GP/NFP:** Some of you seem to put erroneous amounts in the "Saved GP/NFP" spaces on your orders. Sometimes it looks like it just gets mixed up with other totals (like "Build totals"). Other times, it looks like calculations are just done wrong. In any case, this forces me to go through every bit of the builds and investments and do the calculations myself. That really stinks, it takes a long time, and it is demoralizing. Nothing more exciting than adding and subtracting numbers, eh? Thus, can I ask you: please try to indicate the correct amount for "saved GP/NFP." Thanks!
- **Just FYI:** Every thing that happens in Lords 24 is either the result of player actions (within the confines of the rules) or is a result of random events. Just so you know. I ain't doing nuttin here! I'm just a-rollin' dem bones. I do admit to being creative (ok, I admit, maybe *too* creative at time) in the way I write up the results - there are deceptions and falsehoods that do occur in the newsfax - some intentional and some not. But there are also truths. In fact, anything that is

newsworthy and is not hidden by a successful CF (Conceal Fact) operation generally tends to come up, in some way or another, somewhere in the fax.

- **Leader Charisma**: Here's a tip: the "charisma" rating of a leader doesn't cover only "how popular they are with the common people and how well liked they are" as the rules indicate. It is also a rating of how the leader adapts to unusual or unforeseen situations and how sneaky they can be if called upon to do so. Think of it, in some cases, as a "guile" or "wiles" rating.
- **Retirement ratings**: As mentioned in the listserv, you should now have on your stat sheet (listed in the player notes section) a phrase like "retire at x%" This indicated the amount of damage at which you want your armies to call off any attacks. The default is 50%, but you can change it to whatever you want. You can even set it at different levels for different armies if you do so explicitly and clearly in your orders. If it isn't given in your player notes section on your stats, it just means I forgot to put it on there.
- **Willingness to open trade with others**: Often it will happen that player A will give orders to "Open trade with X" while Player X will forget to do the same. Because the rules clearly state that both players must acknowledge a new route, then, in the above case, trade would **not** commence between the two empires. Is this proper? I'm not sure, and I am willing to discuss this issue to make it easier on everyone.
- **Maximum wall points for cities and fortresses**: A reminder: the maximum wall points for cities or fortresses is equal the Siege QR of your empire (see Basic Rules, sec. 5.7.4)
- **Cultivation costs**: I have already told many of you, but here it is again: if a region is partially converted to cultivation (say, from having a city in it for many years) then doesn't it make sense that if you did a "cultivate" megalithic construction that you would only have to pay the difference? Well, I think so, and apparently so do many other GMs. So that's how it is. Cool, huh? (note, however, that the *level* of any given cultivation MC does not change - you simply get a percentage discount on the cost of them).
- **Trade durations**: Some of you (well, probably all of you) may find that your trade durations for your trade have been increased by 10 years (instead of the expected 5). That's because there was a world trade boom. (well, actually, I, uh, messed up and ran the trade calculations twice and there is no easy way to undo it, but let's agree to call it a trade boom).
- **Another reminder**: Troops can only be disbanded for their NFP for specific purposes (such as building cities or MCs in the region they are disbanded, and so forth. See Rule 5.4.5). Some of you disbanded troops and used their NFP in totally different regions for purposes that the rules prohibit. Not a big deal, and I didn't enforce the rule this turn, but in the future I probably will.
- **AP costs of actions**: I will not count out the AP expenditure of each and every leader you have unless there is a war going on or it looks strange. Thus, if you don't put down what extra AP you're spending on an action, you won't get them. For example, if you move a leader all over and then end up in region and list the leader's action as "DP" then you will be doing a regular DP action. If however, you list the action as "DP+10" or "DP+10 extra AP spent on it" or something like that, then you'll get the benefit of the extra AP. In other words, I can't afford to take the time to calculate everyone's AP expenditures. Sorry, it just takes too long and I want to keep these turns coming out quickly.
- **Leader death during a turn**: I treat it as standard that if one of your leaders dies during the turn, you get a new one (usually at your capital, but sometimes at the same location as the one who just died) who then goes on to perform the actions that the one who just died would

have.

- **Army numbering** : Please remember that your army numbers are the same as your leaders numbers. Thus, army 1 is led by leader 1, army 2 by leader 2, etc...if you mix up different army numbers with different leader numbers it is a sure recipe to cause me serious headaches and confusion. Thanks!
- **Use of Agro surplus**: Lots of people use their agro surplus to invest in their QRs. Hey, that's great. But, remember, there is an intervening step: you must first convert your agro to a given amount of GP or NFP. This conversion rate varies depending on the size of your economy (see 2.11.5.2 in the basic rules). Please convert it first, then invest the resulting GP or NFP. It really makes it hard on me when people write things like "20 surplus agro into BL" because then I have to figure out how much GP or NFP that translates to, and since it is usually different for each nation it takes a fair amount of time. Thanks!
- **Notes on MSI, ESI, ISI calculations**: Some of you have asked how the MSI is calculated. It basically depends on unit type (i, xi, hec, etc...) times the number of them you have times a multiplier based on your QR for that type of unit.
- **Sea mapping/trade range issue**: Last turn I made it explicit that empires have to explore those sea zones that are not adjacent to controlled cities or regions. However, because a nation can trade by sea up to 3 or 4 sea zones away, it makes little sense that empires do not know the sea zones around them because their merchants obviously do! So, hereby is an important modification to the sea zone exploration: all **regular** sea zones within the empire's trade range of a city or region controlled by that empire (at a status of T or greater) are mapped and can be freely traversed by that empire. Hostile sea zones, open ocean/inter-island and any other non-regular sea zones must still be mapped, though.
- **Paypal**: For those of you wishing to send me turn fees using PayPal, please be advised that the email address I use for PayPal is different from the other ones. For all PayPal payments (only!), please use this address: alarikf@yahoo.com. Sorry for any confusion.
- **A note on leader death** : If a leader is slated to die a natural death during a turn, I roll a 12 sided die to determine what month in that turn he or she dies. Sometimes it matters. In like, oh, Europe.
- **Processing note to self**: I am probably going to start writing a bit less in the newsfax, in order to keep up a fairly rapid turnaround rate for turn processing.
- **Turn 26 processing turnaround** : 2 weeks & 4 days (sigh).

Prior Announcements

The Papacy In Dispute:

Each Catholic Nation may declare their support for either Papacy (Rome or Paris), or neither at the **beginning** of each turn. If a Nation supports a given Papacy, then that Primate's activities in their domains are conducted normally (regular movement, site establishment, etc.) The disfavored Primate, however, must pay extra (for moving through hostile or non-controlled areas), gets a minus on establishing sites or conducting activities. If a nation is neutral, then both sides get free rein. A

Nation is free to vacillate back and forth between the two Papacies on a turn-by-turn basis. A Nation may be Influenced by both Papacies (though they will operate on a sliding scale of 0 to 10, summing to 10).

While there are two Papacies, the chances of the Catholic nations successfully calling for a Holy War are greatly reduced.

While there are two Papacies, all Roman Catholic nations may occupy RC regions normally. There are NOT two religions.

While there are two Papacies, a Nation may seize properties (i.e. loot Religious Sites) of a Papacy it has declared against, without providing the offended Papacy with the usual grist for Excommunication.

While one of the Papacies can attempt to call Excommunication / Interdict against supporters of the opposing Papacy, the chances of success are very low. If, however, they succeed, then the chance of an actual split between the two Churches increases.

After a period of 50 years (10 turns), the GM will begin making a check to see if the religious divisions have grown so great as to cause an actual split between the two Papacies, and the creation of actually different religions.

Catholic nations may attempt to resolve the matter of the “True Church” by calling a Synod of (*Your Town Here*) (or Church Council) in attempt to resolve doctrinal issues and anoint a “true” Pope. In this case, a vote is taken at the END of the turn in which the Synod is called, wherein votes are allocated as follows:

- Each Pope: 1 vote
 - Each Catholic Nation: 1 vote
 - Each Catholic Religious Order: 1 vote
 - Whoever controls the city of Rome: 3 votes
 - Whoever controls the city of Constantinople: 1 vote (since the patriarchate of Const. is now part of the Roman Church)
 - Whoever controls the city of Thessaloniki (since the patriarchate of Thessaly is now part of the Roman Church)
 - For each Primacy, each Cathedral status: 1/2 (one-half) a vote
 - Whoever is crowned Holy Roman Emperor: 1 vote (in addition to the national vote)
 - If the Pope's Charisma is > 7: 1 vote
- Each turn, each Nation must include on their orders how they will cast their vote if there is a successful Synod.
- Nations or Orders may abstain from voting (and will, if they do not indicate their vote).
- Either Pope may call a Synod, or any group of three Catholic nations.
- If more than one Synod is called in a given turn, none of them have any effect.
- A majority of 2/3rds the *total* vote is required to anoint a “true Pope.”

The first time this occurs, the opposing Primacy is demoted to a Religious Order, but retains all of their religious sites (and all above conditions continue to apply). The second time this occurs (at least one turn later), the opposing Religious Order is forced to acknowledge the "true" Papacy, and one Church remains (though the Religious Order is still around, but is now under the authority of the victorious Papacy).

Seize Site	
<i>Code</i>	SS
<i>Cost</i>	5 or more Primacy leader actions.
<i>Results</i>	This action can be directed against a Religious Site (either one controlled by a Primacy or a Religious Order) of the same religion as the Primacy attempting the seizure. It is generally used as a weapon during a schismatic conflict, or in reining in an out-of-control religious order. If successful, the site is transferred to control of the seizing Primacy, while possibly being reduced one or more levels of control. The chances of success are improved by spending more time, or gold, in support of the seizure, and are resisted by the level of the site (a Cathedral would be very hard to seize, for example) and the presence of any 'defending' leader.

- **Mistakes on your stat sheets:** They will be there. I have tried my hardest, but I am sure that they will still creep in. I am only human. Let me know when you find one, most likely what'll happen is I'll apologize sheepishly, and correct it immediately. I apologize in advance for any egregious errors.
- **Primacy Leaders acting as Cathedrals:** A Primacy Lieutenant or Primate conducting an *Administrate* action (not a Rule), acts as a Cathedral for the sole purpose of tracing the Primacy control web.
- **Leaders & Espionage:** Please note: a leader is able to only perform one espionage action (ES) each turn. Sorry if this was unclear.
- **The Moon Cult:** The Moon Cult is a pagan religion hostile to Southern Amerind, but otherwise identical to it.
- **Support Costs:** Remember, each turn you must pay the support costs of your empire – if the troop support cost is not paid, your troops may (will) mutiny. If your other support costs are not paid (government, espionage, religious, etc...) then similarly bad things will happen.
- **Mapping Sea Zones:** According to the rules, "Each Open Ocean Arrow, Hostile Sea Zone, Inter-Island Arrow, and Sea Zone that is *not* adjacent to a controlled port or region, *or within the nation's trade range of the same*, is unknown." This means that it must be explored (mapped) in order to be traversed. However, in Lords24 there are some exceptions and clarifications:
 - The New World and the Old World are not connected in any way in Lords 24 – yet. The world is flat. Sorry. You need higher tech levels than any of you have to get to the New World. Don't try sending fleets to the New World. You'll just lose them. That would stink, eh?

- o All Islamic nations automatically have knowledge of the *shortest* sea route to Mecca from their capital provided it is shorter than the land route to Mecca. I.e.: If the land route to Mecca is shorter than the sea route, an Islamic nation doesn't get any automatic knowledge of the sea path to Mecca. However, if the sea route is shorter (in AP cost to get to Mecca) then the sea route will automatically be mapped. For example, the Emirate of Sa'na automatically has maps of the Red Sea *even though* they don't have a city or region adjacent to it.
- o All nations in Europe and those bordering on the Mediterranean have maps to all the European sea zones that border the Atlantic (i.e.: from the Norwegian Sea to the Gates of Hercules) as well as to all Med sea zones. Otherwise, normal strictures apply (see above).

Once you explore a sea zone successfully, you will gain "rutters" (maps) for it. Your stat sheet will list the sea zones you have rutters for under "player notes."

- **Conducting a Census:** To conduct a census, you need to use a national leader. (see the basic Rules, p. 73 for details). A few people this turn did it without using a leader – since I wasn't sure how Steve was handling this I let it go this time. But since I would like to use the standard rules, please have a leader conduct a CC action in the future. Note also that this action, like all other leader actions, may not work. In that case, the GP and NFP spent on the census will still be expended. Sorry.
- **Upgrading and Re-Equipping Troops:** We are using the following Base Rulebook optional rules – [6.2.4.36] Re-equip Troops and [6.2.4.37] Up-grade Troops.
- **Leader Numbers/Units:** Use the Leader Numbers printed on your stat sheet (and in that order!). And please make your transfers of units between leaders clear. Doing otherwise caused GM confusion and annoyance. This is not a good thing. Not a good thing at all. Oh no. No. Not even a little bit. I need all the help I can get!
- **Build Charts:** At the bottom of your stat sheet is a build chart – this is the correct, up-to-date chart for this campaign and *replaces* the Build Chart in the rulebook.
- **Non-Played Nation Changes:** We're going to be keeping the NPN system, with two main changes: First, there will be four levels of control: INFLUENCED (no tribute provided), TRIBUTARY (25% tribute provided), ALLIED (50% tribute), FREE STATE (75% tribute) and INCORPORATED (100% tribute, and the NPN is folded into your realm). Second, when an NPN king dies, a roll will be made to see if the level of control degrades.

Control	Tribute	You get...	You can...
Influenced	0%	--	--
Tributary	25%	Gold	--
Allied	50%	Gold, stat sheet	Issue orders to leaders
Free State	75%	Gold, stat sheet	Build and invest with their GP and NFP, issue orders to their leaders.
Incorporated	100%	Regions and armies are added to your stat sheet	NPN becomes part of your nation

- **King Auto Admin:** This feature has been TURNED OFF. Your King and/or Heir must now explicitly Rule / Administer to govern your realm.
- **Flags and Royal Portraits:** Any nation submitting a GIF or JPG picture of their national flag or banner (no more than 80 pixels wide) and their ruling monarch (100 pixels wide), will get them posted on the web-site and the leader pictures in the newsfax.
- **Leader Names:** Unnamed leaders are boring, and you risk the GM giving them a name you don't like. So name your leaders, eh? A very useful website for historical names of various flavours can be found at: <http://www.kabalarians.com/html/surf-by.htm>
- **Tithes:** Any GP that you receive from a tithe (either because you are a primate, or because you have a tributary ally), is automatically included in your Saved Gold each turn. So don't be adding it in again...
- **Order Formats:** Please use one of the standard forms if at all possible. If plain text (or email) is used, please summarize all expenditures in the builds and investments sections.
- **Intel Operations:** Please specify the target clearly on intelligence operations: for example, CI can be used to defend vs. a specific area of your nation (Government, Intel, Religious, Army, etc.) Many operations failed this turn for lack of specific targets. If you place a "floating" CR operation to cover "any possible leader revolt", there's a moderate negative modifier for non-specific target, if he's then outside your CCR, there's more negative modifier.
- **Diplomacy on Pacified regions:** A number of players this turn did diplomacy on pacified regions. If successful, the effect of such diplomacy is not to elevate the status of the region but to increase the "years from conquest" of that region more than would occur normally.
- **Operating Bases:** Action range is traced in Action points from a "controlled region". For open nation purposes, a "controlled region" has a status of pt, p, or t or higher. For Primacies, this is a region with an **Abbey** religious site or higher.
- **Holy Wars:** In the recent update to the GM's Handbook, we changed how religious troops (Crusaders) are generated. Basically, if a Holy War is successfully called, then a target number of Crusaders is calculated (based on your nation's religious strength and city/regional GP production). The nation afflicted with supporting a Crusade then has to produce that number of **national** troop points to go on the crusade. If the nation *does* produce that number of troops, then some additional "religious" troops join them from the common population. If the nation *does not* send that number of troops to fight, then the religious army appears anyway, but its strength is ripped right out of national NFP production, which (frankly) will put it into negatives for 2-3 turns.
- **MSP Basing:** The MSP Basing Formula has been changed a little:

$$\text{MSP Capacity} = \text{City GPv} \times 20 \times \text{TaxMultiple}$$

This is the big change. Please note that this means that T and PT cities only give you **half** of their capacity, and NT not at all.

- **New Religious Primacy status:** The new first status that a Primate gains in an area or city is a Church (ch), acquired through the Establish Church (ec) action.

Religious Authority Control Statuses

Control Status	Control Code	Taxation Multiple	Count Control?	NFP?
Church	ch	0.10	No	No
Abbey	ab	0.25	No	No
Monastery	mn	0.50	Yes	No
Cathedral	ca	0.75	Yes	Yes
Holy City	hc	1.00	Yes	Yes

- **Merchant Shipping Conversions:** When bringing MSP out of a route into ships, you must convert it in groups of 4 MSP, which become 1 HT, while paying 4 GP.
- **Hiring Mercenaries:** Note that mercenaries must be hired at a **City** within the Regional area that they form the mercenary pool of. If a group of mercenaries move out of their Regional area into another, they may be hired at the location they ended the previous turn.
- **Warships as MSP:** If you allocate Warship units to be MSP on a trade route (as opposed to their being anti-piracy patrols), they become MSP in number equal to the warships Cargo and can only be withdrawn from the route as Heavy Transports (see above).
- **Opening Trade Routes:** If you do not provide me with **all** of the trade route information (your base port, the other nation 's name and base port, the distance, the MSP assigned) I will not open the route.
- **Official Map Changes:** The region of Carmania (southern Iran) is Hostile Desert, not Wilderness. The southern edge of the *Celtic Sea* is moved up to the tip of Cornwall, making the *English Channel* and the *Bay of Biscay* adjacent. The Asiatic province of **Kur**, on the Amur river, is **Kurshin** instead. The Burmese-area province of **Shan** is now **Wuliang**, instead. The sea zone border between the *Tyrhennian Sea* and *Gulf of Lyons* should not line up with the mountains between Liguria and Provence, instead it should be in Liguria province, which makes Genoa on both the *Tyrhennian Sea* and the *Gulf of Lyons*. The sea zone border between *Aegean Sea* and *Mare Negri* should be at Constantinople, which is on both zones.
- **Regional Mercenaries:** Each region will have a maximum number of units that can be hired from each main type, all mercenaries are regular (no elite or inexperienced). Each region will have a QR for each main troop type. It will be possible to hire the Mercenaries from turn to turn. It is possible to counter-bid the Mercenaries to leave their employ and join another employer or even sit idle. The total number of regional mercenaries that can be hired are below each regional header.
- **Credit where credit is due:** A number of pictures on this newsfax are from public web sites on the web, and are intended for entertainment purposes only. I just wish I remembered to write down where I got them from...
- **Thanks:** Thanks also to Tom, Lorne and Dan for all their help with the Website, Maps, and other stuff!

NOMENCLATURE

Turns are currently five (5) years long. Base tax rate is 100%.

Infantry (200 men = 1 point), Cavalry (200 men = 1 point), Siege Engineers (200 men = 1 point), Warships (2 ships = 1 point), Transports (2 ships = 1 point).

LORDS 24 WEB RESOURCES!

The Lords Twenty-Four homepage is at:

www.throneworld.com/lords/lote24/index.html

All of the on-line resources, including mailing lists and web-sites, for Lords of the Earth are summarized on this page:

www.throneworld.com/lords/players/resources.html

You can subscribe to the Lords 24 mailing list by pointing your web-browser at:

<http://www.egroups.com/group/Lords24>

...and following the instructions on that page.

CONTACTING THE GM TEAM

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For general Lords queries:	Lorne Colmar 50 Promenade Court Regent Walk Aberdeen AB24 1RF UK lcolmar@lordsoftheearth.co.uk

VARIOUS FEES AND LEVIES

Turns	\$3.00 per turn.
Maps	Available on-line at the Lords 24 website.
LOTE 5.7.2. Rulebook	Printed ~ \$10.00 (<i>Local</i>) or \$15.00 (<i>Mailed in US</i>), \$18.00 (<i>mailed overseas</i>). Emailed as PDF ~ \$5.00

The News:

MANCHU'KUO

Mercenaries: 20c, 10xc, 4i, 1s, 3w, 2t



The Mongol Khanate

Bartan, Khan of the Mongols, Future Lord of All Asia

DIPLOMACY: Nestorian Kerait Horde Block(a), Ayaguz/Shan/Hsai-Hsia Horde Block(a)

Gripped by a holy vision, Qutula picked a spot of dirt, in the vast wasteland that is Mongol, and made a mark in the ground. "Last night, the Hawk and the Arrow came to me. I know now that it is one this spot I shall die." The tribes were thunderstruck, and bade him brush off the nightmare. "It was no nightmare. It has been ordained to me." And, within three weeks, his prophecy was to come true. The men and women of the tribes were leaderless, and without guidance. They encamped on the spot, and erected a great shrine called Xanadu. Over time, more and more came to pay their respects to the Father of them all, and the permanent encampment that grew there can only be called a city. A frozen, desolate place, but one surely destined for greatness and legends.

Bartan, the ba'atur of Kiyat, rose up and took what was his right alongside his newborn son, for was he not proclaimed successor to Qutula? It was under his guidance that Xanadu grew and prospered and he made it into the heart of the Mongol empire. After assuming the right to rule, Bartan set forth to extend his claim across all the lands around. The Nestorian Kerait and the Ayaguz and Hsia-Hsia, although highly sceptical of Bartan and his grandious plans, did ally with him. But only for now.

In the frozen north, where only Great Wolves trod, the Tatar tribes settled the wastelands of Vitim and Tungus, finding that it was possible to eke out an existence up there, but only just. However, they did find that the Great Wolves, once hunted provided a feast as well as warm skins for their

Yurts. The barbarian tribes of Turkestan were overwhelmed and conquered.

The Ju-Chen Khanate

Wa-Yen A-kut-ta, Khan of the Ju-Chen, Favored of the Thunderbolt

DIPLOMACY: Harbin(f)

Although the untimely deaths of both Wa-yen and Ma-chan while riding together on the ice floes slowed down the inevitable advance of the Ju-Chen, it did not stop them. The boy Ju'Ki'Ta assumed the bridle in the ritual of blood, and led the tribes as Wa-yen would've wanted. He rode at the head of a vast host that laid waste to the lands of Wudah, and carried off as slaves as many tribesmen and women as they could track down (which, Wudah being a desolate and poor land, was not too many).

Ju-Zhen-Wai returned with his men from the lowlands, where the fields are rich and fertile, and the people are soft and weak. His men returned not only with great tales and a few hapless Chinese girls who had fallen for their dashing ways (oh, foolish wenches!) but also bagfuls and bagfuls of gold and gems. Seeing the riches, an evil gleam crept across Ju'Ki'Ta's eyes...

The Goryeo Kingdom

Go Yun Zun, King of the Chaosen

DIPLOMACY: Mudan(f)

The Chaosen were peaceful yet, as is their habit, industrious. Zun ordered the fortifying of the small town of Po Chi on the tip of the Bandao peninsula. The town, really just a village, was located strategically covering the Bo Hai. With the addition of the earthen works (they didn't really qualify as a true fortress) Po Chi suddenly gained some measure of protection from the frequent storms and lashing waves that made this part of Bandao truly difficult to live in. As the danger from storms lessened over the years, itinerant wanderers and the few farmers who braved living in the nearby lands moved into the protected area, and within time Po Chi grew into a real city. The new tax revenues generated from Po Chi aided greatly in expanding cultivation around the Pusan area.

Go Yun Zun was blessed with a child with his new bride. Old Lady Kim, though, looked over the boy and said, with a sadness in her eyes, that he was not destined for the easiest of lives...

NIHON ~ Daiji ichinen kara gonon made

Mercenaries: 10c, 5xc, 12i, 4s, 2w, 2t

Clan Kiyowara



Kiyowara Motosuke, Lord of the North, the "victorious"

DIPLOMACY:

Motosuke, loyal servant of the Emperor and the Gods, bent his energies toward assisting his former Fujiwaran enemies in reunifying the rebellious daimyo of the North, now that peace had been attained. The han of the northern lands were a stubborn lot, and historically prone to challenge the authority of the central government at every opportunity. Indeed, that had been the

case with Clan Kiyowara. However, now that Motosuke had accepted a higher mission for his clan, he was willing to lend his knowledge of the ways of the northerners to bringing them back into the Shogunate. In return for this the Shogun donated to the Kiyowara coffers many thousands of *koku* of rice.

Fujiwara Japan

Fujiwara Torashima, Shogun of the Isles, Protector of the Emperor

DIPLOMACY: Toyama(a), City of Kanazawa(fa), Niigata (ea), City of Sakata(ea), City of Edo(t), Kwanto(a)

As the war ended, a streaming mass of refugees poured into Heian, the capital of the Shogunate. The refugees were shocked to discover that much, in fact most, of their homes they had abandoned had been burnt to the ground in the war and their lands had lay barren of rice for years. But the Japanese farmer is a sturdy one, and they bent their backs into rebuilding much of Heian and planting, anew, the rice crops they needed to survive. However, a goodly portion of them, having lost all title to their lands, found that rogue samurai now inhabited their plots and were not willing to leave without a fight. Since that would be suicide, a large portion of the farmers were without resources to fall back on to support themselves and their families. The shogunate samurai were reluctant to intervene since fear of another uprising of disgruntled samurai still gripped the shoguns' men. In then end, many of the farmers were forced to become itinerant peddlers, traveling from city to city and village to village selling whatever goods or services they could. A few of the more successful ones returned from such trips having actually gotten lucky and made some money. This encouraged some of the others, who were squatting on the outskirts of Heian in shacks and camps, to try their hand at it too.

After a few years of this, the Shogun, seeing as how the ronin were not causing too much trouble, sided with them and began to give a few select grants of land to those who had served him during the war. In this way he was able to reward men who, while not technically members of the clans that owed him direct allegiance, still had served against the Kiyowara. Technically, the land grants gave those ronin who occupied farmers' lands at the time of the Emperor's declaration a few years



ago the right to that very same land. Although this infuriated and impoverished many of the returning peasants, it did give the ronin the legal status that many of them had always sought but never found. This land grant program proved very successful in Heian, in that it became clear after a year or so, that the ronin who now owned land were not going to be challenging the Shogun any time soon. This popularity caused ronin in other cities to demand the same treatment. The Shogun's advisors pondered the whole affair much too long for the ronin, and open bands of them began to gather in Shimazu, Kumamoto, and Shimo-no-seki intending to march on Heian. As the crisis grew, the Shogun became more concerned that a second civil war was going to occur, and acceded to the ronin's demands. Torashima intended to distribute much of the land in question the same way he did in Heian, according to actual presence on the land for a given period of time.

However, when the Emperor's advisor Lord Norisuke burnt down much of the seki-no-kura, not only did the Imperial Census records go up in smoke but so did much of the Imperial Land Registry.

Lord Norisuke, now hated by both the Emperor and the Shogun, gave serious thought heading north to join the rebellious daimyo, but suspected that even they wouldn't have him. In any case, it put the Shogun in quite a quandary. If he refused the ronin's demands, they would march on Heian and civil war would recur. If he gave in to their demands, how was he to know who deserved land and who did not? And, if he was to give them too much land he would destroy the way of life for the entire farming class in the cities, and they would surely revolt themselves.

In the end, he proved himself to be something of a risk-taker by simply granting, en masse, almost all of the city lands that had been owned by the *nojin* and not by a samurai clan. The farmers who had land *outside* of the city walls still retained the rights to *that* land, but those who had lived in the cities for generations were suddenly left with no income. The southern ronin accepted this offer, which was no surprise, but the disestablished farmers, as expected, rose up. Mobs took to the streets and for every samurai or ronin who could stand with the Shogun there were a hundred farmers who wanted their heads. In order to keep his head on his shoulders and stave off this new crisis, Torashima authorized the Shogun's coffers to partially reimburse the farmers for the land they lost. The Shogun promised to continue similar payments in the future, "for the period of one generation" (*ichidai no teiki*) which, although it did not settle the question of how the farmers were to make a living in the future, it did ameliorate them enough to disband the mobs (well, that and a number of their heads were lopped off). The farmer mobs went home, and peace returned to the cities. After everything had settled down, the Shogun (who was definitely getting too old for this sort of excitement) finally was able to turn his attentions to the matter of rebuilding his war-torn realm.

He dispatched his retainers to the north in order to convince the northern daimyos to ally themselves with his realm and unite against the Ainu. The caravan was led by Kido and assisted by members of Clan Kiyowara since they knew better than any the ways of the northerners. Being a skilled strategist, Torashima sent along his two comely daughters, Kimie and Miyu to the daimyos of Toyama and Niigata - since they were unmarried. Lord Toyama Taro was smitten by Miyu, and allied himself with the Shogun in return for her hand in marriage. The demure Miyuko was aghast, as Toyama was not a very handsome man (but she, for her part, was somewhat petty). She was certain she was going to forevermore lead a sad and lonely life but nonetheless stoically accepted her fate. On the other hand, the daimyo of Niigata, Yukitake Masaharu, was a dashing man, and also accepted the shogun's offer of Kimie's hand in marriage. Kimie thought she could have done a lot worse. The expedition to the north was generally considered a rousing success for, although the northerners remained suspicious and not fully integrated into the Shogunate, they had largely acceded to the authority of Torashima. The whole expedition was topped off by a reserved marriage ceremony in which Naetoru, Eldest son of the Shogun, was wed to the only daughter of the Daimyo of Kwanto. Neither of them appeared to have much concern for one another - this was a marriage of purely political utility.

Nihon-no-Tenno

Tenno Sotoku, Emperor of Nippon, Blessed of Ameratsu

DIPLOMACY: City of Edo (ch), Yamato (mn), City of Kanazawa (ch)

As the land once again knew peace, life slowly but surely returned to normal. The Emperor, having taken a much more active role not only in rulership of Japan through the Shogun but also as

spiritual leader of a renewed Shinto religion, became less of a figurehead than ever before. He left the confines of the Imperial Grounds more often than ever before, brining hope to the *nojin* that they had a true father looking after them. Much of the Tenno's work in these years was dedicated to bestowing titles and names upon the various members of the imperial line. During the civil war, much had become confused, and a host of petty relations and even charlatans had weaseled their way into the Books of Succession. The Emperor thus spent a great deal of time figuratively cleaning house. The most prominent title bestowed went - unsurprisingly to those in the know - to Konoe his second son and made him third in line for the throne. Having taken care of family matters, the Emperor renewed work in his real power base - the common people. Only they could he truly rely on, as recent events showed all too clearly. Thus, to ensure the continued support of the farming classes, he traveled among the people, and blessed the shrines his retainers worked upon.

Lord Norisuke proved himself rather incompetent when during the conduct of the Royal Census he managed to lose the entire batch of records from Kyushu when, while working late at night, he succumbed to sleep (he had too much Nihonshuu earlier in the evening) and accidentally started a fire that burnt all the records to cinders. Needless to say the Emperor was none too pleased.

The Emperor, while attending the ritual ceremonies at a shrine to Kaze-no-Kami in Yamaguchi, caught a chill. It led to a lingering illness, and later he was forced to step down in favour of his chosen successor Sotoku Akihito. As the Emperor lay dying, the Imperial Household, as is its nature, was full of plots and schemes. Emperor Tenno died before the rituals for Sotoku had been performed. Nonetheless, after a few mysterious deaths and the incarceration of some loud-mouthed samurai who still had not accepted the Restoration of Imperial power (they figured that they could still dictate who was going to be the next Emperor - unfortunately they had little support from Fujiwara Torashima who knew a good thing when he saw it) Sotoku was successfully appointed Emperor. Konoe was a bit put out by the whole affair, but such is the life of the second son.

THE LAND UNDER HEAVEN - TIANXIA ZHONGGUO

宋 Land of the Sung

Mercenaries: 57i, 39c

The Greater Vehicle of Tibet

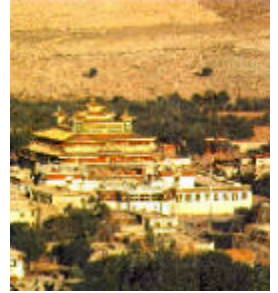
Chandragumra, Dalai Lama of Lhasa, Light of the World

DIPLOMACY: The barren and rocky land of Tz'Uk'An (ch), The high and cold lands of Amdo'tsho (ch)

The bonze finally began to make progress in the barbarous lands of G'Tsang. They changed their tactics to using the beliefs and rituals already present in the region as vehicles for Buddhism - showing the natives how their prayers and rituals were actually a part of The Sutras already - and

by this way they were able to make rapid inroads among the locals. Starting in the smaller villages which had been hard hit by famine, the monks distributed food and assistance and their holy preaching. Soon Buddhism came to be accepted far and wide. Furthermore, inroads were made among the half-mad barbarians of the highlands as temples were established in both Tz'Uk'An and Amdo'tsho, with the help of the Dalai Lama. In all, he was greatly pleased.

So pleased was he that he felt it was time to make sweeping changes in the structure of the Greater Vehicle. The Dalai Lama had, like his predecessors before him, exercised both secular and spiritual control over his mountainous realm. The great temple of Lhasa was a center not only of the soul of the Buddha, but also a shining example of the peace and tranquility rule according to Buddhist scriptures could bring to the world. Nonetheless, for decades the monks had been debating the merits of this. Was not the pursuit of Nirvana of greater importance than everything else? But they had constantly been called upon to mediate in secular disputes, trade issues, and relations with the realms of others. Two factions, the Red Hat and the Tsa had different desires.



The Red Hat believed that the Teachings could be spread best by secular expansion which could bring the Sutras directly to the faithful. The Tsa, however, believed that to understand and pursue Enlightenment required devotion of one's entire soul. There was no need for secular activities to them. Indeed, they were appalled to see monks engaging in essentially bureaucratic efforts on a daily basis. The decades-old dispute finally came to a head when a previously unknown monk, one Zhou, was called upon by peasants to mediate a dispute over the ownership of a goat. Each family claimed the goat for their own, and it had no markings to prove either one correct. A wiser monk might have taken the goat away from both, or threatened to cut the goat in half, but Zhou was one of those younger monks who had been forced to cut short his learning to help with the administrative duties of Lhasa. He sided with the family that seemed to have a stronger claim. This would've been fine, had not the other family, a few days later, exacted blood vengeance on the first, killing two of them in a knife fight at their home. Zhou was mortified and despondent, for his actions resulted in violent death. The feud between the Red Hats and the Tsa



broke out into open clashes, and the Dalai Lama was forced to address the issue. In a long and grand speech he sided with the Tsa. To ameliorate the Red Hats he allowed them secular control over the lands surrounding Lhasa and the Holy City. But the Dalai Lama would forever be spiritual head of the land. The monks in the highland areas of the Greater Vehicle turned over

their secular duties to locals, and returned to their true calling: meditating on and studying the Sutras and the Teachings.

Having averted a crisis, the Dalai Lama felt reinvigorated with a need to extend the influence of the order beyond the ceiling of the world and down in the Middle Kingdom itself. He embarked on a great journey down into the lowlands accompanied by a train of retainers and servants. His purpose was vague, and he traveled for almost two years before he reached his destination...

Prince Avayapala passed into the arms of the Buddha in his sleep, with a smile on his face.

Western Sung (Po Hai ~ Xing Sung)



Song Chou Lin, "The Grim", Lord of the Middle Lands

DIPLOMACY: Shan'si down to (fa)

The realm was unusually quite, which was a welcome change from the recent chaos and war. The peasants were happy, and the stars aligned properly to lend much credence to the rule of Chou Lin. Many men conscripted to fight the Dragon Sung were released from their duties, and they returned home to their farms in Ningsia and Kansu. Lord Chou Ho, still suffering from wounds he received in the last great battle against the Dragon Sung, finally succumbed and passed into the great night beyond. His right hand man, Kuai Lai, took over his duties. Song Wu Wei devoted much of his time to family matters and getting his holdings back in order after the recent war. A son was born to his wife, and the usually dour Wei was made quite happy by this. Unfortunately, two years later, when pregnant again, his wife passed away while giving birth to another boy.

Lu Tzin Wai managed somehow to gravely insult the nobles of Shan'si (something having to do with a funeral and a bottle of baijiu, but details remain sketchy) and they refused anymore to pay tribute to the Sung. They continued to recognize their feudal duties, but that was about it.

Chou Lin donated some gold to the Wudan school in order to ensure that the Buddhists would take good care of his soul in the afterlife (which was becoming an increasing concern as he grew older). He further ordered the strengthening of the northern borders against the all-too-real possibility of nomadic incursions, and accepted the help of learned Sung scholars schooled in the art of castle building to help in this. He withdrew his men from the lands of Hopei, Houma, and the City of Kaifeng and transferred their control to the Southern Sung.



Feng Sung Zao (Phoenix Sung Dynasty)



Song Gaozong, Prince of Kang, Celestial Emperor of the Middle Kingdom

DIPLOMACY: City of Yenching, known for its jiaozi (c), Yen, known for its dust (c), Bao'Ding, known for its freezing rains (t), City of ZenZun (c)

To mark the vanquishing of the Dragon Sung and the passing of the Sung Dynasty into a new era of peace, Gaozong declared his realm "Feng Sung Zao," the re-awakened Sung. As peace was restored, the refugees who had fled their homes during the vicious war returned home. Many of them found their lands occupied by renegades or bandits, or simply expropriated by Imperial Soldiers. Forced to find new abodes, tens of thousands of them streamed into the valleys of Hunan, giving the fishing town of Ch'ang-sha a large boost in population. Prompted by concern over the nomads to the north, the Imperial Surveyors planned and constructed a new fortress to cover the approaches to the Bo Hai a few leagues from Cheng'de. As the workers slaved away hauling stone from the quarries, small "bedroom villages" grew up along the way where they were barracked. In the evenings, shopkeepers would come around to sell their wares, and soon they simply set up shops among the barracks. As work continued through the years and the number of workers grew, the shanty towns were officially incorporated into the city of Chengde.

Continuing the reconstruction, the courier roadworks connecting Kaifeng, Yen-Ching, and Bao'Ding were fully repaired by the civil servants of the empire. While they were rebuilding the physical bridges of the empire, Gaozong sought to repair the political bridges across the Middle Kingdom and outside it that the war had wrecked. That is why, in a dazzling display of nepotism, he promoted his own wife to be his chosen heir to ensure the continuance of his line. He proceeded then to get her with child, and she bore him a son soon thereafter. Not stopping to catch his breath, the Emperor then concluded an agreement with the Western Sung that ceded the occupied Dragon Sung lands of Houma, Hopei, and the city of Kaifeng to his realm. Finally he sent forth his trusted adjutant Lu Pan to restore Imperial control in the northern provinces while Li Hai was to recreate the old Ministry of the Imperial Census (which had been abandoned during the chaos of the recent war).

Lu Pan met with little success in the north and when Li Hai returned to his old ministerial post at the Census, he found the records there to be largely destroyed, scattered, and unaccounted for. That, combined with the mass of refugees all across the Empire, meant that a new census was going to be harder than was first envisioned. Abandoning the job for next year, he traveled north to assist in the imperial reconstruction. However, the northerners treated him and Lu Pan alike: with distrust and malice. Having tasted independence they wanted little, if anything, to do with the new Sung despite the lavish gifts showered upon them by the Empire.

The Office of Barbarians was instructed to deliver a large amount of gold and gems to the Ju-Chen nomads, who had been granted permission to enter the Middle Kingdom. The nomad chieftain Ju-Zhen-Wai, traveled southward across the frontier into the Dynasty's lands armed with the Imperial Seal to see for himself what this Chinese "civilization" was all about. He traveled with over 3,000 ferocious horsemen who had quite a fun time beating up locals, tearing through the markets looking for a variety of trinkets, and generally causing a ruckus where ever they went. Arriving in Pienching, they were stunned to see the size of the place. And it's riches were beyond compare to anything they had even dreamt of. The Emperor summoned them to audience and, after waiting for seven hours in the anteroom (where they sized up the guards), they were allowed to enter his presence. They presented a display of their martial prowess, which unfortunately for them involved the death of three of the Emperor's guards who were a bit too excitable. They then went on to insult pretty much everyone in attendance before the Imperial Censor, in disgust, gave to them a box of gold and gems ostensibly for the purposes of buying from them some exotic animals and strange plants for the Imperial Gardens. The nomads, laughing, said they would pass on the request to their Khan. Leaving out the backdoor, the riders had one last look around the city walls, and one last party in the palace and then left the next morning for the steppes (where they felt a darn sight more comfortable). A number of local girls, falling for the handsome nomads, ran off with them much to the dishonor of their families.

The Wudan Masters



Ma, "The Laughing Sword"

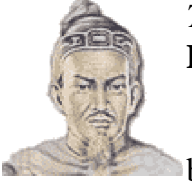
DIPLOMACY: Deep within the heart of Pienching city (of), In the city of Chiangning in Anhui (oe), In the Valley of Mist in the region of Honan (oo), High in the Wu Tang mountains of Hupei (oo)

Late in 1133, Emperor Gaozong held a shadowy meeting with members of the Wudan school of Swordsmen from the north. He had been greatly impressed by the martial skills of the nomads who had so recently soiled his chambers, and was concerned that, should they turn on the dynasty, their skills might outstrip those of the conscripts of the army. After all, the typical conscript could barely cut himself with a kitchen knife. Of course, it was ridiculous to think that such nomads could threaten the realm, but Gaozong was a cautious man. The swordsmen from the mountains agreed that it is better to be safe than sorry and that they would agree, if the Emperor so desired, to train some of his qualified soldiers in the mysterious ways of the Wudan sword. The Emperor, however, had a different plan. The Wudan swordsmen were known all through the kingdom for their mysteriously powerful arts, but also for their calmness and piety. In these troubled times, when so recently brother had turned against brother, men had betrayed their lords, and the entire kingdom had been rent asunder, such men might prove to be a beacon for others to follow. Of course, the Emperor himself would be just such a person, but he was only one and could hardly give himself to the people at their level when he was needed to keep the realm at peace. The Wudan swordsmen, however, were perfect for such a role. Even the lowliest peasant looked up to them, while the ruffians and bandits that infested the realm feared and respected them. The criminals from the underground fled from them, and the soldiers would follow them to the ends of the earth. They were the living symbols of filial piety and righteousness throughout the realm.

In the end the Wudan swordsmen, although highly skeptical of becoming too involved in worldly affairs, accepted the Emperor's Seal of the Sword. With this official recognition, they grew from an elite school hidden deep in the mountains to one with a public face. The Emperor set aside lands within the empire for the school and contributed large amounts of funds to it. Furthermore, the reputation of the swordsmen was such that, when word spread of their official recognition, monies flowed in from all corners of the Tianxia Zhongguo. Seeing as how the Emperor was setting up a quasi-independent fighting order within the realm, the neighboring rulers came to the conclusion that the more influence and input they had in the process, the better it would be later on down the road. Hoping to have their representatives placed within the school, the Western Sung and the Annamese had their embassies deliver large amounts of gold to the school. Suddenly in the enviable position of being the recipient of gold from secular powers across Zhongguo, many in the Wudan school were concerned that the ideals and training of Wudan would be diluted and endangered by being beholden to others. Nonetheless, the monies were accepted. And even far-off Thaton, that strange land of legend and outrageous creatures, contributed gold to the school, as well as fifteen young applicants to the school (they were the sons of some of the more well known Thaton nobility). Finally, as the fortress of the order was finished, the Most Holy Dalai Lama himself appeared, having made the arduous and treacherous journey from far-off Holy Lhasa. He blessed the order and delivered a portion of saffron cloth, old and crumbling, that had been worn by the Bodhisattva himself. Awestruck by this precious gift, the Wudan masters were overcome by a sense of the responsibility invested in them. They vowed to serve their code and to never waver from their path. Then, after taking their final sacred vows in private, the Wudan masters were ready.

SOUTH EAST ASIA AND THE ISLANDS ~ Land of Spices, Intrigue, and Exiles
Mercenaries: 12i, 10w, 10t

The Dai Kingdom of Annam



T'an Minh, Da-Wang ti Annam

DIPLOMACY: Kwangsi(f)

T'an Minh, in the waning years of his life, took his son aside and bequeathed to him a bound chest full of writings and thoughts. "My son...wheeze...therein lies...wheeze...my great plans for Annam...wheeze...take the throne, take it all but ...wheeze...make sure you listen to my words..." and with that, T'an Minh died. With great ceremony and reverence he was interned in the family tomb within the noon courtyard of his great achievement and monument, Tonkin Castle. At the services, there was much talk that his efforts towards peace and alliance with Annam's neighbors would be his greatest legacy. Overcome by grief, T'an Lung was simply silent. He gave only the poem his brother had written but was too grief-stricken to read:



Spring goes, and the hundred flowers.

Spring comes, and the hundred flowers.

My eyes watch things passing,

my head fills with years.

But when spring has gone not all the flowers follow.

Last night a plum branch bloomed by my door

(Man Giac, 1051-1096)

Returning to Tonkin, T'an Lung opened the chest and began to read. Within weeks, he had plunged the Kingdom into a new era of activity and development as per his father's plans. The courier's road from Annam to Korat continued to advance, and workers encamped in Annam greatly enhanced the local economies there. Two thousand soldiers returning from China were granted titles to farms and lands in Mison, as well as the troops there already. Mison soon became the sight of a massive effort by the government to encourage cultivation and settlement, and within years those policies had paid off handsomely. The land was rich and heavily farmed, and the people had been integrated into the realm.

The bumbler Nyugen Nyugen continued to amaze as his efforts in Kwangsi bore fruit (although it probably helped that T'an Lung married the daughter of the local prince). The troops engaged in the recent Sung Dynastic wars returned home to a hero's welcome - primarily by their families for whom they brought back all the loot they could carry from China. T'an Lung was also heavily involved in the support given to the Wudan school, and contributed greatly to the swordsmen.

The Kambujadesa Empire

Javyaravarman, Boy-king of the Khmer

DIPLOMACY: Siam(f)

CyoCyin, regent for Javyara, passed away in a poorly planned duel after the boy-king's 14th birthday party. Although the throne was vacant for a year, the realm was quiet and a peaceful succession occurred. One of the first acts of the boy-king was to enact a minor, but perhaps

indicative, change in the primogeniture laws, forbidding the passing down of an entire plot of land to the eldest son in cases where there was another valid claim by the second son. A minor law, which allowed it to get past the nobles and vested interests who controlled large portions of land, but one that might have far-reaching consequences. As the troops returned from the lands of the Sung, they brought with them ideas and concepts of Buddhism that were once forbidden by the Kings of Khmer. But where once they would've been hung, the ideas of Buddhism seemed no longer so treasonous. Other foreign ideas, too, seemed of less concern. The people had generally seemed to become more concerned with the here and now, a fact which worried the high priests of the temples and shrines.

The sister of the boy-king, a certain princess woman named Vimila, was offered by the King (who was a spiteful lad, and still remembered the time she had beat him up as a boy, but he was king now...) as a bride for the Lord of Siam. He was thereby made a Prince of the realm, and Siam became more integrated into the Empire.

The Kingdom of Thaton



Souphan, Lord of the Mon

DIPLOMACY: Manipur(f), Nakhon(f)

As the trade of the Kingdom grew by leaps and bounds, the small entrepot of Bangkok became a way point for many merchants heading East. Eventually, enough of them began to warehouse goods there that the population of shopkeepers, workers, and dockhands grew large enough so that Anawartha was obliged to change its status in the royal rolls from village to municipality. A similar dynamic - growing trade - led to the continued growth of Rangoon, a seedy, aromatic port full of spices, danger, intrigue and adventurers seeking their fortunes looking for hidden cities of gold. many of these adventurers headed north for the dense jungles and hills of Burma. There, instead of continuing on, many found the farming business to be extremely lucrative. Enough so that they settled down to hew lives out of the wilderness there.

A few of these intrepid men and women, however, did continue the trek north through the region of Manipur (which pay a limited fealty to the King) and over the High Mountains into the legendary land of Tibet. Months later, they would return with Mountain Yak wool and holy writings of the monks there.

Prince U Thant was declared the official successor to the king, although Souphan was still hearty as an ox. His advisors welcomed such a show of prescience and fortitude, and the realm was made more stable by it.

The Manipur tribes, wary of the Thaton king, finally acceded to his diplomatic offensive and joined the realm fully - but only after their Lord accepted the hand of Amethyst, daughter of Anawratha. And the other daughter of Anawratha, Jade, was not so lucky herself, for she was packed off to be married to the Lord of Nakhon who was less than charming. However, the King forsook diplomacy when he dealt with the Hindus: the Arakan people were subject to cruelties and tortures unspeakable as Thaton troops burnt all Hindu structures to the ground, raising Buddhist Stupas in their place. The wailing of the people could be heard far and wide, and refugees streamed out of Arakan on ships bound south. A revolt of the last few able-bodied males in Arakan was put down

bloodily.

Aside from matters of state, Souphan spent much of his time in these years attending to matters of this new, legendary school of swordsmen in China: The Wudan. Taken with their philosophy and prowess, he supported his Chinese allies with the financial burden such a school required, as well as donating a number of his best troops, his own swordsmen, and a number of members of his own school of the Arts to the Wudan. The coffers of the Thaton poured themselves out for the Wudan, for Souphan was a pious man who had great reverence for the Masters. Plus, it was his hope that his men would not only bring greater glory to Thaton through their selfless devotion to the Sutras but also teach the Wudan a thing or two themselves! For these Thaton swordsmen were no slouches, certainly. Ma, master of the Wudan school, graciously accepted the men as students and pledged to repay the King for his generosity in other matters.

General Aung San died, in far off China, of infected wounds he received in battles last year against the upstart Dragon Sung. His troops straggled back.

The God-Empire of Sirivijaya



Ginandjar the Magnificent, Blessed of the Bohdisattva, The Builder

DIPLOMACY:

Lord Sata, a man of daring, courage, and not a little madness, set off where once others had sailed. There was a grand sendoff, but none were very confident that he would ever be seen again, and his drinking buddies made sure his tab was paid with the local palm wine merchants. But, the plucky Sata surprised all of them when he reappeared years late. He was found by some merchants, washed up on Nias, half mad, starved, and with but a few of his crewmen left alive after having "gone around the world" (or at least some of it.) Needless to say, he basked in all the glories the king could award him. The passage west had at last been found!

Ginandjar proved himself once again to be the forward-thinking king that all said he was, when he declared that the slaves in the kingdom would be set free. He gave to them, and a number of others who were down on their luck deeds to farms and uncleared lands in the interior. A number of these freed slaves did quite well, and made a bit of money for themselves. This encouraged others to push for more and greater emancipation, which the king seemed all in favor of granting, especially now that he was in such a grand mood (due to the wife of his son, Gozomonye, finally giving him a grandson).

Sirivijayan merchants, always eager to find new markets and shorter routes, exploring the strange islands to the east, came to trade with the Hindu tribes in Sarawak and around the Brunei. As these were new markets, and not inhabited by any people of sophistication, they did not expect what they found: steel swords, technically advanced ships, and a well developed system of trade...Curious, some of them explored further east seeking the source of these goods. Finally, they were quite surprised to find:

The Free State of Palawau

Mukmin, Master of Balabac

DIPLOMACY:

A small state, founded by outcasts and exiles from the formerly Hindu lands of Thaton. Although most of the Hindus in Thaton were now conquered, many of them did manage to escape, and their history from that generation was a dark one. Adrift, from island to island, evading pursuit and the dangers of the high seas, they finally managed to escape far enough to feel secure. Now, a generation later, they had forgotten what it was like to be hunted, and instead they ventured out into the oceans, seeking trade and contact with others. And trade they did, with a vengeance. Even with their former enemies!

INDIA ~ Land of the Fervent

Mercenaries: 10i, 10c, 5s, 5w, 5t

The Pala of Bengal



Rubapala II the energetic, Lord of the Pala, Prince of Tamralipti

DIPLOMACY: City of Orissa(nt)

The burgeoning trade between Bengal and the Western Indians (as well as the distasteful Cow-eating Muslims to the far west) and the massive growth in pilgrims heading north to the Temple of Vishnu led the small town of Machilipatnam to grow into a bustling little port on the Palk strait. The merchants there made a killing in selling the unusual spices and fruits of Vengi. These pilgrims would travel by foot and horse all the way along the coast, longing for the sight of the Holy Ganges. However, by the time many of them reached the rich lands of Nadavaria, they had often run out of money and were forced to end their pilgrimage. However, longing for the religious ecstasy of Vishnu, as soon as they saw the Ganges, they would fall to their feet or run into the water full of fervor. Nearby, the walled temple complex of Calcutta (really a group of temples and schools dedicated to a variety of gods) accepted many of these faithful who, having seen the River of Life for the first time could not bear to leave. They asked to be accepted into the rites at Calcutta and places were found for them in the temples. Thus, after many years, the Calcutta temples and schools grew famous in their own rights and became a sight for pilgrims in addition to the Temple of Vishnu to the north. With the addition of so many pilgrims to the land, the bureaucrats were hard pressed to keep track of everyone.

The people of Chandela began sending their tribute to the Pratihara Kingdom upon the order of Rubapala. A large amount of money arrived in the royal coffers to compensate the Pala, and a small bank was established by fiat of the King so that he could more easily put his nation into debt.

In the northern tribal regions, a group of holy men built a large fortress along the river approaches to Shillong in Assam. Named Arjuna, it was there to provide refuge and succor to refugees from the troubles in Thaton. Similar refuges were built across the Bengali lands to accommodate and protect pilgrims from thugees and bandits. But, in reaction to the continuing crisis of refugees coming from the lands of Thaton, messages and diplomatic concerns flew back and forth between the two empires. For a time, it seemed war was imminent, but in the end cooler heads prevailed and Bengal and Thaton, with the intercession of the Dalai Lama from the far northern reaches of the Himalayas, were able to agree on a set of provisions and arrangements that would, hopefully keep their borders at least somewhat secure. The cornerstone document was the Treaty of Bengal (N.b.: there was

some confusion whether the representative for Thaton was legally able to sign for Anawratha):

Treaty of Bengal

In order to promote peace and prosperity to all the lands of Asia, we of Thaton, of Bengal, and the Dali Lama of Tibet, have joined in a mutual economic & defense pact. This pact also specifies, and acknowledges, on the part of all parties, the sovereignty of each nation, to certain regions.

PROVISION 1, territorial

A) The regions of Manipur & Samatata are hereby removed from the list of Thaton's spheres of influence. Bengal & Tibet recognizes the sovereignty of

Thaton over the following regions: Thaton, Mon, Pegu, Ava, Burma, Nakhon, Kedah, Perak, Johor, Arakan, Lampang, Kayah, & Sagaing.

B) Thaton & Tibet also recognizes Bengal's territorial claims to the following regions: Nadavaria, Palas, Gaur, Maghada, Chandela, Kalinga, Vengi, Assam & Samatata.

C) Bengal & Thaton recognize the sovereignty of Tibet over the following regions: Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, & Gtsang.

PROVISION 2, economics

The region of Manipur shall become a "trading area", wherein all nations of the area will be invited to share (up to a non-paying tributary), as a common ground

for all. Thaton will be allowed to control the region, up to tributary, but then also takes upon themselves the responsibility to improve the region, i.e., cultivating it and building the city, where trade can be done.

PROVISION 3, military

A) In the event of a need in the defense of Bengal, the Bengalese may request military aid from Thaton. However, due to other current treaties, such as the treaty of Tonkin, aid requested from other allies of Thaton, must take priority. That is, all treaties prior to the date of this treaty gets priority for military aid

requests. In addition, no request for aid, against an ally of Buddhism, will be honored.

B) Should a known ally of Thaton be judged to be the belligerent nation, & start a war with the Bengalese, Thaton will remain neutral in this instance.

C) Should Tibet break this treaty, Thaton will also remain neutral, and additionally, cut all tithes to Tibet.

SIGNED SOUPHAN, LORD OF THE MON, EMPEROR OF THATON

SIGNED CHANDRAGUMRA, DALAI LAMA OF LHASA, LIGHT OF THE WORLD

SIGNED ANAWRATHA, LORD OF THE MON

Pratihara Kingdom of Kaunaj



Nagabhata, Emperor of the North

DIPLOMACY:

In the north, in the Rajput Kaunaj, the massive city of Vijayapala along the Holy Ganges was gripped by a great increase of officially sanctioned religious excitement around the heretofore minor Temple of Vishnu. A massive popular movement, set off by an ignorant Muslim merchant, led to a vast influx of wealth and pilgrimage to the temple from all

across the land of Kaunaj. The temple soon burst to overflowing with this new outgrowth of frenzied faith and the growing pilgrims who came to visit the Holy Ganges at the site of the temple. Soon, most of the inner city was populated by itinerant seekers of the truth and holy men connected in some way or another to the Temple. It soon became a destination for Hindu pilgrims of all Indian nations. However, the Temple of Vishnu had earlier connections to prior kingdoms and political systems. Decades ago, when the Temple was first dedicated, Vijayapala was named Holy Benares and the temple and the name of Benares were intimately connected in the people's minds. As the Vishnu movement grew stronger, the Rajput government, instead of opposing it, embraced an official renaming of the city back to its historic name. This only increased pilgrims from all of India, and soon, the foot traffic to Benares was a constant stream of human flesh, pounding the earth for hundreds if not thousands of leagues. A hard packed road eventually grew up alongside the pilgrim's route, paid for by the donations of pious merchants and worked on by holy men. Indeed, it became a ritual of the pilgrimage not only to bathe in the Holy Ganges and pray at the Temple of Vishnu but to take a stone from one's home and place it in the earth on the path to the Temple. In this way hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of holy men and pilgrims created a grand road that led, from the North, directly from the city of Kaunaj to Benares and, from the south, from Bihar in Bengal to Benares. Now one could, and many did, set foot on this road in dusty and dry Charkhari in Chitor and continue onwards, never leaving the road, all the way to Tamaralpatri in Palas, traveling the entire way along the beautiful and moving site of the Holy Ganges. Many Ajmeri tribesmen, driven from their homes by Muslim invaders, did exactly that in their quest for guidance from Vishnu.

Apart from the realm of the spirit, the land was also abuzz in the land of the mundane and the political. Large shipments of food continued to flow to the cow-eating Saffarids, much to the disgust of Hindus far and wide. Otherwise the frontiers were quiet. Having staved off disaster for another few years, Kavali bowed his head to Fate and departed this earth. Nagabhata took over the reins of government.

Omprakash, son of Nagabhata, was declared a prince of the realm in a strange ancient ceremony that involved a lot of imported exotic Jack fruit. Lord Ramasevka, unfortunately, discovered he had a fatal allergy to the smelly stuff, and expired at the feast.



Kalachuri Kingdom of Tripuri

Junaryala, King of Kings, Lord of Ramagiri

DIPLOMACY:

Ayapala died of old age, and his cousin, Jundaryala, took over the reins of government. Lord Arhim of Chalukya and King Kavali of the Kaunaj held long negotiations with Junaryala over the relationships of the three kingdoms. In the end it was decided that closer ties between the Chalukyans and the Tripuri would better serve all involved, and Junaryala agreed. A large sum of gold was transferred between them, and all involved seemed happy with the new arrangements.

Western Chalukya Kingdom

Mularaja, Lord of Anahillapura

DIPLOMACY: NE

Except for the diplomatic coup in Tripuri, the efforts of the Chalukyans seemed rebuffed by fate at every turn. To aid insult to injury, Lord Arhim the Quick died while in Tripuri from the strange curries they eat there. Apparently some sort of blue sauce did him in (although the other members of his delegation quite liked it, they said it tasted somewhat like almonds). Even the scribes were frustrated in their efforts to count the vast, numberless people of Chalukya. All told, the Wheel of fate turned not in their favour in these years, and Mularaja was frustrated. Except, there was one bright spot: Prince Munja did bring a shining ray of light into the land with the birth of his son. He had the blue spot on his forehead that the Wise Ones foretold would lead him to greatness...

Sad Drivida Kingdom of Ceylon

Vijayabahu, Lord of the Tamil and the Nadu

DIPLOMACY: Madurai(f), The busy city of Trichar in lovely Chera, which is known for its exotic teas (ea)

Vijayanahu continued to show his devotion to Vishnu, and spent much of his time on pilgrimages and performing sacred rites. His devotion was not lost on the people, who thronged to the Great Temple at Polonarva. The seers wisdom spread through the lands, and a general renaissance of Hindu learning and culture flourished. Many of the local sutras of smaller shrines handed down locally for hundreds of years became part of the official codex of The Wheel of Life, and a thousand sects flourished. Vijayabahu looked out among his people, and his heart swelled. "Surely the Gods and Fate were happy with us!" And happy they were, for the markets in every town were busy with the fruits and produce of millions of industrious faithful. The crops overflowed, but even the merchants (who stood to lose a lot of money due to the glut of produce) were happy. It was an era of peace and prosperity, typified by a series of wall murals in the great temple which depicted happy and fat farmers, believers, and merchants performing devotions.

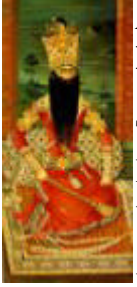
Prince Bhaljahu, in a grand sendoff, set sail for the Eastern Islands of yore at the head of twenty of the Kingdom's finest vessels. His flagship, *Holy Samsara*, was a glorious sight as it set sail over the horizon. Years later, after much rumour, speculation, and fear, the Prince returned. He and his crew were haggard, rife with scurvy, and decimated by the storms and cruel winds that had buffeted them and thrown them off track. For years they had drifted, landing at craggy outcroppings of barren rock. They had even come within sight of green land, only to be cruelly blown off course by fate. Where he had left with twenty vessels, only four returned, and a sorry sight the survivors were. But they were nonetheless happy. Not only had they returned alive, but they were certain they had almost made it. After three months of recovery, Prince Bhaljahu was eager to make the passage once again. He beseeched Vijayabahu to give him more ships...



CENTRAL ASIA AND PERSIA

Mercenaries: 15i, 15c, 5s

The Ghaznavid Sultanat



Mahmud (II) al Dala, Lord of the Punjab, Master of the Highlands

DIPLOMACY: Punjab(t), Sukkur (ea)

The mountain kingdom prospered, an outpost of civilization in a wilderness of barbarians. Nonetheless, the continued expansion of Ghaz rule over the tribesmen proved difficult, as the Punjabi and Sukkur are notoriously independent peoples.

But the real excitement was yet to come. Mahmud, full of youthful bravado, had determined to teach the Ajmeri tribes a thing or two about what civilization was. At the head of his gathered hosts, 5000 horse and 2200 Ghaznis, he rode into the desolate land of Ajmer. Now, the Ajmeri nomads were known for their wiles and it had been many decades since anyone had dared tread into their lands. Furthermore, the land itself was dangerous to all but those who knew it. A barren land, the sand dunes and poisoned water would've frightened off any normal man. But Mahmud was hardly one to be frightened off by anything. He needed slaves to build his empire, and these cow-worshippers and Indians would be perfect for what he was looking for. Luckily for Mahmud, the Ajmeri had recently been devastated by poor foraging, and many of them had abandoned the old ways and migrated to the richer southern Hindu lands of Kaunaj. Thus, when Mahmud finally brought them to battle, only 1600 Ajmeri riders faced them. But this was not to be any easy contest. On their own land, in ravines of unbearable heat and dryness, with water scarce, and the nomads knowing well every nook and cranny of their land, they succeeded in holding off Mahmud and his men for no less than three years. Hiding, riding out and riding back, satisfied with killing one or two at a time, the attackers were constantly harassed. Rarely taking many casualties, and decimating the nomads whenever they caught them in an open battle, Mahmud's troops nevertheless continually found themselves on the defensive. Their tactics became ever more fierce. They began to enslave the families of the nomads when they were able to track them down just to get the riders to come out and face them. At the end of the third year, no more than a couple of hundred of nomads remained, but a daring raid by them had captured Mahmud himself. An exhausting game of cat and mouse ensued, with Mahmud's men pursuing the nomads across hell and back, until finally all the nomads were killed and Mahmud, beaten senseless, was rescued. Angered beyond all measure, he ordered the villages razed and the families all enslaved. Finally, returning to Afghanistan, he was triumphant but humbled. And the Ajmeri that remained behind vowed that, to the end of their days and far into the future, they would fight the Ghaznavids.

The Saffarids of Baluchistan

Rasul ibn Leys, Shah of Baluchistan, Governor of Khorasania, Lord of the Hunt

DIPLOMACY: Fars(a)

There is a rocky cliff that faces the Gulf of Persia. Along that cliff, legend goes, for hundreds of years fishermen and refugees from all corners of the world have dwelled in caves and houses carved out of the rockside. At the cross-roads of trading routes that have existed forever, shipwrecked sailors would wash ashore at Rasanian Point and, finding the fishing profitable and the

land above the cliffs green, they would stay. And as time went on, this outpost of criminals and refugees grew larger and larger until, in 1131, a Saffarid tax collector performing a survey of the surrounding farmlands happened to come across it. A veritable city in the rock! Alas, the independence of Rasanian was over, and the Saffarids incorporated the inhabitants as members of the Shahdom.

Rasul continued to focus on the demands of the court, but there was a variety of interesting news out of the south. There were rumours of revolt from far-off Sind, but in the end they proved to be rumours only. Nonetheless, it was only a matter of time before those restless people threw off their allegiance to the Shah. The Sheikh of Qatar, parleying with the Dharani nomads, barely got out of that province alive when a veritable sea of Al Mohad tribesmen overwhelmed the province and whipped the Dharani into a frenzy of Bedouin madness. Prince Ali patrolled the Gulf with the royal fleet, looking out for pirates and others. It was late in 1133 when, on the lookout for suspicious ships, Prince Ali was struck by a swinging mast, and knocked into the sea. His body was never recovered.

In the blasted land of Carmania, where the dervishes go to commune with Allah in their own ways, and where the Zakam fruit grows plentiful, with its spines and thorns, there is a valley which has

not been seen by a city dweller for over a thousand years. As Lord Kazarani descended into the valley, he tripped and fell down a sloping wall of sand. Falling head over heels, he lost consciousness and sight of his camels as his head smashed into a rock outcropping. He came to in the shadow of vast statues and figures. And, as he looked around him, he saw what he had come for: the travelers tales were true! He stood in awe of the vast ruined city around him. Silent it was...like a tomb. He shivered. It was obvious no one had been here for a very long time, except perhaps the nomads. They knew everything about the desert, and would've kept this a secret too had the caravans not gotten off course in the sand-storms. He prayed to Allah, as he noticed the statues and icons around. Strange, they looked almost European. But, there had never been European heretics here in this land. Or had there? In any case, it was more important now for Kazarani to find a way out of here...if possible...and report back to the Shah.



The Uighur Khanate

Khagan Ko-Lo, Lord of Jungaria, Uniter of the Uighur

DIPLOMACY: Dzungaria/Balkash/Frunze Horde Block (absorbed), Tarbatgatai/Chuguchak Horde Block(a), Osman/Betpak/Ryatka Horde Block(nt)

Khagan Ko-Lo reunited the scattered Uigur tribes in the area of the northern Tarim oases of Old Turfan. Seeking to recreate the greatness that was the Uigur of Old, he moved north to integrate the Karluk, Seljuks, and Khirgiz in his dream of empire. He ordered all young men and women into the saddle, and rode at the head of a great host of nomads out of Jungaria. Behind him, Karakocho - the heart of the empire over three hundred years ago. Where once his ancestors were kingmakers in China, so would Ko-lo be once again. Where once his ancestors were driven from Imperial Mongolia, he would restore their honor.

Driving north at the head of his host and tribes, the future Khan of all Mongolia, sought first to recreate the ancient alliances with the Uigur allies of the Karluk. In Dzungaria the two tribes met, and the sacred ink was brought forth to draw up the ancient boundaries and vows. The depredations of the Turki, to the west, made their decision that much easier. In a grand ceremony to seal the alliance, Ko-Lo married Esra, the sister of Thakir, the Khan of the Karluks. But the Karluk, though loyal, were no longer the great horde they had once been. And so Ko-Lo, his ambitions unabated, traveled into Chuguchak, where more Karluks resided. These tribes, the Upper Karluks, were less welcoming of the Uighurs, but allied with their cause. They too longed for the loot of China. Hearing of the salving of the Turki, Ko-Lo became enraged. He turned northward, towards the Seljuk lands to parley with them. Though suspicious of the Turki, the Seljuk Khan, Alp Arslan was, frankly, suspicious of everybody and merely allowed the Uighurs to pass through his lands unmolested. Rebuffed, he went further north into the cold plateaus of the Khirgiz in Saraba. The cold of those lands only encourages stubbornness, however, and the Khirgiz refused the Uigur offers entirely after a brief fight. A similar disappointment awaited Ko-Lo among the Altai hordesmen.

The Great Khanate of Two Khans

Kubla Khan and Kang Khan

DIPLOMACY: Tzin-Kiang Zao Horde Block(a), Tarim-Tsinghai, Datong Shan Horde Block (nt), Yumen-Suzhou Horde Block (nt), Bulingir-Lob Nor Horde Block(a)

Out of the harsh land of Tsaidam, pushed forth by the ancient hatreds of their mortal enemies, Lord Kubla knew it was time to wreak his revenge on those who had wronged him. The farmers who had raised him as a boy knew nothing about what it was to be riding with the wind in your hair and your bow at your side. There was nothing greater than the hunt, and Kubla had been the greatest hunter of them all. Now, it was time to hunt game bigger than fleeing caravans or fat Chinese merchants. It was time to claim his destiny.

And so he rode forth, at the head of his tribes. First, to the Tzin-Kiang Dynasty. In Charchan they two tribes met, the war drums beating, they slammed together in ritual combat, and Kubla met his counterpart, Khan Kang, across the field of battle. "The Tzin-kiang will not bow to any, whelp!" Kang shouted as the tribes fought. After the day was done, and many lay dead on the field, the two men met once again. Splattered with blood, they parleyed again. Kang, his honor intact, demanded that their tribes merge but he was Kubla's equal, nothing less. After looking at his dead, Kubla had to agree. "Let us join our tribes Kang, your daughter shall be my wife, and you and I shall be of the same blood. We shall fight no more, but conquer together!" And so it was agreed. A grand party was had, and the fermented goats blood and milk flowed more freely than it had for years. Kang agreed, and the alliance was forged.

Moving East, towards the riches of China, the two Khans moved into the Tarim basin. There, the Tarim and the Yumen tribes allowed them to pass through, but nothing more. They both remained on their lands, confident in their own strength and not willing to ally with any southern tribes. The tribes of Bulingir and Lob Nor, a strange people, did ally with the Khanate, for unknown reasons.

The Karakhanate of Ilig

Jasmine, Bughra-Khan, Queen of the Ilig

DIPLOMACY: Khwarzm (free state), Kophat Dagh(nt), Khurasan(aw), Tadzik(ea)

Jasmine was determined. She was not getting any younger, and she vowed that she would see her realm restored to glory before she died. All efforts were bent towards the Khwarzm, and she dispatched Ali Bakash himself to that land to. Ali was a highly skilled negotiator, and he was aided by the silver tongues of his advisors. Indeed, the Khwarzm and the Ilig were like brothers, they were of the same blood, it makes perfect sense to unify the two great nations into one! At least, that's what Ali was able to convince the Khwarzm leaders of. Though not yet completely absorbed by the Karakhanate, they Khwarzm were getting there. Trade and people flowed unhindered between the two lands, and the borders became all but non-existent.



Back in Samarkand, Jasmine announced that her daughter, Nia would succeed her as the Khaness. She sent envoys to secure the loyalty of all of her trusted advisors and a special mission was sent to the Shah of Kwarzim to solicit his support. The Khaness agents, the Sadukar, were employed to ensure that these loyalties were obtained. Elsewhere, Jasmine's advisors worked to try and put the Karakhanate back together from the Civil War caused by Ahmad's death, sending emissaries to Kophat Dagh and Khurasan. The Kophat people grudgingly accepted that it was better to accept a slight loss of sovereignty rather than face Ilig arms, but the Khurasan were a proud people, and drove Jasmine's men out of their lands. As Lord Nimur left, Khurasani riders ambushed him in a ravine, capturing and killing the overly-proud noble. His troops returned to Merv.

Samarkand continued to grow as the silk trade flourished in this time of peace. A host of new gardens and parks were added to the city by Jasmine's order, so that she might better secure the loyalties of the people and strengthen the rule of Samarkand and the will of the Mullahs. All who saw the city marveled at its beauty, its grand mosques, and the growing piety of its people. Jasmine also sent about strengthening the defenses of her kingdom and, in a surprise pronouncement she declared that the Karakhanate would abolish slavery. This nothing less than amazed and stunned the merchants, upon whom most of Samarkand's wealth was built. "Without slaves, how can we make money?" Surely, the Khaness has gone mad! But, alas, it was not true. In consultation with her mullahs and after reading the "Decree of the Broken Chain" as issued by Mustarshid years back, Jasmine decreed that slavery was hereby abolished in the Karakhanate. She posted the Ilig version of the Decree in all the mosques of the land to be read to the faithful. And emissaries were dispatched to the Kalif to discuss implementing the Broken Chain. Despite posting the decree throughout the land, enforcement proved to be sporadic at best. Mainly, the slave markets remained open, and only a few slaves were bought and freed. What enforcement did exist was generally bought off by bribes from rich silk merchants, and corruption grew rapidly. After a few years, Jasmine's efforts at eliminating slavery proved ill-timed and unwelcome. Her councilors, fearing the growth of illicit elements in the country and a rising opposition of merchants urged Jasmine to postpone, or soften, her Decree.

After returning from his successful Khwarzm mission, to a hero's welcome, Ali Bakash fell ill and died soon after. The entire country mourned his passing.

Shahdom of Khwarzim

Mustapha, Khazarim-shah

DIPLOMACY:

The Shah reveled in his wealth and listened closely to the words of Samarkand.

The Turki

Charan the Cruel, Great Khan of the Turki and the Polovotsy, Feared Lord of the Steppe, "The Chain"

DIPLOMACY: City of Saratov(ea)

Jebe, Great Khan of the Polovotsy, died early in 1131 from a poisoned batch of goat's milk and was succeeded by his third cousin Charan. Charan was ever bit as wise and vicious a ruler as Jebe had been and he decided it was time to show these upstart Khans from the east who was really the boss. He first commanded the Nogai clans to subjugate the western farmers of Suvar - a strange tribe of blonde smelly barbarians. The Suvari were killed by the Nogai to the last man, their villages and lands taken, and their people brought back to Charan enslaved. He immediately sent them to work in the salt mines in their former land, to better enrich his kingdom.

Having impressed the westerners of his might and cruelty, Charan then withdrew the stick and offered the carrot: across the Volga, within sight of the killings and destruction in Suvar, to the city of Saratov, he sent emissaries demanding tribute and allegiance. To the lords of Saratov, this seemed like a God-send. Petrified by the hordes of Yasi encamped outside their city walls, and the predatorial Russians to their West, what better way to protect themselves than to ally with a third party? Gladly the Saratov accepted the Khan's generous offer of sparing their lives for tribute, and not coincidentally, asked the Khan, oh so politely, if he wouldn't mind parking his nomads somewhere between Saratov and the Yasi? The region of Mordva became a land of tension and intrigue as three hostile powers eyed each other very suspiciously.

Charan, however, was far off in the east, running rampage over a number of tribes who had, earlier, pledged tribute to him in a vain attempt to hold off his anger. No, Charan was not pacified by mere tribute. He was indeed a cruel and cunning Khan. He ordered the Lord of the Uze to call up his men and go to enslave the Suzdali far in the north. Obeying his sworn master, Prince K'lit did so. He got all the way to the lands of Nogai before he heard of Charan's betrayal of his trust: Soon after K'lit left, Charan visited the Uze tribes to show just what he thought of their measly grain and gold shipments each year. The 16,000 horseman strong nomad army proceeded to round up every single man woman and child they could to work in the salt mines. When K'lit returned with his troops, frothing at the mouth for Charan's guts, his army was smashed to pieces and K'lit was killed. His head was stuck on a pike at the head of Charan's troop train.

Charan then proceeded to deliver the same cruel fate of enslavement to the Kazan, Khirgizi, Chorasmians. When he came to the Turgay, however, he ran into the Golden Horde who had lived on the lands of Turgay, Tabolsk, and Tarhain for decades. On the plains, the 14,000 Turki riders faced, perhaps for the first time in their memory, a true horde, a horde that lived and breathed on the frozen steppes, and Charan realized that this was not going to be a push-over like the others

when he counted their numbers: over 21,000 riders. Ah well, perhaps it was a good day to die! The two nomadic armies slammed into each other like opposing Tsunamis, and the earth shuddered. Charan's men brutalized the Golden Horde armies, who retreated like beaten dogs to Tarhain to regroup. Charan, as was his due, demanded his tribute from them. The horde delivered it, but then reneged as Charan, unsatisfied with their gold, ordered the enslavement of the women and children of the Turgay. The Golden Horde vowed to continue to fight.

Taking every last able body out of Turgay, Charan left that wasted land to its own devices. He took with him a vast number of enslaved tribes to camps in Otrar. Then, remembering his mother's tales about returning revenants and ghosts seeking revenge, he turned back towards the Golden Horde lands to finish them off lest they come for him in some future time. Thundering back into Tarhain, the Golden Horde welcomed the chance to once again face Charan who slaughtered their children. Though a more even battle, the skills of Charan won out again, and he laughed long and hard as he returned to Otrar with the families of the Golden Horde in tow. He returned west through the domains he conquered. There was some confusion, as he demanded his tribes watching the salt mines rejoin him. His counselors urged him to reconsider, since the subject peoples would surely rise up and throw off the Turki yoke.

The Kama Bulgar people, seeing the cruelty of the Khan, threw off Charan's yoke. No more would they pay tribute to a man such as he! The outer lands too brewed with talk of independence. Such talk was stifled for the moment by the fact that nobody who was over the age of 10 was doing anything but working in the salt mines...

The Yasi



Tzoemir Khan, Destroyer of the Khazars, Stormblade

DIPLOMACY:

Tzoemir Khan was content to survey his vast domains and the hordes under his command. The Yasi migrated out of Alan, Khazar, Kuban, and Vasi, and Mordva, where the horde was encamped, remained tense as the tribes pondered their next move. Persia threw off Yasi control.

Then, just to make things more exciting, the Turki rode into Mordva, and convinced the Saratov that allying with them, not the Yasi or the Russians was the smartest thing to do. Everything became quite tense in the area, and each side waited for the other to blink.

Ar Rawwadid Emirat at Tabriz

Mikai'l Alueddin, yabghu of the Rawwadid

DIPLOMACY: None

The Rawwadid were content to watch the machinations of their neighbors, and chuckle at the chaos engulfing them.

MIDDLE EAST**Mercenaries: 10i, 5c, 40xc, 9w, 10t****Jamis of Cyprus: 6 cbt rating, 20w, 42ht, 10c (Islamic hires only and no Egyptian hire)****The ‘Abasi Kalifate***Mustarshid, Judge of Judges, the True Kalif***DIPLOMACY:** Damascus(mn), Syria(ch), Egypt(ab), Alexandria(mn), Mansura(mn), El'Gitar(ab), Fai-yum(ch), memphis(mn), Mt. Sinai(ch), Jerusalem(ch), El'Uqsor(ch)

Mustarshid continued to feel the pressures from governing the vast realm of the Caliph. It was one thing to extend Sharia influence over a few mosques here and there, and let the rest throughout the Dar-al-Islam govern themselves as they wished. However, since the Caliphate had adopted more rigid controls and adherence to Sharia over the past centuries, it was obligated, by Allah, to ensure that the mullahs across the House of God all adhered to the proper teaching. Thus, for some time, the Caliph had been engaged with the Judges to codify and strengthen the teachings. Mustarshid would not return to previous eras where Allah was worshiped by different peoples in different ways. What was the House of God if not an inclusive one? And what was Allah if not unforgiving? Indeed, in the past, there had been heresies and Mustarshid was determined to never let that occur again. Thus, his extension of the rule of the Caliph over the mosques far and wide continued rapidly. But as more and more Mosques came to swear allegiance to the Abasi Sharia, it became clear that the old ways of rule were not sufficient. Unlike Baghdad where Mustarshid had spent most of his years studying, the Mosques throughout the rest of the Dar-al-Islam were generally run by specific families and clans that had tended to them for generations. He recalled, indeed, when he was traveling as a young judge through the lands of Syria and Egypt that he was astounded when he was told that the daily prayers for the Mosques were the responsibility, not of the most learned in the Holy Qu'ran, but of certain families. This thought appalled Mustarshid. How can Allah be worshipped correctly if it is not the judges who recite the call to prayer, but hereditary clans? And these thoughts all came back to Mustarshid now, years later. As an old man, he continued to be thwarted by the lower mosques - he would issue proclamations on the true way to worship, and they would be ignored or circumvented because they did not fit in with local customs! An abomination. But, looking back on his youth, he now realized why, in part, this was. The Mullahs must be the ones to say the call to prayer, they must be the ones to tend to the houses of worship, and not others. And it was no accident that the mullahs were the ones who owed allegiance to Mustarshid, and not to local interests. A plan was conceived of in which the tier of High Judges directly under Mustarshid would owe allegiance to him. The judges under them would report to the High Judges, and so forth. Eventually, the clans would be taken out of the picture, since the proclamations he put forth would work down through the High Judges. And so, after a number of reorganizations Mustarshid was able to put such a scheme into practice. There were some holdouts but Mustarshid was cunning enough to not raise too many alarms at the local level. And, his work bore great fruit, for he and others found great success in bringing a vast number of mosques under central Abassi control, primarily in the Empire of Egypt.

When the Al Mohad came streaming out of the desert, the Caliph was pleased beyond measure to see such a vast host of the faithful. The Judge Akbar was sent to guide them to the Holy Mecca and

Tigris-Euphrates valley had been lucratively sought by the Lebanese...

As the new Emir consolidated his power, he instituted a series of reforms of the old system under Jord'na. Jord'na, while a capable administrator, had relied primarily upon personal connections and family ties to keep the kingdom together. Akbar, however, was little known in the court, did not engender a lot of respect, and had few friends outside of his immediate family. And, he was paranoid, and convinced that his realm was in danger. To ensure loyalty, then, he set up a system of royal titles and privileges that were required for access to the higher offices and positions. In this way hoped to rationalize the loyalty of the nobles and mullahs to the office of the Emir rather than simply to the person of the Emir. In order to differentiate his realm from that of Jord'na's, he dropped the title of Emir and was crowned Sultan by the High Mullahs.

The Hatamid Emirat

Rukh al-Din, Sultan of Damascus

DIPLOMACY: NE

A particularly extreme form of Sharia was adopted throughout the empire in order to enhance the control of the Sultan and strengthen the rule of the Mullahs. There were rumours of an impending invasion by the Buwayids, but these proved, so far, unfounded. News that the war with the Buwayids was officially over were welcomed in many circles, but the Sultan remained skeptical.

Hayrenik'un Armeniam

Hayrenik Mecatun Hieriea, Queen of the First Men

DIPLOMACY:

The Queen and the kingdom entire celebrated the birth of a boy-child (finally!) and then, a year later, another girl. As part of the celebration, a large number of new churches and shrines were built throughout the land, and the Queen issued the Proclamation of Christ. This proclamation gave sweeping new powers to the clergy throughout the land and extended their influence. Foreign gold enriched the kingdom, and gave the queen further resources to carry out her plans. The most ambitious of which was the construction of the city of Hierancyra in the highlands of Psidia. What was originally a small trading village at the crossroads of minor trade routes grew, with help from the Queen, into a bustling town and then a largish city in a lush valley. Soon, it's uniquely flavoured dates and cloths became famous throughout most of Armenia, and the Queen had a special set of robes commissioned from their markets as a sign of her favour. Hierancyra became, in fact, the largest concentration of people in all of Armenia, and the center of that nation's commerce and wealth.

The Cappodocian allies of the Queen, though loyal, remained stubbornly wary of joining the kingdom fully. In fact, Naxarar Leontius of Cappadocia met his end in a grisly way during a duel with his wife's brother's younger son whom he had insulted during a celebration rite. The young man put his sword all the way through the Naxarar, killing him. The Cappodocians, always a cautious lot, refused to renew their alliance with Armenia but did remain tributary to the Queen.

The Rum Khanate of Turkiye

Malikshah, Khan of the Seljuq Turks

DIPLOMACY:

The Khan continued his harsh domestic policies, squeezing every last shekel out of the populace. The merchants groaned, and trade all but ceased due to the ruinous taxation. The economy, luckily, didn't actually collapse but the commoners certainly couldn't tell the difference. Basic necessities skyrocketed in price, and a series of minor tax revolts and peasant rebellions broke out. They were put down, but the grievances of the people remained. The Khan lowered taxes slightly, but still they remained high and his counselors urged him to be more cautious. Instead, the Khan drew his bodyguards closer to him, almost daring anyone to threaten his rule. In fact, he laughed at the possibility, and spent much of his time with his wife. This union resulted in the birth of a girl, and a second son (who, unfortunately, died soon afterwards).

But the monies squeezed from the nobles, peasants and farmers continued to pour into the various projects of the Khan. The courier road from Lydia to Isauria was finished amid great fanfare. In Phrygia, across the pass from Hierancyra, the small town of Kor was the only spot in the Khanate where money was being made and not being taken by the Khan's men. As a result, a wealthy trade in Hierancyran cloth grew up there, and soon the village was more properly a city.

Suleiman returned from his grand marriage to the beautiful Mahia of Oran. Although the headstrong Mahia spent most of her time practicing her swordplay, their union eventually did produce a child - a daughter with green eyes and jet-black hair much like her mother.

The Lands of Lydia were a virtual battleground of religious intrigue and scandal, as priests and Mullahs from all over Europe and the Middle East battled it out for the souls of the people there.

Oriental Roman Empire

Basil III Bolgarophilos, Avtokrator of the Romans

DIPLOMACY:

Emperor Basil sent to his fellow Romans in the West his best wishes and an ikon of the Madonna in support of their faith in the Roman Pope. Missionaries continued their lonely work in the Crimea, trying, again, to bring the Word to the Orthodox there. Prince Herakles was stricken with a fit of terrible depression upon the death of his wife during the birth of his child (who also died). The royal family decreed an entire month of mourning throughout the Empire.

Alarmed by the actions of the Egyptians on Crete, and the subsequent slaughter of Christians there, the fleet set out with Andreas Comnenus at its head to patrol the seas and make sure the Egyptians did not try anything funny. Aghast at the enslavement of Cretans, Andreas was beside himself with rage and sympathy for their cause. All Byzantium was overjoyed to hear of the successful revolt by the Cretans (and not a bit beside themselves after hearing of the troubles the Egyptians were having at home).

THE RED SEA AND ENVIRONS

Mercenaries: General pool: 10i, 5c, 5s, 5w, 5t

The Empire of Egypt (formerly Al Fatimid Caliphate al Qaira)

Badr II, Sultan of Egypt, Calif of the West

DIPLOMACY:

The Sultan Omar was a man with a variety of experiences. He had risen up from less-than-perfect situations in his early life to lead one of the greatest bastions of the House of God the world had ever seen. He had seen great men come and go, and empires rise and fall all within his lifetime. He knew full well what the Mullahs meant when they spoke of the transitory nature of life here as one of service to Allah but still merely a prelude to service in the afterlife. Now, in the twilight of his years, he spent much of his sleeping hours wandering in his olive garden, restless. Something was bothering him, and his sleep had been disturbed for days. Perhaps because Omar was an old man, and ill, and perhaps because in recent years his love of history kept coming back to him, or perhaps it was just the simple yet powerful words of the Mullahs...but he kept thinking...Empire rise and fall, men great and weak alike all return to Allah and leave this world. All changes and dissolves in the mists of time. Or does it? That is when it came to him. The Kalifate may be young in the eyes of time, but what of what the Kalifate was made of? Was not Arabic the Divine Language? And surely it was permanent? And what of the knowledge and ideas that Allah brought to men? Was not the land in the time of the Prophet a different land? The cow-worshipping heathens think life and time is but a great circle. Hah! They are truly fools. Can they not look into the past and see that there is such a thing as progress? By the Will of Allah, is not al Qaira a greater city today than it has ever been? In Omar's youth it was but a fishing village, now it is a bustling metropolis. And is not the knowledge of the Mullahs and scribes greater than ever before? Kingdoms may come and go, but surely knowledge lives on? And, if knowledge can live on, traditions can too, for they are, in part, knowledge are they not? And if traditions can survive the passage of time, then anything can. Even if the Kalifate should perish in a hundred years or one year, what I do now can reach into the future, it can reach out to my descendants over the span of time! The Kalifate is but a vehicle! I understand now! Praise Allah!

And with this vision of the future of the kingdom, Omar was transformed. He was like a man possessed of demonic energy when he addressed his councilors the next day. "Hundreds of years ago, there was, on this spot, a Library of great renown. There were also men, learned men who brought together ideas and books from the entire world to learn from them. What those men created lives on in each of us today, whether we know it or not. You, Loyal Ahmud, do you not love to gaze at the stars with your devices? Do you have any idea how those devices came to be? True, it was Allah's will that they be fashioned, but it was men who first understood Allah's will to do so! And you, Noble Mohammed, does your son not enjoy riding in the swift sailing ships across the water to Crete? Surely you know then that it was earlier men that learned how to sail beyond sight of land? Men and kingdoms who came before us. And you, Baru, tell me, before you leave for your far off homeland, are your beloved robes not made with techniques passed down from the ancients? They understood Allah's will and design and created these things you enjoy. Without them, we

would not be here. We could not lay stones upon stones to build the great monuments, or fashion the metals for our swords, or create the paper for the Holy Qu'ran. Those ancient lands and kingdoms may be gone, but their legacies and knowledge live on - in us! Now, I ask all of you...what will we pass on to bring greater glory to Allah? In the mists of time, we may be forgotten, but what we do may not be. We have hewn a great empire out of Egypt. Today we begin to create something even greater. Today we will begin to pass on to the future our ideas and our knowledge. In that way we shall truly achieve Allah's will! Go forth. We start with a great library in the name, not of Fatamid, but of Egypt. And Egypt shall be a land great in power as well as learning. In this time of conflict and strife, Egypt shall rebuild that beacon of learning so that knowledge shall shine once more upon the world. Let the Great Library of Alexandria be rebuilt!"

But this new path did not sit as well with certain others as it did with Omar. The traditionalists, composed primarily of a large and very influential group of Mullahs from Petra and Sinai, had long opposed any hint of association with unorthodox beliefs. Their ways were quite hostile to any connection with a past that was not completely in accordance with Sharia, much less not Islamic. Until now, they had always had an ally in Omar, for he had been the staunchest defender of orthodox Islamic custom. In large part, what he didn't realize was that such customs provided one of the many glues that held the Fatamid empire together. The empire was vast, and composed of a wide variety of tribes and peoples, with tens if not hundreds of dialects of Arabic and other languages. However, there had always been a common denominator among all the peoples and that was Islamic custom, rooted in Sharia. And the guardians of much of this custom were the Sinai Mullahs. Revered by the common people, their word was often law especially when the Fatamid authorities were absent (which was really the norm in the smaller villages and outlying areas of the kingdom). Strangely, Omar didn't see the storm brewing at all. Work was begun on his great library and a dozen proclamations were issued from the royal palace - including a momentous decision: the renaming of the land to the Kingdom of Egypt. Dropping the Fatamid title infuriated a great number of others, members of the great houses and guardians of the Fatamid ways, who soon began to listen more closely to the Mullahs. Finally the pot boiled over when, while watching a parade with his counselors, a groups of fanatical soldiers leapt out of a passing wagon, and peppered the royal pavilion with spears. They then ran up to a dazed Omar and stabbed him repeatedly before being torn apart by the palace guards.

Soon, open civil war was breaking out across the kingdom, with the Mullahs pressing for an end to all non-orthodox ideas and the installation of a Sultan who would revere Allah properly. The Lords Abu'Dal and Mustafa, on their way to discuss border problems with the Bedouins in Libya, were set upon by fanatics and violently murdered in the name of Allah. Admiral Jamis, who had just arrived in Crete with the entire fleet and much of the army (and who was busy rounding up all able bodied men to sell them in slavery elsewhere) declared that Omar had succumbed to the madness of rule and Satanic machinations and that to retain Sharia his son, Badr II, must not be allowed to take the throne. "This sacrilegious madness must end! For years I have been distraught at the freedoms Omar took with the will of Allah. He was my Lord, but Allah is my Master! I will not swear fealty to Badr. I will, instead, restore the glory of Allah to the Fatamids!" And with that Jamis declared for the Sinai Mullahs. In his new found zealously, he slaughtered the Christian Cretans he had rounded up so far and set sail for Alexandria with the fleet, abandoning Crete to it's fate. (this scene was recorded by a French Monk who happened to be present in Crete at the time). Having thus been barely

avoided slavery, the Cretans rose up against the Fatamid forces left behind and a mob of 2200 angry Cretans massacred the 800 Fatamids there, delivering Crete from Islamic rule.

Having now gained the allegiance of a strong leader with an army, the Mullahs felt emboldened enough to push for the ouster of Badr. Open warfare broke out in the countryside, but the Mullahs were surprised by the strength of the Egyptian state, and a number of revolts were crushed brutally by Badr's troops. Ad'Diffah repudiated any ties to Egypt immediately - the Bedouins there never had much respect for the city-dwellers in any case.

However, this nomad-urban split was clear as the City of El' Gitar remained true to Badr while the countryside degenerated into chaos. Soon, El'Gitar became unto a city under siege, as the nomads ruled the wastes outside the walls. The people inside had little recourse but to buy food and supplies from passing merchants, rather than face the fanatical nomads. The defenses of the city got a boost from the organizational skills of a dark-skinned man on his way west. The Sinai Mullahs based out of the Holy Mosque of Mount Sinai declared the independence of that land, and their influence and agents led Ghebel-Gharib to do so as well. But, much of the potential rebels were biding their time, for all knew that it would come down to a test of arms between Jamis and Badr. That test was not long in coming. Jamis blockaded the harbor of Alexandria, and proceeded to unload just west of the city. Badr, reacting swiftly to this challenge to his rule, sortied forth and laid into Jamis men. Loyal Egyptian troops numbered 12,500 horse, 4,000 foot, and assorted support elements still in the city. Against this were the 8,600 horse of Jamis. A series of mistakes led Jamis to become separated from his men, and he watched helplessly as his troops were slaughtered to a man on the shore. Knowing he could not hope to take Alexandria with his remaining fleet, he and his men fled to Cyprus, when word reached them that it had declared for the Sinai Mullahs. When they reached there, however, they got quite a shock when they saw the land in an uproar and the people frantic. Some sort of strange pirates had been operating in the area for months, and had recently descended upon Cyprus like a plague of locusts. They manned ships the likes of which had never been seen before, and they were obviously heretics from their smells and stench of pig-fat. Jamis, settling in Cyprus, vowed he would track down the pirates.

Once Jamis had been taken care of, Badr was able to purge most of the opposition to his plan and the Kingdom settled down a bit. The Mullahs remained active in Sinai, but they could be dealt with later. To honor his father's plan, he continued with the construction of the library in Alexandria. It was truly a marvel to behold and surely, after they felt safe, scholars from the world over would come to study and wonder at it. As a precaution, Badr oversaw the construction of a series of castles and forts in Egypt. To further consolidate his rule, Badr elevated his sister Nafara and his brother Zahid to the sheikh status, and bequeathed them with the royal writ. To appease the Mullahs, he consented to the dispatch of their followers to Lydia and Suakin in order to bring those lands into the Dar-al-Islam.

The entire country was scared out of its wits when the Al Mohad rampaged through Egypt itself,

and then left onwards towards Mecca. Badr was tense as he discussed agreements with the smelly nomads, taking care not to show any fear of them. The local economy of Alexandria fairly burst asunder, however, as the nomads dwelling outside of the city had to eat something. A brief famine occurred as rich merchants, hoping to make a quick profit, bought up all the available grain leaving none left for any but those who could pay their exorbitant prices. Crisis was averted however when the Al Mohad refused also to pay the merchants prices and instead sharpened their knives and played tattoo on a few of them. In the end, the only result was a bunch of really scared merchants. The ravages of civil war led to a swelling of the cities of El'Uqsor and Al'Qairah with refugees.

The Yemeni Rassid Imam

Yarik ur'Adal, Emir of Yemen, Guardian of the Holy Places

DIPLOMACY:

The Rassids held their breath as the horde of Al Mohad swept through their lands to Mecca. Surprisingly, the nomads proved to be moderately polite in their devotions, and, have performed the Hajj, they left soon after (to everyone's relief).

Ar Rassid Imam as Sa'na

Abu Jahal, "the Jackal", Imam of the Beni Makhzum

DIPLOMACY:

The dry and worthless land of Somali was abandoned by the Rassid. The people there had strange customs and refused to follow any but their own whims. And the land, ha! Worthless. One could not even grow Zakam fruit there.

A number of friendly tribesmen and merchants, induced by Abu Jahal, colonized the barren lands of Zufar, driving the nomads there northward into Muscat. The sudden influx into that land led to even greater pressures on the nomads there for greener pastures...

The Almohad Kaliphat

Yusuf ibn Tumart, Imam of Imams, The Revealed

DIPLOMACY: Ain'Farah/Kosti Horde Block (a), Kordofan/Darfur/Ennedi Horde Block(absorbed), Tihamat/Dahy/Ad'Dahna Horde Block(absorbed), Dharan/Al'Riyadh/Al'Bayad Horde Block(absorbed), As'Summan/Jabal Shammar/Safajah Horde Block (absorbed), Selucia/Circis/Bostra Horde Block (absorbed)

Having seen the glory of Mecca so many years ago, Mohammed had continually urged his brother to take the Hajj. So when Mohammed died in his tent at an ancient age, Yusuf, in a touching act of familial piety embarked the nomads, in their entirety, on the Hajj to Mecca. A few tribes men protested, but they were easily silenced, for Yusuf had cunningly consolidated all power in his hands.

Abandoning Zeila and Suakin, the tribes moved north through Danakil and Adulis, and then took a detour to the west where they rode through the heart of the Dongola empire once again on their way to the Ain Farah tribes of Kosti. Outside of Axum, Prince Lazarus of Dongola declared that

enough was enough: Dongola was no longer to be a path for whatever uncivilized barbarian want to ride through. Riding forth at the head of his troops, he met the tribes and promptly changed his mind. Coming upon the Al Mohad camps he was terrified to see their vastness. His 4400 men were dwarfed by the almost 50,000 nomads (not to mention the hundreds of thousands of tribesmen following along behind). Even if he had been joined by the Prince of Kassala (who had recently died and so was unable to reinforce Lazarus) he still would've been insane to attack. A ritualistic battle was fought, and, having saved his honor (and most certainly his life and that of his men), he let the nomads pass through.

They continued on to the harsh lands of Kosti, where the Ain'Farah allied with them. Moving north, they then crossed into the Outer Sahel and the lands of the Kordofan. The Kordofan were absorbed, as the lure of the Hajj attracted them greatly. With this newfound strength, Yusuf moved north, at the head of tribes more numerous than the world had seen for perhaps hundreds of years.

The tribes arrived in Mecca years later, after having ridden like the wind. The sheer numbers of the nomads far outnumbered those who dwelled in Mecca, and the Mullahs there were heartened to see not only so many faithful but a strong leader at their head. Yusuf indeed was devoted to Allah and ready to spread the word of God. After the Hajj was complete (it took quite a number of months - it takes a long time for so many tribesmen to squeeze into such a small city!) the tribes again moved out into the familiar territory of the desert. They absorbed the nomads of Tihamat, and then those from Al'Riyadh and As'Summan. Finally, they moved into Selucia, within sight of legendary Baghdad. The Selucian Bedouin were also absorbed by the nomads, while the Buwayids looked on in fear. The horde was vast, numberless, like a swarming tide of locust that nothing could stop. Needless to say, as the hordes encamped in the desert of Selucia, kings far and wide feared their next move.

The Makuria Kingdom of Dongola

John, Negusa-Negast of the Makuria

DIPLOMACY: Adulis(t), Gezira(ea)

A massive diplomatic effort to win back the allegiance of Adulis, which bore some fruit. Eonus attempted to find a wife, but his efforts were thwarted by...his death (of severe dehydration due to spending too much time out on the plains hunting). The succession passed easily to his son John.

Lord Lazarus moved to prevent any further nomadic incursions into the realm, and met the Al Mohad once again (see Al Mohad results, above). The prince of Kassala, sent to aid him against the nomads, never made it. A bad batch of Enjera and lentils laid him up for a couple months, and eventually led him to expire. He was succeeded by his son.

Eonus, in one of his last official acts, ceded control of Dongola to the Fatamids of Egypt. However, with the civil war in that Kingdom, the Dongolans became independent, repudiating both the Makuria and the Egyptians.

EASTERN EUROPE

Mercenaries: 15i, 9c, 10xc, 5w, 5t

The Western Roman Empire

Christophoros Augustus, Rex Bulgaris, Duke of Illyricum, Mad Emperor of the Romans

DIPLOMACY:

As the viciousness of the war raging across Europe grew, even the souls of men of pure heart and soul were tried. The concepts of good and evil became muted and grayed as both "sides" engaged in ever greater depravities and cruelties. Indeed, base treacheries and reprisals made even the concept of two sides seem ridiculous. As the Two Popes and their forces committed unspeakable acts across the lands, and the Vikings struck fear into the heart of all across Europe as well as the Mediterranean, those who endeavored to remain neutral found their efforts thwarted. God-fearing and sane men and women tried to remain aloof and retain some measure of peace and civilization amidst the chaos. Unfortunately, Christophoros, although *very* God-fearing, was also *very* far from sane. "Enough of this! Gather my men to me, tonight we ride into the heart of the Evil, and put a stake into the Jabberwock's heart!" Actually, very few knew what the king was really talking about, and, since all but the most imbalanced of his advisors had much communication with him anymore, there was little recourse the soldiers had but to go along with the Mad King's scheme. Poor Gregory the Pious, who had been hiding out in a monastery in Serbia, hoping the King would forget about him, was summoned to the Royal Palace with the command "Bring me my Royal Wizard Gregory!" Arriving, Gregory found that the King's paranoia had reached new heights, and was demanding his guards surround him at all times, and taste everything before it touched his lips. In his more lucid moments, the King still recognized Princess Euthemia, but her entreaties to him went ignored. To Gregory the King declared: "Wizard! You shall lead my Glorious Army into Battle while I shall be by your side the entire time" Gregory sighed. "Uhh.. Yes, milord." "In fact," the King continued, "to make sure that no one gets any bright ideas while we're away teaching the purple ones the strength of Roman steel, *everyone* shall come with us! Hah! What a perfect plan Gregory! I'm so glad you thought of it!"

Everyone in the room, Princess Euthemia, Vlad the Abstainer, and Princess Zoe all went "gulp." The king commanded his guards draw closer to him, eyeing everyone suspiciously.

The troops gathered, over 11,000 horsemen, eager for heretics blood (and every single one of them trying to not make eye contact with the Mad King for fear that he would once again play "ratchet head" with them, a rather nasty little game that usually ended in someone losing their fingers). Into the north they rode, fast as the wind...

Missionaries from Rome, that is, all the monks who could book a ticket out of the war zone, continued their work in Slovenia converting the pagans.

The Varangian Rus of Kiev

Aleksandr II, Prince of Kiev, Lord of the Rus and the Varig

DIPLOMACY:

The realm was petrified with fear. To the west, the chaos that engulfed Europe continually threatened the peace of the realm. But the real danger lay to the East: the Yasi. Thus, advisors and generals were sent hither and yon to bolster the realms' defenses. Grudgingly, tribute was set aside for the nomads, and for years the Rus held their breath. In the end, the monies were set aside, for the Yasi did not move from their encampments at frozen Mordva. Nonetheless, danger did not abate but greatly increased when the Turki nomads showed up in Mordva also. The Saratov nobles, hoping to ally with whatever side could ensure their survival, sided with the Turki. The Rus awaited the next few years with dread.

Prince Aleksandr, father of modern Kiev, passed away in his sleep after a long bout of pneumonia. His son, Thorfinn, assumed the throne without incident in a ceremony that also marked the birth of a new son to his wife, Anya. To inaugurate his rule, Thorfinn declared he would bring the Word to the pagans in the south and sent missionaries to continue their work in Seversk and Tver. They met with much success. The Royal household was dealt another blow when Prince Jarik was found dead in a stream near the palace. The cause of death was unknown. And, as if a curse was stalking the land, a minor bout of influenza claimed both Nikolai and Piotr, two of Thorfinn's most trusted advisors.

Pereslavl was put into the cartographers records once again.

The Ests

Valthan Christoslayer, King of the Estonians and Sons of Rurik

DIPLOMACY:

Valthan kept his realm safe, secure, and untouched by the ravages of war. In less strained times, this would sound boring. In these times of crisis, madness, and destruction however, if a ruler fed his people and kept the peace it was in itself a victory. And thus were the Estonians happy and content with their icy lands.

The Kingdom of Verona (formerly Lithuania and Poland)

Silverweasle, King of the Lithuanians and the Poles, Defensor Christianum

DIPLOMACY:

The Lithuanians were really little more than a group of barbarian tribes who had only recently settled in the area of Poland and Vilna. Much of the conflicts they had with their neighbors resulted from the decades-long encroachments of the Germans and the Bohemians upon what they regarded as their rightful lands. For what was Poland before they came? Nothing! Nothing but a group of frozen forests and untilled land. But, despite having been in Polish land for some time, the Elders of the tribes longed for the old ways and patterns. Their ancient lore, rooted as much in Paganism as Christianity, taught them that to remain in place was to admit defeat and that to move was the only route to true health and manly virtues. Now, with the return of their veterans from the debacle in Bohemia, the elders once again pressed their hands at the Councils. Knowing full well that the Germans (bah!) and the Bohemians would now bend heaven and earth to drive them out of

their homes and slaughter their families, the Elders urged Mikuil: "It is time once again to leave these lands! Soon the lowlanders will be coming for us. Our ancient enemies will once again drive us out of what is rightfully ours, and lay waster to our pride. We must return to whence we came!" Mikuil was in a quandary, for he could not simply ignore the Elders (they held most of the real political power, and his legitimacy was ultimately derived from their assent to his rule) but he could not simply return the tribes to the frozen wastes from which they had come in Antiquity. But, as rumours of a vast Roman army of knights could no longer be ignored, public pleas for a migration grew stronger. Finally, Mikuil assented, and the call to the tribes went out and Lord Felchmore was sent to gather the troops. The tribes gathered quickly, for the Litts and the Poles had never truly given up their old ways. First by tens and then by hundreds, then thousands, they came to Warzawa, numberless tribes. The Duke of Volhynia refused to participate, and the Duke of Silesia (not known for his extremely loyal ways) went home to forswear politics (at least until the next good offer came along).

Mikuil remained convinced that to return to the ancient homelands was not the answer for them. And he waited for a chance. Soon he got it: A group of Roman monks, denouncing the migration as a "pagan ritual" and "satanic" went too far in their cries, and infuriated the locals of a nearby village. In a confused situation a number of people on both sides were killed, and the monks strung up. Whipping up the people, Mikuil showed the gathered tribes that the Roman Pope was once again going to insult and spit upon them. In an orgy of destruction, the mob rampaged across the land, burning Papal churches and hanging monks in the name of the True French Pope. While the mob rapidly got out of control of the Elders, Mikuil was able to redirect their efforts. Their hatred of Rome proved key, and soon even the Elders were going along with the new movement toward the warm lands of the West: toward Italia to teach the Papists a lesson! At the head of tens of thousands of tribesmembers and a great host of horsemen, Mikuil set off...

SCANDIA AND THE OUT ISLES

Mercenaries: 15i, 5s, 11w

Kingdom of Svear

Erik Lughassen, Christian King of Scandia

DIPLOMACY: Skanet(f)

Erik continued to heed the call of the high seas, but in service to the Roman Pope (unlike his more, shall we say, wild and crazy cousins in the rest of the outer isles). Dispatching Lord Torulf (known as "Old as the Hills Torulf") and his men once again, they set sail for the lands of the heretics.

The work on the grand monument to God known as Eriksdomen was finally finished. The massive church and statues looked out across the bay of Upsalla, as an example of the power of God on earth. Awed, the commoners could not help but feel as mites in the presence of greatness. Pilgrims from all across the northern frozen lands trekked to the great site. A group of Lapp came down from the uninhabitable wastes with their reindeers and converted en masse at the sight of the monument.

Erik's men continued to work to bring the subjugated Halland peoples and the Lord of Skanet into

closer ties with the realm. The Lord of Skanet began to see the wisdom of joining Erik's realm when he was offered the hand of Katanna in marriage. A nice wedding was held, but Katanna's mother in law proved to have some very strange habits regarding cats.

The Norwegians

Bjarne Hejarsson, "The Red", King of the Norwegians

DIPLOMACY:

The Norwegians were shocked and amazed to discover a number of Germans running around their country spreading rumours of impending war between Norway and the Normans. They were deported for stirring up trouble. Guntar Axehand, the left-hand man of Bjarne, passed away at an extremely advanced age. But otherwise the realm was quiet. Which qualified Norway for the "sanity club of Europe."

Jarldom of Orkeneyjar

Bjorn Torvalds, vikingrik na orkneyjar

DIPLOMACY: Strathclyde(a), Trondheim(f), Brest(t)

Ivar Bjornnson, gathering the vagabonds and wastrels of the northern seas to him, once again set forth to exact his Viking due! Indeed, by this time, Ivar was the envy of most of the others around him, not only in Orkney, but even in the frozen north. Even the Svear, normally a rather pious people, felt the urge to raid and pillage. As word spread that Ivar had set forth from Kirkval, fear grew all across Europe. Peasant families locked up their daughters, Pierre (you remember Pierre, don't you?) got out his cleavers, and Roman and French Catholics alike held their breath. Ivar laughed long and loud, for as long the Europe burned itself into the ground, his men and ships had virtually free rein over all. Among other things, this led to the Normans caving in to Viking demands for port basing rights in Brest.

A blonde haired blue eyed son was borne to Jane, wife of Osvald, in a particularly gruesome and bloody birth. Jane died, painfully, but the boy kicked and screamed his way out into the world and looked upon it with the same lusty eyes as his father did when he went raiding. Leif brought back from Trondheim a lovely bride to cement the allegiance of that land.

The Commonwealth of Iceland

Olaf Longnose, Jarl of the New Islands

DIPLOMACY:

Olaf became obsessed with the actions of his brethren the Orkneyjar. Drinking with his shield man Erik, he came to long for one last glorious Viking, to show the upstarts how a real Viking is done! Loading up his men and ships, he set off, to the rich and fabled lands of the south which he had barely glimpsed in his last foray there. Ah, but they had been nice, rich places with loot sitting around for the taking! Hah! Assembling a small, swift fleet of long ships and doughty men, he set off once again to warm seas. Feeling alive and youthful once again, he found for the first time in years, the urge to sing and write poetry and composed a commemoration of the greatness to come:

Olaf's Song

They that waken the storm of the spear-points -
For slaughter and strife they are famous -
To the island they bid me for battle,
Nor bitter I think it nor woeful;
For long in that craft am I learned
To loosen the Valkyrie's tempest
In the lists, and I fear not to fight them -
Unflinching in battle am I.

"To batten the black-feathered wound-bird
With the blade of my axe have I stricken
Full thirty and five of my foemen;
I am famed for the slaughter of warriors.
May the fiends have my soul if I stain not
My sharp-edged falchion once over!
And then let the breaker of broadswords
Be borne - and with speed - to the grave!"

"I dread not a death from the foemen,
Though we dash at them, buckler to buckler,
While our prince in the power of his warriors
Is proud of me foremost in battle.
But the glimpse of a glory comes o'er me
Like the gleam of the moon on the skerry,
And I faint and I fail for my longing,
For the fair one at home in the North."

(Excerpted from "Kormak's Saga," *The Life and Death of Cormac the Skald.*)

The Tuath Kingdom of Thomond

Dermond ard-Brien, High King of Eire

DIPLOMACY:

The Thomond wisely sat out the current conflict convulsing the entire civilized world and destroying entire clans and nations...

Saxon Kingdom of England

Robert Godwin, King of the Britons

DIPLOMACY:

The English forces under Aethelsten withdrew from Brittany and returned to England. Those lands were returned to the French Normans in exchange for the Muslim forces leaving Southern France. This little episode was a welcome breath of rationality to the commoners on the ground, and encouraged a few monks and scholars in that perhaps it might lead to a larger and more comprehensive peace agreement. King Godwin, however, spurned such ideas. The English were content to return to their isles and enjoy the peace they had worked for so long to achieve.

Prince John "the Black" was involved in a particularly nasty carriage incident and crushed beneath a stampede of horses. The country mourned, but not too much, for John was always more feared

than loved.

The Duke of Cornwall was granted the title of Knight, and his lands accepted the role of formal vassals under the King.

WESTERN EUROPE

Mercenaries: 45i, 19c, 5s, 4w, 4t ;

Carlo of Pitigliano (L57A, French Catholic)

Das Deutesches Konigsreich

Alexander the Grumpy, King of the Germans, Emperor of the West

DIPLOMACY:

The madness of Europe continued to spread. As entire cities were laid waste and countries destroyed entire, all machinations turned towards the few remaining islands of stability in the world of Christendom. The German lord, Alexander, who had for so long stayed aloof from the conflict, became increasingly disturbed by the reports he read. He was more of a practical than pious man, but even he had limits to what he could take. But he understood all too well what it meant to go to war. He had seen death and destruction in his long life before now, but none could compare to what Christians were doing to Christians today. He read the reports from Burgundy, how that realm had been ripped asunder. He saw how his cousins in Bohemia had their families slaughtered and their cities assaulted. And he saw refugees and veterans from the wars who, seeking peace and sanity, came to Germany to escape the cruel masters of both sides. Alexander knew all too well that wars had a way of decimating not only nations and peoples, but morality and faith. It was for this reason that his heart was so heavy. He could no longer sit by and watch as all Christendom destroyed itself. But he knew well the risks that he and his realm might also succumb not only to death and destruction, but to eternal punishments. It was a fateful day. But he could ignore it all no longer. He prayed for salvation and guidance, and then sat down to write to the Holy Father...

Your Holiness,

It is with a furrowed brow that I write this letter. Perhaps it is the heaviness of this season's wine or the poison in my heart. I sit with only one candle lit in my empty chamber. It was a wish of mine to stay on the side of reason and peace. A desire to walk with righteous step and Godly blessing has guided me away from the soiled history of my people's past. Once we ran through the forests with neither rules nor order. Even our heathen beliefs showed a people wracked with blood lust and anger enough to crucify my very own lord and savior. We prayed to Thunder and War. At one time we even fought against the mighty Roman empire in an act of defiance! It was my wish to stay on a path of virtue. One laid out by the greatest of books...

In this time I walk a sword's edge, and watch it shrink. What's left? Perhaps a spears point? This is not where I wish to guide my people. Because of that, I now shed my Godly ambitions and take my hand from the cross and place it on the hilt. My people's destiny is not to have the Lord's message scribed into our brains or hearts, but rather, to have both consumed by the Devil. This, I fear is a path to loose one's soul. Now I have committed the last of my sins. I will throw down my personal salvation as it represents what cannot be. My people will never be saved.

Your answer is this, yes. I will fight for you. The release I feel! Invigorating! Like a person born again, now born to be a servant of destruction. With scruples removed I can now tell you what my wicked mind has brewed...

Alexander did not look back, for he knew that to do so would lead to madness. But, he prayed, that the way forward was also not the path to insanity. His soldiers gathered, having bid farewell to their families. Would they see them again, or would they die, like so many others, in the mud and muck of France?...

Duchy of Bohemia

Sviatoplus, Duke of Bohemia, Prince of Prague

DIPLOMACY:

Sviatoplus, still smarting from the events of the last few years, bowing in to pressure from the noble families, he fortified the homeland and imposed new levies to raise troops for the defense of the realm. His advisors urged him to put an end to the Lithuanians once and for all, but the nobles refused to allow their sons to be slaughtered again. And, the King, after barely keeping his realm together the last time he tangled with the Litts was eager to use their pleas as an excuse to stay home. Even as word of the Lithuanian migration reached Praha, the reaction was to defend the realm rather than hunt the Litts and the Poles down like the vile dogs they were.

The Anacletan (Paris) Papacy

Roek, bishop of Paris, vicar of Jesus Christ

DIPLOMACY:

Anacletus brooded. True, Paris had been saved, but at what cost? All this because of a rather minor difference in doctrine? No, it was more than that now. He remembered his discussions with his teachers, so long ago, about his ideas of lay investiture and other matters. How they had refused to even consider his ideas, the stubborn fools! Now look what it had come to. Those were different times, a different world. Now, death was all around, everything was scarce and the fissures in the church were hidden no longer. "It will never be the same, no matter what happens to me. It has gone beyond either me or him now. Far, far beyond..." Anacletus got up to go to window, a slight pain in his belly reminding him how old he was...

France (formerly Le Duché de Normandie)

Henry The Young, Duke of Normandy, King of the Western Franks

DIPLOMACY:

As soon as word reached him that the English had left Brittany, the young king Henry - having learned well at the feet of his teachers and father - wasted no time in issuing orders to Guy Berengar ahead of his ride to Paris.

A particularly harsh winter affected the French crops more than expected.

La Milice Du Christ

Robert de Guiscard, Count of Gascony and Orleans, Master Brother of the Militia of the Temple

DIPLOMACY:

Once again calling upon the knights to serve their faith, Robert gathered to him those still present in Paris. "We have now a chance to end this madness once and for all and bring the evil of the Roman Pope to an end! I call upon all of you, ride with me!" The families of the knights and farmers from Poitou remained barracked in Paris, ever fearful of a Roman attack. Rumours spread throughout Paris that the Roman soldiers ate babies and sacrificed them to the Devil, or worse. Riots spread through the city as bread and other staples became scarce.

Le Royaume de Bourgogne

Hugh the Second, Duke of Burgundy, The Prisoner King

DIPLOMACY:

Burgundy was torn asunder. The army in pieces, rumours of heretics on the march running rampant, the streams of refugees and deserters blocked the roads and swelled the cities. Armageddon cults sprung up, and the inquisition descended upon them like vultures. Burnings of witches became common, and there was a marked return to old pagan ways in out of the way villages. Stories of how the heretics ate babies or sacrificed them to the Devil ran through the masses. Common staples such as flour grew scarce as the few with money bought them up to sell at outrageous prices. And all through this, where was the King? Where was the salvation of the common people? Some said he was dead. Some, that he had been tortured mercilessly. Some, that he was insane. And some even said that he had joined the heretics. The Inquisition was busy, very busy, taking care of business in the towns and villages of Burgundy. Many a peasant disappeared in the night...

The old Gilbert de Rossillon was himself driven half mad by the strains of trying to keep the nation intact while at the same time trying to regroup what few men remained under arms to meet the Norman advance. An old man of eighty years he was all that was stopping the outright disintegration of Burgundy. With Bishop Lothar, he awaited the arrival of His Holiness at the encampment outside Lyon. Hard rains for two straight weeks had turned the ground into a slurry of mud and blood, and a mudslide onto the camp last night had driven three men insane as their dead comrades washed up in front of them. Gilbert looked out of his tent, wiping the mud from his eyes...the world has indeed gone mad, he thought.

When His Holiness met with the generals, Gilbert agreed to the plans, but he could not help but wonder: "how much of this can I take, before my body refuses and my soul is damned? And what of Burgundy? If she survives, what will she be like when all this is done?"

Lombard Kingdom of Italy

Geowulf of Vinicenza, King of the Lombards

DIPLOMACY: Carinthia(fa)

"This is utter madness!" shouted Geowulf at his advisers. "My so-called allies abandon me, both Popes have gone mad, and my realm is split asunder. My government a shambles, and danger at every turn. Scribes, take this down and have it delivered to both Rome and Paris: I, Geowulf of Vinicenza, hereby declare that the Lombard realm withdraws from conflict in this Peace of God. We are hereby neutral, but will defend our sovereignty forcefully and without hesitation. Fight your wars and kill your people if you must, but do it elsewhere." The message, dispatched, was a risky ploy. By declaring his neutrality Geowulf there were two possibilities: either both sides in this chaotic mess of a war would leave his realm and people alone, or both sides would see betrayal and deception. It soon became all too clear that the latter was the more likely course of action. After thirty years of war, the chance for compromise, much less any hint of rational thought, was indeed slim. The thought of neutrality, nonexistent. Reading reports of the approach of Salerno forces, Geowulf sighed, and ordered the defenses of Venice prepared, food and water stocked, and the lagoon fortified. His messages to Dominic went unheard, as did those to his former "allies."

Carlo of Pitigliano, slipping north to Verona at the head of the few remaining men in the Peasants Army, was shocked by the actions of his Doge. Carlo was known for his fanatical allegiance to the Lombard state, but he saw Geowulf's declaration as a betrayal of all he cared about. Abandoning his commission, he accepted the life of a disillusioned mercenary, his idealism yet one more casualty of this war.

Prince Marcus found a beautiful young wife in Carinthia, sealing the feudal allegiance of that land just as it was threatened!

The Papal States

Clement III, bishop of Rome, vicar of Jesus Christ, successor of the prince of the apostles, supreme pontiff of the universal Church, primate of Italy, archbishop and metropolitan of the Roman province, sovereign of the Papal States, servant of the servants of God, The Prisoner

DIPLOMACY:

The camp was in tatters, soldiers lay scattered about, crying out in pain, and rats run amok among the bodies. Whereas just last year they had been an army of boys, now they were truly men, but men embittered and disgusted. While the faith of the Cardinals and priests every day grew stronger, those of the men in the army grew weaker. They began to see themselves simply as tools of greater powers, caring for naught but their own. Rumours of mutinies and disobedience spread through the ranks, and even the pure of heart could not stop their eyes and ears to the depravities going on around them.

The camps, full of rabid dogs feasting on the flesh of plague victims, were visions of hell but on Earth. Crosses lay face down in the mud, and men carried trophies with them - trophies of rings, and gold teeth from the French they had killed. None asked how they got them.

And the Pope was furious, towering above all like some vengeful angel, was furious. What had started out as some upstart heresy now threatened all of Christendom. It was time to bring this to a close. Drawing the Inquisition nearer to him (as he feared greatly for his own life) he laid out his plans with a fearsome glint in his eyes. Never before had his cardinals and dukes seen such anger in him. Truly the world had gone mad, if the Pope himself was capable of such acts as they saw planned that day. "I have finally received word from our loyal Catholic allies. We will end this, now, all of it. Paris will be ours. We will burn it to the ground and we will put an end to these French heretics in a sea of blood. They will all die by the Grace of God! And Italy, I care not about: that is a matter for the Italians. I will put an end to the heretics, let them put their own house in order..."

Norman Principality of Salerno

Dominic de Cagnano, Duke of Naples, King of the Italians

DIPLOMACY: NE

Dominc read the Pope's letter with relish. "He has given me the right to handle matters in Italy as I see fit. He cares not for what happens here! Ha! Now we shall be able to destroy the Lombards once and for all, and unite Italy under the Neapolitan flag." With these words to his men (as well as the subjugated Lombards, just to rub it in) Dominic preceded to hire every condiettere he could get his hands on and march out of Vincencia towards Venice to put an end to the Lombard upstarts once and for all...

In Campania, Bohemond remained alert to the presence of foreign ships bound for Italy (especially ones piloted by blondes with names like Erik). Giotto returned to Campania for a few years to get the records in order and adjust taxes, and then returned south again to continue the parley with the Sicilians.

El Reino de Leon y Navarre

Sancho V, The Young, King of Leon, King of Navarra, Prince of Romagna

DIPLOMACY:

King Sancho tried desperately to keep his realm from being overwhelmed by the powerful forces ebbing and flowing around him. He spent long hours in what remained of the royal palace, trying to stave off the chaos and writing dozens of letters a day to the heads of Europe, seeking support for his land and people. When he received news of the death of Pedro he was shattered. All his attempts to win his freedom had been for naught, and the experience caused him to fall into a fit of depression. Still, there was a kingdom to defend, and so he once again readied his men and steeled his realm for the onslaught, all the while longing for Spain...

Norman Spain

Hugert, Baron of Castellon and Valencia

DIPLOMACY:

The tide turned for Valencia, as accords reached with their Islamic neighbors led to the liberation of their homeland. A great fanfare awaited the returning nobles. The families

found that much of the people, disillusioned by the constant wars between the Popes and the Muslim occupation, had turned away from their faith. Many of the churches were abandoned and decrepit, as the farmers under the occupation had no time for such matters, instead concentrating on day to day survival under Islamic rule. The collapse of faith in the homeland disturbed the Baron greatly. To address this, he joined in the call for a Synod to be held in Cherbourg.

However, those were matters for another day. The Baron continued his war on the Papal forces with the help of the Ummayyads. He marched his men across the Pyrennes into Languedoc where the Muslims turned over the area and the city of Marseille to him. Tancred spent his time thenceforth in meeting with the hostile neighborhood and guild leaders to attempt to convince them of the legitimacy of the French Pope. It was this sort of parley (which met with little real success) that led a Marseille patriot to jump down upon Tancred from a balcony in an inn where he was holding a "voluntary" meeting with the Colliers Guild. The crazed fanatic stabbed Tancred seven times before the stunned guards could react and chop his head off. Back in Burgos, Hugert assumed the throne upon hearing the tragic news. Hugert also christened his son Juan, which raised a few eyebrows among the Norman nobility, for it was a Spanish name and not a Norman one.

The Akramid Sultanat

Mohamar, Sultan of Granada

DIPLOMACY:

The Sultan laughed long and hard at the depredations of the heretical Europeans. He was confident that peace had come to Iberia and all that remained was a bit of "mopping up."

So he used the Christian slaves of the realm to hew paths through the mountains as the a grand road to connect Seville and Cordoba was begun. And, since he felt ready to settle down a bit, in a magnificent ceremony he wed the captive Princess of Portugal in the small fishing town of Lisbon. The arrival of the hundreds of retainers and party-goers led to the town to increase greatly in size, and a number of mansions grew up that overlooked the coastline. All in all, it was quite a nice ceremony among pleasant surroundings, despite the continued occupation of the region. Unfortunately, the wedding night of the old sultan proved to be too strenuous, and his heart gave out. There was some speculation that the bride had done him in. In any case, the pavilions set up for the wedding were used two days later in a somber burial ceremony. Lord Mohamar took the throne and, in a gesture of respect for Achmed, allowed the peoples of Talavera and Badajoz their freedom, as well as turning over the city of Fez to the Ummayyads, but instead went independent. Abdul removed the troops Talavera and took them north, to put an end to the Leonese presence in Iberia. Asturius was conquered, but only after a stiff fight. The realm seemed to be almost at peace again. At least until they got a few visitors...

Lord Pedro of Leon, held captive for all these years by the Akramids, finally succumbed to unknown Islamic tortures and deprivations according to news reports by Leonese patriots. According to Mohamar's men, Pedro died peacefully in his sleep while resting at a seaside villa after having accepted Allah into his heart. In either case, he was dead.

Ummayyad Sultanat al Oran

Muawiya, Sultan of the West, Emir of Oran and Mahidia

DIPLMACY: Cheliff (nt)

The Muslim state of Oran, too, seemed on the verge of peace. They remained cautious, however, and did not cease to be vigilant. With eyes on the backs of their heads, they backed out of Languedoc when word reached them that the English had indeed abandoned their imperial ambitions in France. They gave the lands of Languedoc to Tancred of Castellon when he arrived in late 1131. The people of Languedoc and Marseille, fervent supporters of the Roman Pope, felt they had gone from the frying pan to the fire, exchanging barbarous Muslim overlords for heretical witches of the Anti-pope. Muawiya, in a further show of support for what could only be some sort of agreement, liberated Valencia. It immediately returned to the control of Tancred, and there was a great amount of rejoicing by all. The homeland was restored! Al'Karras drew back into Catalonia, ready for a Papist assault, but none came.

A ship carrying learned Mullahs and wise men from far off docked briefly in Mahidia to escape a bad storm. Their vessel damaged, the dark-skinned passengers took refuge in local Mosques before continuing their journey.

THE PEACE OF GOD

1115 ~ 1135

France, The Paris Papacy, Lithuania-Poland, La Milice du Christ, and Norman Valencia, the Akiramids

vs.

The Kingdom of Svear, Duchy of Burgundy, The Papal States, Duchy of Bohemia, Norman Salerno, The Western Roman Empire, Germany, Leon Y Navarre

Trying desperately to stay on the sidelines:

Lombardy

Trying to keep the war going so they can keep looting:

OrkneyJar Vikings, Icelandic Vikings

Get out your maps ladies and gentlemen, here we go again...<GM takes deep breath here, drinks fifth cup of Gunpowder tea>

January 1131: In Paris, Anacletus sat hunched over as his pen rode along the page. "Once again" he thought, "I must try to end this and reconcile all of us." Or, perhaps, he was thinking "It is time once again to deceive the great deceiver, for it is the only way to bring peace to the land." Either way, we will never know for as he rose, and handed to Cardinal Roek his writings, he said to him: "Here. It is done." And, a faint breeze passed over his vision, he looked up, and collapsed in a heap. Shock, anger, terror, and panic ran through the Cardinal's minds. Acting quickly, Roek declared that "though Anacletus may be called back to God, the Paris Papacy must not surrender. Not at this crucial juncture! God has brought us here for a purpose, and we cannot forsake our duties." By sheer force of will and tireless energy, Roek convinced the Anacletan Cardinals that to submit to Rome now would surely mean the end of their cause and, not incidentally, their certain deaths as heretics. In the end, the Cardinals that were present in the city hastily convened in one of the few buildings in Paris that was still somewhat dry and not as overrun with rats. It was not a surprise really that they elected Cardinal Roek to take Anacletus' place. A significant minority of Bishops wanted to go all the way and name Roek Pope Clement the Third, but that would have forever rent the church in two. Even Roek, militant though he was, still held out a glimmer of hope for reconciliation (as long as it was on Paris' terms).

As soon as word reached the young boy-king Henry in Normandy, he knew all his plans could be for naught if the Paris Papacy and his people were to see this as a sign of weakness for their cause. In large part, the only thing that held the Parisian Catholics together was the strength of will of Anacletus and Baron Fulk. But now Anacletus was dead. And Fulk's power had ostensibly passed to Henry. But Henry was so young, and so unproven. He saw it in the eyes of his advisors, and in muted whispers down dark halls. Already there had been defections from the household by those hoping for leniency from the Romans. Henry needed a way to show he was not merely a boy, but a man of power. An idea came to him, and he summoned his retainers and household, and the fastest horse available.

As he rode toward Paris, a somber scene was playing itself out. The city turned out en masse for the funeral of Anacletus. A drizzly, dreary day, full of sadness and gloom. As the crowds gathered, a communal wailing gripped them. They wailed not only for Anacletus, but for the loss of faith and spirit. Years of warfare had left the people shattered and despondent. In the middle of the services, a woman dressed in rags jumped up and started screaming about the End of Days and Armageddon coming. No one touched her, for fear of giving credence to her rantings. Over the next few days she was seen wandering all throughout the city, screaming at the top of her lungs. A week later, she was found dead, nailed to the side of a church, a pool of blood under her and strange scribblings above her head on the door. The church was closed as a result of this curse, and never opened again in the memory of the current generation. Anacletus was buried in the Church of Mary. Later, his body disappeared, and was rumoured to have been interned in the Catacombs. A cursory investigation turned up nothing, although a strange incident down there left three gendarme dead.

After the funeral, riders reached Paris bringing word of Henry's imminent arrival and his own call for a Cherbourg Synod to compliment the Paris Synod. As the word went out to Roman and Parisian Bishops and Cardinals, few had the wherewithal to brave the rampaging soldiers and pestilences across the land. A number of Parisian delegates showed up in Paris and Cherbourg, but there was a notable lack of delegates from Italy, Germany, or other lands who had sided with Rome.

February 1131 : In Lyonnais, the Roman camps were stupendous examples of disarray, panic, and desertion. Still reeling from the events of last year, a number of men had already been caught and hanged for trying to escape and rejoin their families. Tensions grew in the camps, as Pope Urban and the Burgundians became ever harsher in their punishments.

In Venice, Geowulf of Lombardy declared his neutrality and, noting certain preparations of the Salerno in his occupied homeland, began to prepare his defenses and moved his household and palace onto Venice. Much of the nobility and well-to-do in Verona followed him onto their Venetian villas (while an even larger number hedged their bets and got on the first ship south and adopted non-Lombard names).

When Henry arrived in Paris, he sent his men to find his old childhood sweetheart, Marie. Marie and he had grown up together and had fallen for each other years ago. Resigned to a marriage of utility for Henry, she had gone on with her life and married a local noble by the name of Phillippe. All the more pity for him because Henry - who was still in love with Marie as well as desperately in need of a bride - had his men pay a visit to Phillippe to "negotiate" with him. In the end, Phillippe cared more for his skin and agreed to call the marriage a farce and annulled it. Marie, now free, was able in the Church's eyes to marry Henry (although she wasn't too sure she quite liked him anymore). Henry summoned all the remaining French nobles, as well as his father's Poitou and Anacletan associates to the ceremony. Expecting a grand marriage, they were surprised to see the extent to which Henry had gone (in these dark times) to hold a massive series of rites. In fact, Henry summoned all the representatives of the Anacletan papacy and surrounding nobles to witness his crowning, not of King of Normandy but King of All France! In a display of pomp and ritual that would've awed even the most cynical, the nobles present were witness not only to an historical marriage and swearing in of Henry as the First King of All France, but also to their own "swearing in." After the crown of France was placed on Henry's head, each noble bowed deeply to kiss the ring of Henry and swear their allegiance to him. Two of them refused to do so, and they were escorted out by Henry's guards (and not heard from again). In the end it seemed that Henry proved himself as tactically wise as his teachers, for in one fell swoop he gave the people a new object of their loyalty which in light of their loss of Anacletus was no small feat and he also ensured the loyalty of the French nobility (at least for the time being). Marie, on the other hand, was alarmed for this was not the same young man she had fallen for so many years ago. "Perhaps the rumours are true" she thought...

In Italy, mercenaries by the dozens and thousands accepted their bags of gold and began to gather under the banner of Dominic of Salerno. In the far frozen north, the dread long ships once again

left their moors for the defenseless riches of Europe...

March 1131 :

There had not been any noise from the cell for some time now. What, three, four days? Usually the prisoner made some grunts or scrapes a couple times a day, and lately he hadn't even come for his gruel. Jean opened the door and peered into the blackness. After a bit his eyes became accustomed to the dark, and his nose to the foul stench. "It's a wonder anything could live in here" he said to Gerard. "Hey! You alive in there? Hey! Stumpy! Come out!" Cautiously, they minced forward, the darkness and the unknown somehow terrifying even though they knew they had nothing to fear from their prisoner. In the corner, curled up into a ball, a twisted mass of flesh and iron was what used to be a man. What went on underneath that mask they didn't want to know, for the flesh of his face had seeped around the sides. He hadn't had eyes for years now, nor hands (hence, "Stumpy"), and his knees were caked in bloody bandages from scraping himself along the floor. "Hm. Who was he?" asked Gerard. "You don't want to know, trust me, you don't want to know. Just remember this Gerard: all of us, from you and me, all the way up to the top are just one step away from that, if we're not careful."

Outside of Lyon, the Roman and Burgundian forces, stretched thin and demoralized, were preparing to move once again. "Damn their complaints!" shouted Pope Urban, quite shocking everyone nearby. "They are soldiers of God! They will get their reward in the afterlife!" He referred to the continual mutterings among the troops of the conditions and the muck and their dead comrades. Even the most loyal and faithful of the troops were beginning to express doubts. As the inquisition moved among the men, raucous words ceased and the insolence of the men was replaced by fear. The inquisition was the only thing keeping order in the army now. The tension nearly reached the boiling point when a certain exceedingly cruel inquisitor was involved in an altercation with some of the men. Heaping abuse upon them, one of the more loyal of the soldiers, a certain Williame Bu'D, intervened. What happened next is unclear, but within moments the inquisitor lay dead face down in the mud with Bu'D standing over him aghast at what he had done. The naive young man, well loved and even protected by the troops from the horrors of this war, was arrested and soon hung until dead. This was the final straw for the troops and all that was needed now was a spark. Even the inquisitors became nervous when they saw the looks in the soldiers eyes when they passed Bu'D's body still hanging from the tree. And then, two days later, when Urban was with his generals discussing strategy, into their tent leapt two men shouting "Death to the Pope! Long Live France!" Although they were brought down quickly by the Papal Guards, they did manage to stab Urban once, wounding him severely. As they were chopped into pieces by the

guards, word spread quickly through the camps. Soon, the entire Papal army was refusing to follow orders, and a mob gathered to exact vengeance on the Inquisition. Once the mutiny gained strength, the entire affair was over quickly. Far from home and ripped forcibly from their homes, the Italians of the Papal army strung up the men of the Inquisition and vowed to forsake this mad war. The Pope, lying in bed of a fever, was delirious and defenseless. Muttering something, the men to his tents and demanded they return to Rome. The Pope was hallucinating, and incoherent from the fever which gripped him. Even the most hardened of the soldiers, though, was not willing to touch His Holiness. Many of them, in a final act of piety, bowed to the ground and begged the Pope for forgiveness (which he granted, though not consciously). They then left him, and the Papal forces marched back towards Italy intending to reunite with their families. The Burgundian forces did not follow, for they were fighting for their survival and that of their families against the heretics. King Hugh was their lord, and they would not stop until they had rescued him and their lands from the jaws of the Devil heretics.

Not able to take the time to convene a full Council of Cardinals, Cardinal Ximenes took the name Clement III, and took command of the remaining Burgundian forces. He was confident that the deserters would be back and his primary goal was the destruction of Paris. After that, everything else could be easily taken care of later.

Meanwhile, back in Paris, Henry (King of France) declared his uncle, Frederick to be his rightful heir "until such time as royal issue is produced." (Marie didn't quite like the sound of that, frankly). He also issued a proclamation that gave the Orkney Jar Vikings the right to trade and tribute from Brest. This sent quite a ripple through the city, since it was well known that the Vikings were to be feared and not trusted. Furthermore, they were certainly witches and heretics, like the Romans. And then in the last day of March another tragedy struck: Guy Berengar, the King's right-hand man, caught a small bout of the plague (which was becoming more and more common, what with all the bodies from last year's siege lying around in pits, and rats everywhere) and died slowly and painfully. Henry now assumed the Kingship not only in word but in deed as he prepared to lead his men into battle himself. Also, on April 1, Robert Guiscard, Master Brother of the Knights of the Temple, left for Orleans at the head of most of his knights. And in far off Poland, while tribes from all over Lithuania gathered in Poland, a riot broke out in which the Roman Catholic churches there were left in smoldering ruins.

April 1131: Burgundian forces, under the leadership of Gilbert de Rossillion and Pope Clement III, break camp and depart north while, behind them, the mutinous Papal forces head south for their homes and families in Italy. Gilbert de Rossillion, Bishop Lothar and Pope Clement III enter Burgundy at the head of the Burgundian army. They are thankful when they receive word that, indeed, the Germans are keeping up their side of the bargain and have begun to march west (entering Holstein). The Soldiers' Army of God (as the mutinous Romans had taken to calling themselves) enter Provence. Robert du Guiscard leaves Orleans for Limousin at the head of the Knights. Henry, King of France, begins to march on Nivernais with the intention of either demolishing the Burgundian state or, better yet, catching up to the Papal/Burgundian army and

finishing what he started a few years ago in Paris. Soldiers and mercenaries in the pay of Dominic of Salerno are given free rein over conquered Lombardy, and decimate the land. They rape, loot and pillage all across Lombardy, and carry off everything of value they can find. King Christophoros, Mad King of the Western Romans, begins the mountain passage into the pagan lands of Bosnia. Viking longboats are sighted all throughout the north sea, the Skagerrak, and northern England striking fear into English hearts.

May 1131 : The Burgundian army crosses the frontier into Champagne, their way slowed by the lack of roads and the unfamiliar terrain, on their way north to meet the Germans (who are now in Freisland). The Free Soldiers Army of God encamps outside of Cannes, taking what they want from the hapless local Burgundians while on their way to Rome. The French under Henry reach Nerdone in Nivernais, and deliver terms to the city and regional nobles. In response to the rampages of the Salerno soldiers and mercenaries, Geowulf, King of Lombardy, states that "I will not stand idly by while the allies of this Pope murder my subjects!" He seizes all the Papal merchants and assets in and around Venice that he can. In chilly Poland, Lord Felchmore arrives in Poland with the bulk of the Lithuanian army, and prepares to ride with the tribes, while, in the South, Christophoros crosses into Bosnia and continues north.

June 1131 : A very hot month. A small but deadly outbreak of plague in a number of cities reminds the commoners that life is ugly, brutish, and short in these times. Even the priests and nuns of the Roman Catholic church in Italy are affected by the grim news over the last few years, and church attendance fails to reach the high levels Holy Mother Church was wishing for. The heat becomes unbearable in a number of cities throughout the Mediterranean, and related sanitation problems become acute.

The Free Soldiers of God (as they now came to call themselves) cross over into Liguria and march towards Genoa.

In Nivernais, the Prince of Nerdone refuses to surrender the city to the French, and Henry begins the attack on the city while Lord Lotulf begins to occupy key towns and villages throughout the area. Word reaches the French at this time of the presence of the Papal/Burgundian army in neighboring Champagne.

The Norman Baron of Vermandois shows up in his homeland, and raises his household levy to face the oncoming Germans, which rumour now has in Holland or Brabant. German riders have been sighted in northern Vermandois.

Dominic of Salerno rallies his troops and begins to march on Verona.

The Polish/Litt tribes begin to march from Lithuania to Bioloweza.

July 1131 : Vermandois troops refuse to leave Vermandois "for some so-called King of France" while the Germans are marching on their lands. The Baron of Vermandois, convinced (and having little real choice in the matter), instead turns his attentions to the Roman holdings in his lands, letting his troops loose on them and torching a number of small monasteries, nunneries, and convents.

Robert du Guiscard and the Knights enter Auvergne with the declared intention of "conquering the land for Lord Charles!" while in Champagne, the Roman/Burgundian army regroups and resupplies at Metz and begins to march north once again.

A large number of the Free Soldiers Army, originally from Genoa, leave the Army and return to their homes. Prince Juan of Leon, at the head of 200 men, stops the Free Army in the name of the Church and demands they return to fight the heretics. A tense moment ensues, but the Free Army continues south, bypassing Juan's demands.

Nerdone falls to Henry after a shortlived resistance.

Seeing the numbers of Dominic's men, Geowulf of Lombardy withdraws his forces into Venice, fortifies the lagoon approaches, and orders his warships to vigorously patrol the harbor.

The Litt tribes enter Volhynia while, to the south, Christophoros enters Croatia.

August 1131: There is a great deal of dissension in the Burgundian/Papal camp, as Pope Clement demands that the army continuing moving to meet up with the Germans, while Gilbert du Rossillion is of a mind to pacify the region of Champagne to prevent its use as a staging area for raids on the supplies of the armies. The makes a fair amount of sense, but Clement holds that it is of utmost importance to link up with the Germans as quickly as possible so the advancing heretics cannot defeat the Romans piecemeal. In the end, after a very large ruckus in the command tents, it is Clement who wins out and Burgundian/Papal armies begin moving north once more while in the north the Germans formally cross into French territory when they seize villages along the Rhine and make the crossing into Brabant.

At around the same time the countryside of Nivernais comes under the full control of Bishop Du'Gatr of France, who is given feudal title to its lands by Henry of France. Henry, Du'Gatr, and Duke Lotulf, knowing now that the Burgundian army is close by in Champagne confer on their next course of action. Henry had originally vowed to use the Pope's plans, but it had been the expectation of him, Anacletus, and all else involved that the Italians would go running back to Italy, thus giving them free rein over Burgundy. Obviously, things had changed. However, since the priority of Anacletus was "the complete destruction of the Papal army..." Henry and the others were forced to agree that the conquest of Burgundy would have to wait. To go further into Burgundy with the Papal army, and now the Germans too, behind them would be folly. Anacletus' instincts were correct, and so Henry swung the French forces eastward towards Aachen to try to catch the Burgundians before they could meet up with the Germans. Meanwhile, Robert du Guiscard was becoming bogged down fighting in Auvergne, while his men were sorely missed by Henry for he knew that when he did catch up to the Burgundians he would need every able bodied man he could find.

As the Germans were crossing into Brabant, the dreaded long ships appeared on the horizon. The independent minded peasants who, just years before, had defended their lands from the Vikings returned once again to the hill forts and abandoned castles strung along the coastline and through Brabant. They were truly a plucky sort, these peasants, for they *once again* (!) managed to drive off the Svear raiders.

In Italy, Dominic of Salerno's troops, finding that the Lombards have all withdrawn across the Lagoon into Venice, set about securing the major villages and crossroads. A few prescient ones confiscate the remaining boats they find in the harbors.

In the eastern front, Mikuil of Lithuania, while leading the mass exodus of his people, is ambushed by a bandit patrol and killed. Lord Silverweasel succeeds him as king of the Litts.

September 1131 ~ February 1132 (Winter) : A brisk winter settles in, and much campaigning stops. Only the hardiest (or most desperate) can campaign in the winter. But, campaign they do: Robert Guiscard, a veteran of countless battles, drives his men to defeat the troops of the Duke of Auvergne, a servant of the Roman Pope and his Burgundian lackeys. However, the Duke of Auvergne turned out to be a surprisingly good tactician, and ambushed the Knights as they were traveling through the hills. Though severely outnumbered, the Duke did manage to stun and rout the Knights before being killed himself. His land was firmly under Knight control by October, but precious time was lost by Robert in tending to his large numbers of wounded and regrouping his forces.

In the east, the Litt and Pole tribes cross into Bochnia, and continue into freezing mountains of Slovakia, while the Mad King and his horsemen cross north into Bakony.

In December, the Roman Bishop Gian Mazzini dies from a stab wound by a Lombard patriot.

March 1132 : Off the northern tip of land of Cherbourg sits a small tall set of castles and towers. Although not the heart of the Norman Kingdom, they nevertheless are an important part of Henry's continued rule, for it is those walls that serve as a prison for those who have defied the Normans' rule. Jutting out on the utmost tip of land, to the east lie a league of crags and rocks that would take a mountain goat days to cross. Only one small path went through those rocks, and it was carefully guarded. On all other sides, lay the Channel waters. Choppy, cold, treacherous. Only a few times in the past has anyone ever escaped from this prison. But, on a cold misty morning in early March, out of the mist sailed over forty long ships, headed straight for Cherbourg. Raising the alarms, the guards in the tower quickly sent runners to alert the city to the raiders. Baron Fulk, hearing the bells, quickly roused the city guards, and rushed to the defense of the city. But the raiders came in too quickly, they snuck into the harbor and lit much of the dock works on fire. Their men swarmed into the city, smashing and grabbing what they could. Before Fulk's men could respond, the Svear had once again disappeared into the mists. But it was only later that the second blow had been discovered. For as the men were raiding Cherbourg, two of their ships had crept up to the Towers and unloaded a group of ten, twenty, maybe fifty Viking raiders. Overpowering the guards by luck as much as anything else, they quickly ran through the towers and searched the cells for their targets. Before the garrison could react, they had gone. Leaving behind a trail of smashed heads and gutted Normans, they took with them a beaten, bloody and half-dead man: Phillippe II, Son of Hugh, King of Burgundy. Taking him on board their ships, the Vikings removed the shackles and iron mask that bound Phillippe. Even they, no strangers to punishment and hardship, had to recoil when they saw what the Normans had done to the young man who was now the King of Burgundy.

April 1132: In April, the German army arrives in Brabant, while the Burgundians under Clement III continue to travel to the north through the free land of Hainaut. The Free Army of God moves into the Lombard lands of Tuscany, and loses even more men as they too return to their homes. The Lombards are bypassed, for the Free Army has no grief with them. Henry begins to move north with the French army into Hainaut to catch up to the Papists there. Robert Guiscard regroups his army in Auvergne, hands over the lands to Lord Charles, and turns back for Orleans. In Lombardy, Geowulf continues to stay holed up in Venice while Verona is conquered by Dominic. Giotto reinforces Dominic for the upcoming attack on Venice. The Litts continue on into Slovakia, while in Bakony the Mad King's army is *not* attacked by the Magyaraskorzag tribes (but they are mighty suspicious of him).

May, 1132: The Germans, under Lothar and Ferdinand find that Brabant is defended by a bunch of plucky peasants named things like Pierre, Francois, and Georges who have occupied a few well placed forts and ruined castles. They're feeling a bit smug, actually, because they've beaten off a few Svear raiders a few years running and aren't about to roll over for any Germans! Nosiree! well, the 200,000+ German army proceeds to beat them into a bloody pulp for the next few months to teach them a thing or two about humility.

The Burgundian/Papal army gets to Aachen, and, knowing full well by now that about three feet behind them are the Normans, immediately continues on towards Vermandois. Henry, pressing his troops as fast as they can go, remains one step behind Gilbert du Rosillion simply because Hainaut, a neutral land, is somewhat unfamiliar to his horsemen and scouts. In the south, Robert Guiscard and his knights cross the mountains into Orleans, and begin the rush to meet up with Henry in Vermandois.

In Italy, the Free Army of God leaves Tuscany for Latium and its destination of Rome.

In the east, Christophoros moves into Slovakia from Bakony, just as the Litts have arrived there and are beginning to move into Carinthia. Unluckily for Christophoros (who was really itching for a fight), the two armies manage to miss each other.

And, finally, the Vikings sail out of the wine-dark sea and strike! On the peaceful coastline of Portugal, in the small town of Lisbon, just days after the wedding of the Sultan took place there, the Orkney Vikings sailed out of the depths, and rampage across the lands. the Sultan's right hand man, Mohammad attempts to rally the defenses of the area - including a large number of hill forts and castles along the coast build just for this purpose - but the raiders are more cunning than he. Nonetheless, the presence of so many castles does deter the Vikings enough so that they don't get away with too much. They do manage however, to carry off the sister of the Princess of Lisbon, a couple hundred casks of Portuguese wine, and burn a number of Mosques to the ground. A great number of people, fearful of another raid, migrate from Portugal to safer, inland areas.

June, 1132: Crossing over into Vermandois, Gilbert du Rossillion, at the head of the Burgundian army, gets separated from his men in the strange forests there, and is ambushed by a gang of Vermandoix bandits. His remains are found the next day, and Bishop Lothar takes over command of the army. behind them, Henry pushes his Frenchmen on into Hainaut and then turns towards Vermandois. However, he has an advantage: Vermandois is well known to his men, and the back

roads and short cuts allow him to gain precious time on Lothar. Furthermore, ahead of Lothar and Pope Clement III is the Baron of Vermandois with his much reduced household troops. Lothar and Clement, with Henry gaining on them from behind and the Baron of Vermandois ahead, are being driven into a trap. The Germans, meanwhile remain bogged down in Brabant occupying the region.

Robert Guiscard and his knights arrive in Orleans, and continue rapidly north to Ile De France to connect up with Henry.

In the east, the Litt and Pole tribes begin to move into Carinthia, (newly allied with Lombardy).

In Iberia, the Orkney Jars descend upon the lands of Estramadura. Undefended, the land seemed destined for destruction and death, but the Vikings meet unexpected resistance from the locals, and call off the attack - the signs were not in the favour.

Outside Venice, Dominics' men had requisitioned every available raft, barge, gondola, and ship they can for the assault on Venice. Geowulf's men, outnumbered but behind high walls and the Lagoon prepare the city for the assault. 6,000 Salerno knights and soldiers together with almost 9,000 ruffians, bandits, and mercenaries faced over 5,000 Lombards behind high walls and across a lagoon patrolled by six warships. The Lombards, skilled engineers, had the advantage behind their newly built walls, but Dominic was well known to be a cunning leader. And both men's agents were busy at work planting rumours, stealing plans, and engaging in clever deceptions. However, the Salerno men got pinned down by boiling oil and a rain of arrows in the approaches to the city, and suffered a great number of killed and wounded before they were able to break through the city gates. However, a lucky arrow caught Dominic in the side and that, combined with their losses, lost the Salernans the initiative. The mercenaries broke and ran, and the rest of them followed suit until the entire army was routed. Dominic, bleeding profusely, ordered his men to regroup in Vincencia and prepare for a longer siege in a few weeks. After arriving in Vincencia, Giotto takes command of the Salerno forces, regroups the mercenaries and his men, and prepares to go after Venice again.

Christophoros at the head of the Western Roman army continues to swing northward, where he will, over the next year of campaigning, occupy and loot Little Poland (which is already pretty deserted and lacking much of value) and then swing back west to Silesia. In Silesia, he hears word that the Litts have moved on south, but it is too late to change his plans. He engages and destroys the Duke of Silesia's army, and the Duke himself suffers an ignominious end, run through by a number of Serbian lances. Christophoros returns with his army to Slovenia and vows that, when he returns to Ochirida he will construct a grand monument to his magnificent victory.

July, 1132 :

In the Low Countries, the Germans have fully conquered Brabant, and begin the move towards Vermandois to assist the Burgundians. But, they will not reach there in time, for in early July Bishop Lothar and Clement III, at the head of the Burgundian forces, have little choice but to either continue into Vermandois and get sandwiched between the Baron of Vermandois' household troops and the so-called King of France or turn and meet Henry face on before the Duke can join up with the French forces. As reports of engagements between Henry's forward scouts and rear guard of the

Burgundians reach the ears of Lothar and Clement, they confer and decide that to attempt to turn around the army at this point would open up their flanks to Henry's horse, which he would surely throw at them as soon as they attempted any such maneuver. Their only hope is to force march the troops the four days to the village of Reims, home of the Baron and the most defensible spot in the area. If they can overwhelm the Baron before Henry catches up to them, they can avoid encirclement. The men are tense and tired, as they drive forward through the night, peering over their shoulders, a few hills away they can see the campfires of the French army. Clement proves a cunning commander, and manages to stay one day ahead of the French throughout their trek to Reims. Three days out, they spy the Dukes men, moving parallel to them in an attempt to circle around and meet up with Henry. Moving swiftly, the Burgundian forces (numbering around 9,000 heavy horse and pike) swivel to engage the Baron's 2,000 men. The Baron's men are quickly slaughtered and the Baron himself barely escapes with his life and a few of his men to meet up with Henry. However, the battle took precious time from the Burgundians advance, and the French come charging over nearby hills just as Clement is regrouping his men. The Burgundians, really really wishing the Germans were with them, are taken aback by the over 13,000 assorted horse and foot of the French. A gruesome melee ensues, and in a panic, Clement orders the withdrawal sounded. Everything is thrown into confusion on both sides, as the dust kicked up by the horses and the screams of the dying start a rampaging stampede of both men and beasts. Bishop Lothar extricates many of the Burgundians, and moves to the next hill to regroup and rally his men. When he reaches there, expecting to find the Pope, is distressed to see he is the only general present. From his hilltop vantage point, he can see down into the valley where confusion still reigns. The French, too, are milling about, for the battle has devolved into a series of small melees. Soon, the Bishop knows, will be the time when the French begin moving from person to person to administer the coup de'grace. Then, he sees something that chills his bones: it is the Pope, Clement II, being dragged from his pavilion by French troops. Enraged he looks around for troops to rush back into the fray to rescue his Holiness from the clutches of the witches, but there are few men around him able, or willing, to go back down into the valley. Summoning every ounce of willpower he has, and knowing it will be but a short while before the French come to finish him and his men off, he rallies his remaining troops and heads to the rendezvous point with the Germans.

In a surprise raid on the Muslims (and, quite possibly a highly escalatory move) Sveari long ships descend upon the warm tropical port of Casablanca. They burnt much of the city down and loot and pillage extensively before disappearing again. But the Viking raids continue as the Orkneyjars practically demolish the port of Elvas in Andalusia itself, causing panic, fear, and anger all throughout the Akramid sultanate. The raids further result in a serious problems with the availability of Akramid currency, as mass hoarding begins throughout the country. Rapid deflation ensues, and the country is plunged into economic crisis. And, far off in the eastern Med, a fleet of long ships, different to the Orkneyjars and the Svear, begin to terrorize shipping throughout the area. With the revolt of Admiral Jamis and the ensuing Egyptian Civil War, the entire eastern med is open to the depredations and cruelties of these pirates, and Islamic shipmen far and wide are victimized. A year later, when Admiral Jamis returns with his fleet to Cyprus, the pirates are driven off.

The Free Army arrives at St. Peters, demanding an end to their service in the Army and a significant amount of bonus pay. They are, essentially, threatening The Papacy with violence unless paid exorbitant amounts of money. Cardinal Erasmus, at the head of the Swiss Guards and in command

of a large number of local troops, refuses to meet with them for three weeks. The Free Army thus encamps around Rome, making a nuisance of themselves until their demands are met. Over the next few months and throughout the winter, tense negotiations go on between the two sides. The Free Army dares not attack St. Peters, for they are still loyal Catholics and their faith remains strong. Plus, the area is quite well defended and fortified. On the other hand, they refuse to rejoin the Papal forces until their, admittedly nebulous demands are met. Over the winter, many return to their families, and the remaining ones seem to become nothing more than a mob. Many leave to become mercenaries, once it is apparent that Erasmus will not shower them with gold and riches.

In only slightly less exciting areas, the Lithuanians begin moving into Verona from Carinthia.

August, 1132: The Germans and the remaining Burgundians (about 3,000 men) rendezvous in Brabant, regroup, and prepare to return to Vermandois to put an end to Henry and rescue the Pope from the clutches of evil. A few leagues away in Reims, Henry meets up with Robert Guiscard and his 10,000 knights. Both sides settle in as winter arrives, while awaiting the first frost for it will bring them face to face with Destiny. Pope Clement languishes in shackles, in the French camp.

In warmer climes, the vicious Svear, flush with victory and Honey wine from Casablanca, descend upon Morocco. Despite the defenses, they once again prove their prowess, and pillage much of the land before returning to their second home, the sea. The Orkney Jar, not to be outdone by their erstwhile cousins, launch a raid into Andalusia and then the City of Seville. They quickly abort it however, with losses, when they encounter extremely stiff defenses and well-prepared locals.

September 1132 ~ March 1133 (Winter) : In northern Italy, the Lithuanians occupy Verona, and find that Geowulf has once again returned to Venice. They proceed to occupy the land, and prepare for a siege of the city.

Cardinal Pierleone of the Paris Papacy, ensconced in a monastery far from the fields of death, has his prayers answered, and goes to meet his maker.

And, just so the Cordobans don't get complacent and try to second guess them, the Svear Long ships return to Merrakesh and strike, not the city, but the surrounding countryside. They are driven off by locals, who are ready for them this time.

April, 1133:

The Battle of Four Kings saw no less than six different armies arrayed against each other in the hot noonday sun of the fields of Vermandois (but, really only one honest to goodness king was present). For the Anacletan forces, the center was made up of Henry, King of France, and his 1,800 heavy pike, 8,200 footmen and militia, and the remnants of the French nobility, 200 armoured knights and their assorted retainers. To his north, Robert du Guiscard and his 5,400 veteran Knights Templar along with 1,200 mounted squires and 2,600 assorted retainers, pikemen, and militia. Bringing up the rear, were the remnants of the troops of the Baron of Vermandois: 400 assorted local militia and peasants. Pope Clement remained by Henry's side, in chains while Cardinal Roek looked on from his side.

Across the field were arrayed a might force of Germans, the battered Burgundians, and the Pavilions of the Pope, now led by Bishop Lothar. The Germans were actually not led by King Alexander, but by Duke Lothar (no relation to Bishop Lothar, who was a couple hundred meters away in the Papal Pavilion), a cunning general. At his command, a stunning 7,400 foot and pike, 2,000 veteran pikemen, 4,400 peasant militia, 1,200 newly recruited footmen, 3,800 German knights, 600 retainers, and an assortment of 2,600 sappers and miners. Bishop Lothar, commanding the Burgundian forces from the Papal pavilion 1,600 Burgundian knights, and 1,200 veteran pike.

For the entire day the two sides slugged it out, but in the end the superior cunning of the German general Lothar and the deceptions his agents had spread the night before had fooled Henry into thinking it was going to be a cakewalk. Three times the French withdrew from the field, two times the Germans withdrew. By the end of the day, Henry had been forced to yield vital high ground, and was forced to call a retreat. He timed it well, though, to coincide with a suspected German move to a closer hill which was the site of an ancient graveyard and a ruined church. By the time the Germans knights had secured the area, the French were withdrawing in good order. Henry was angered and concerned, but his army remained largely intact, and had given as good as it got. As night began to fall, a group of pursuing German knights ambushed the Baron of Vermandois and his remaining men. His son took over command of his men and, in the muck and grime of the camp, amid the cries and moans of dying men, reaffirmed his alliance with Henry and the Anacletan Papacy. Behind, on the field of battle, lay over 3,000 German dead and 5,600 French. The Germans occupy Vermandois.

In Italy, meanwhile, Duke Giotto gathers the Salernan forces in Lombardy and again marches on Verona, while the Lithuanians have completed their occupation of that land. The Lombards (who were calling themselves Lombard Venetians by now) hadn't come out of their city for a couple years now and looked to be moderately well dug in so the Lithuanians begin to siege Venice.

May ~ August, 1133 : After playing cat and mouse with the Germans for a number of weeks, Henry and Robert Guiscard enter Ile De France to regroup their forces with the Germans in hot pursuit. The German advance, however, is hampered by their need to spend precious time regrouping in Vermandois as well as their unfamiliarity with the terrain and local features. This gives Henry and Robert themselves enough time to reach Paris before the winter sets in and prepare its defenses. In August, the Germans begin to move into Ile De France, but halt their advance to prepare for the winter and gather supplies to their overextended army.

In April the Lithuanians commence the siege of Venice, but are interrupted when they receive reports from their scouts that Giotto has re-entered Verona with his army. Giotto, unsure of what to do but knowing that Dominic wants Lombardy for himself (and knowing a heretic and enemy of Rome when he sees it) prepares to engage the Lithuanians. The Lithuanians, in their siege, had found the Venetian defenses formidable, but not overwhelming and were slowly, bit by bit, grinding them down when they were interrupted by the Giotto in August.

In rapid succession, the Svear raid Oran, Zirid, and Cheliff. In Oran and Zirid they are driven off by contingents of the Sultan's personal guards, while in Cheliff a number of ships of the Cordoban navy (for what it is) sortie to intercept them when they hear of their raids. The two Cordoban ships and the Admiral are sent to the bottom, and Cheliff is raided for a tiny amount of gold. The Orkney

Jar scare the wits out of everyone in Casablanca when they appear on the horizon, but they dock without burning or stealing anything, and demand the Danegeld they have been promised. There is quite a scuffle at the docks, with the Orkneys insisting that "Oh, those guys aren't us. Those are different Vikings. See, we've got blonde hair and blue eyes, they're dark haired with green eyes. You really should read your *Guide to Vikings* more closely. Anyways, thanks for the cash. See ya!"

Quite proud of themselves for this, the Orkneys get rather ambitious and land next in Granada, heart of the Akramid empire and sight of Holy Madiera! Locals manage to protect the region, but the Orkneys prove themselves worthy of the title Vikings when they sail into Madiera harbour, torch a quarter of the city, and run around grabbing everything they can see (paying particular attention to setting fire to the Mosques and, yes, the Grand Mosque, while they're at it). the city is left devastated but more importantly the people throughout Andalusia are incensed at the sacrilege that has been done. Although the Grand Mosque still stands, much of the Holy City is burnt to a cinder and lies smoldering. The wailing of the women and the lamentation of the masses in Iberia gives the Mullahs pause. Can such an outrage be allowed to go unpunished? Heretics burning parts of the Holy City? Pirates running rampant across the Dar Al Islaam and even off the coasts of Egypt? Messages are sent to far off Baghdad begging for guidance from the Caliph of All Islam.

Later in the year the Svear dock in Latium to confer with Erasmus in St. Peters, as well as to pick up a bit of spending money.

September 1133 ~ March 1134 : It is a quite winter, as harsh winds from the north (and harsh Vikings raids from there too) cause even the hardest generals to allow their men some rest. The longship piracy in and around Cyprus ends, as Admiral Jamis returns in defeat from Egypt to base himself out of Cyprus.

In October 1133, the winter campaign of Verona opens as Giotto assails the Lithuanian positions outside of Venice. Giotto's 6,000 men however had not reckoned on assaulting entire camps of tribesmen and families. There were in Verona by now thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of Litts from the far north, settling in Verona. These tribes, spread out across Verona gave the Litts a decided advantage in ambushing and picking off Giotto's men. Eventually, Giotto was able to force the Litts to battle, but his mercenary losses were very high. Retreating, he returned to Vincencia, leaving Verona to the Litts and their mewling brats. Throughout March the Litts regroup and prepare to begin anew the siege of Venice.

April ~ July 1134 : German and Burgundian forces arrive in Ile De France after a long cold trek through frozen forests. Henry and Robert's forces, having regrouped are ready for round two. The four armies meet again, and the advantage goes to the Germans in a series of running battles across the countryside. Through sheer strength of numbers and the efficient agents of the Pope, they are able to badly maul Henry's forces. The French are, however, still able to withdraw into Paris and they do so in orderly fashion while the Germans regroup in the countryside.

Outside Venice, the Lithuanian siege continued but, after a few months the Litts casualties began to precipitously mount. A combination of superior siege skill, cunning agents, and bad luck managed to lead a number of Litts to their deaths beneath the walls of Venice.

August 1134: The first German assault on Paris succeeds in grinding down much of Henry and Roberts' men simply under the sheer numbers of the Germans, although the Germans also take heavy losses primarily due to the efforts of the Poitou militia (the huge mass of men and women refugees from La Rochelle over the last few years). Over the next few months, the Germans launch two more assaults on Paris under direction of the Papal legation. Each time, more ground is gained and more French and Germans are killed or wounded to the extent that Paris and the surrounding area becomes like unto the land of the dead. Hanging under perpetual darkness, rats filling the streets and ravines, and people on both sides reduced to eating...who knows what. In June, the Papal delegate, Bishop Lothar, decides that since Paris has not yet fallen even after three assaults that it is best to retire back to Burgundy to protect it from the inevitable French counterattack. The Germans, having taken a high amount of casualties accept this and cease assaulting the city. Squabbles in the Germans and Burgundian camps lead to disagreements about the next course of action. The Papal and Burgundian generals advocate falling back to Burgundy, while the Germans are of a mind to remain in Ile De France and starve Paris out. In the end, the Burgundians do withdraw through Nivernais back to Burgundy (while avoiding the French in Nivernais since they are not yet strong enough to face them again) while the Germans remain encamped around Paris. They lapse into barbarism as they begin to round up peasants from the surrounding area and kill them all as "heretics" and "witches." Their bodies are then left to rot in the sun for three or four days and then hurled over the walls of Paris to instill terror and fear and bring death and disease upon the heretics inside the city. As the winter of 1136 settles in, that is where we leave this sorry scene, with Henry and Robert greatly reduced in men and hope, Pope Clement a captive in a Paris full of disease and starvation, and the Germans on the verge of a great victory, or perhaps a great defeat.

September 1134 ~ March 1135 : The siege of Venice continues, resulting in more unexpected deaths for the Lithuanians. Local sympathizers for the Venetians continue to feed useful information to the besieged defenders. Furthermore, although Giotto remains encamped in Lombardy, it is clear to Lord Felchmore that to attack Lombardy without securing Venice risked too many casualties to allow his plans to fully reach fruition. The need to retain a viable army is paramount, he realized, and so called off the bloody siege of Venice and satisfied himself with keeping the Venetians bottled up in their hole.

For his part, Davide in Venice was quite eager to regain what had been lost. However it was also clear to him that the Litts still far outnumbered his men and, in an open battle, they would annihilate him. Better to stay behind the high walls of Venice and continue to wait for reports from Verona. The only news was that the Litt tribes were settling in Veronese hills and valleys. The Litts lost communication with their ancient allies in the north, Courland and Polotsk. And that is where things stood as 1135 came to a close.

WEST AFRICA

Mercenaries: 9i, 3hi, 7c, 4s, 3w, 3t

The Soninke Kingdom of Koumbi

Yuloui, gh?na of Koumbi, Queen of the Mandé

DIPLOMACY:

Traveling up from the south came a caravan of men. Few had survived the rough journey, but their cargo was intact. The prince, when he arrived in Kumbi-Saleh radiated an air of truthfulness and devotion. Never before had the King seen a man so sure of himself, so in possession, and so powerful with the energy of a god. Or was it as he said? Was it not a god but God? Why was this idea so strange, when it could transform such a man so? Prince Baru told them all how their idols and their chantings are but pale reflections of the power of Allah. "There is no god but Allah, oh great King. And Mohammed is his prophet. The words of Allah are not only sacred beyond compare, but can show you and everyone who studies them everything in existence. Come, let me explain what I mean Oh great King, let me explain how Allah is all-powerful and all-knowing..."

Kaya Maghau listened well to the words of the prince. But he was skeptical. His families traditions went back hundreds of years to the beginning of time, why should he listen to this Songhay prince? He bade Baru out of his sight. But then, his sight went dim, the air was sucked out of him, and a terrible cough burst out of his throat. He collapsed. The attendants declared it a case of common blood-sickness, and that Kaya, being strong, would surely overcome it. But he was scared. It was too much to ignore. Summoning Baru back to him, he prayed for forgiveness from him. "It is not me who you insulted, oh King. I am but a servant of Allah. And he is strong and powerful. Tell this to your family and your people."

And he did. Listening closely to the words of the Prince, he heard again with ears open this time what Baru had been trying to tell him. In the end, he addressed the Mullahs that were Baru's retainers, bidding them to go forth with his blessing and his men to spread their words throughout his kingdom. And so they did. And Islam spread rapidly throughout the land. What resistance there was to it was rapidly put down by troops loyal to Kaya. As his health continued to falter however, he was subjected to one last disappointment. Lord Mukacho, who had traveled for two years with Prince Baru burst in on him, spouting insults. "I refuse to follow these new ways! You forget that I have seen that world which Baru now claims allegiance to! I have seen their ways and they are not like ours! He tells you of great riches, but I say you are subjecting the kingdom to the will of far off kings who will dominate and destroy us! We must not let the tribes and the earth be subjected to the enslavement of others!"

"You are wrong Mukacho. I know your concerns, but they are wrong. You cannot see as I can, your eyes are too little. Everyday the kingdom is threatened by the nomads to the West. The people,

they live from day to day, but not with a purpose. Have you seen the markets lately? They are energized, alive again. The people take to this new truth on their own. True, it is different to what we know from before. But we will change it, we will mold it, it will become like us, and we will become like it. We do not die, we do not bow down, we look, instead, forward and up. Now, put down your spear, and come with me to the new mosque."

Mukacho, enraged by the calm demeanor of the king, skewered Kaya before his guards could react. Within moments he too was dead, but the realm was without leadership. In a strange twist of fate, after some infighting the royal family elevated Yuloui, the second and sole surviving wife of Kaya (and newly married to him) to the throne. She was a cunning one, oh yes she was! Maneuvering the rest of the family into a variety of uncomfortable positions, she easily assumed the title of Queen, and took the throne in an unusual ceremony of primarily Islamic bent. By this time the new religion had spread to every corner of the realm, and Yuloui - in a strange position for an Islamic kingdom - inherited a shaken but for the moment stable empire. It was further made precarious by the fact that, by the time she stepped up to the throne for the first time, she was obviously showing. Indeed, Kaya and her had spent much time together in the weeks before his death and it was obvious that, when born, the child would be strong as his father was.

The Dia Kingdom of Songhay

Jodun, dia Songhay

DIPLOMACY: Garou(fa)

The entire country was abuzz when, late in 1135, the Prince Baru returned. And, boy did he have some tales to tell! He regaled his family (whom he had not seen for, oh, ten years or so?) with tales of his terrible captivity by the Al Mohad, the amazing adventures he had traveling with them across the sand-seas and learning their ways. For six years he lived with those fierce Bedouins and came to know and appreciate their ways and Love of Allah. He told tales of ancient lands with massive stone temples carved deep under the rock. He related how the desert is not truly a place of death, but a place of beauty and life and cleanliness. And the cities of Egypt! Oh, to be in those busy caravanserais and bustling labyrinths again. Though he was joyful at being back, he was a changed man. You could see, in his eyes as he told his tales, the wisdom and knowledge he had gained. Part of him remained yet in those amazing lands he saw. And part of him was so changed by his time over there, that he found the ways of his countrymen and family strange, even distasteful at times.

The King, Pakezu, had one last wish as an old man, which is not unfamiliar to many parents: to see his wastrel married off to a nice African princess. And so, in the ripe old age of 62 he set forth to the land of Garou to find a bride for Jodun. He did meet with success in that endeavor, but it was not enough to convince the Garou tribes of any great benefit of joining the Songhay. Nevertheless, they did feel allegiance to their princess, and so gave some measure of fealty to Pakezu as he returned to Songhay. Jodun, however, saw his father's absence as an excuse to finally show him what he could do. Finally growing out of his boyish ways, he took up the reins of government with a vengeance. One of his first acts was to strictly enforce new laws on rat extermination and control, as well as other measures of sanitation, so that the plagues that recently decimated the Ibo would

come no closer. Whether it was these policies, or the whims of the gods we will never know. But, indeed, no widespread outbreak of plague occurred - although a series of minor ones did.

When Pakezu arrive back home, he was very pleased to see how the weight of rulership had transformed his son, finally, into a man worthy of the throne. A grand marriage was ordained at which the sumptuous marriage banquet finally did in Old Pakezu. But, he died a happy man at his son's wedding. Jodun, by now quite loved by the people of Timbuctu, assumed the throne without serious problems.

On the opposite side of the ledger sheet, there was Lord Pharket. He was- how shall we say - less than competent. Perhaps that is why Pakezu had ordered him to go "make nice" with the Air Emirate nomads in Kurfei. In that dry and dusty place, Pharket was not well received. In fact, after a particularly ill-timed remark about how he was willing to marry one of their princesses "if he must" they tried to gut him. Pharket (lucky for him, not so lucky for the empire as a whole perhaps) escaped with his life and returned to his new king. Shaking his head, Jodun remarked to his new wife "well, honey, we actually can't get rid of him. See, he comes from a powerful family, and they got him a government job in the vain hopes that he might make something of himself...but they're too powerful to annoy, so we're stuck with him. Hmm...perhaps we could use him to scout out the Oases to the north?" Excited by this possibility, Jodun and his wife had a nice time in the next few days plotting and scheming in bed. The result of which was a pregnancy that, unfortunately, ended in the birth of the child. This led Jodun -in a fit of depression - to begin work on a new bridge to span the Niger from Songhay into Garou. However, some say it was his wife's idea, as she had fallen into a fit of depression after the birth of her son and kept declaring her sadness and longing for her homeland across that vast river...

The Yoruban Onium of Ibo

DIPLOMACY:

Abwanze continued to expand the empire's roads as the key to holding his vast and rich land together. Grand roads were laid between Ife, Yoruba, and Togo. These wise policies led to much greater trade between the cities of Ijebo and Ibo. The Ivory and slave markets in both cities grew legendary, and merchants far and wide grew fat and richer. In Ijebo, the hills surrounding the city which kept it enclosed for over a hundred years became the sight of a great amount of construction as the Yoruba merchants decided, in their new-found wealth, that a view of sea was nice to look at while they were guzzling various fermented drinks and being fanned by their house-slaves. Ibo also grew under similar pressures, bursting out of its harbor and spreading up the Niger as workers from the hinterlands built stilt-houses along the river banks and in the river itself. With the growth of population of northerners in Ibo, a number of rather seedy dives came into vogue among the criminal element. It was in one of these riverside establishments that Lord Sisperi was found one morning with a knife in his back. A bar fight, it was said, between him and a Muslim trader he insulted.

When word reached Ibo of the illness of M'Blane in Usama, A'Bwanza summoned his men to him. "My nephew, M'Bwanza, will be crowned lord of all Usama if they obey the laws they have, themselves, created. Come, it is time to...pay our respects to my nephew." It was to be a fateful trip for them all.

The Usama-Yoruba Onium of Ibo

M'Bwanza, Chief of the Bini, Prince of Usama, High King of the Yoruba

DIPLOMACY:

M'blane was an old man. Somewhere between seventy and eighty years old (record-keeping was never a strong point of the Usama). Although he had retained a strong grip on power for many years, as his sight dimmed and his faculties faded, plots and intrigues were born like hyena pups after a lush summer. By the time Usama custom dictated he take to his death-bed and prepare his household for his passage, movement was already afoot. It was common knowledge that his only grandson M'Bwana (also known as M'Bwanze), by his daughter M'Blane, was likely to be designated as the rightful heir. The only other possibility was his cousin M'Bla'ko, who was sly but didn't have nearly as much support among the common people and the family. There was only one problem: M'Bwanze was the son of Imbudu (who was the brother of A'Bwanze, High king of the Yoruba) and thus thought by many of the notables of the realm to be sympathetic to the Yoruba Onium rather than to the needs of Usama. These nobles were generally the same who believed that the alliance with the Yoruba did not serve Usama well - there was some concern of foreign domination, after all, and they were all too willing to fan the flames of suspicion to enhance their claims. Thus, when M'Blane finally went to that big hunt in the sky, there was quite a bit of very public name calling and accusations from both sides. Those supporting M'Bla'ko played up the "Usama for Usamans!" card, while the M'Bwanza faction insisted he was the legitimate heir. All the notables, generals, and rich merchants of the realm got involved in the scuffles, and things for a time looked as if they might turn violent. But the Tribunal of Judges, in the end, held that despite concerns M'Bwanza was the legitimate heir. The people of the realm seemed quite taken with him, which made the whole affair less unpleasant than it might have been otherwise.

However, the warnings of M'Bla'Ko seemed to regain some of their momentum when - two months after M'Bwanza assumed the throne and things had begun to die down a bit - Abwanze (the King of the Yoruba) arrived in Bini with a large retinue of Yoruban chiefs to declare that he would step down from the rulership of Yoruba in favour of M'Bwanza as lord over all. M'Bla'ko, enraged by what he saw as a vindication of all his fears about foreign domination, immediately took to the streets to challenge M'Bwanza as a Yoruba puppet. At the same time the nobles of the land alarmed at this turn of events, took to their homes and prepared to defend their livestock and villages if things should get ugly. The Chiefs of Kafin and N'Ja'buda openly declared they would rather be abducted by gorillas than serve a Yoruban pig.

Sporadic fighting broke out soon after between M'Bla'Ko's personal troops and the Bini city guard which supported M'Bwanza. A'Bwanza and his men attempted to get out of town. Bini rapidly devolved into chaos and rioting between the two elements, and law and order went to pot. After two weeks of tension and occasional clashes, on an extremely hot day, tempers flared and fights broke out in the markets between two M'bla'ko spearmen and a number of merchants who supported M'Bwanza. The fights turned into riots, and the riots turned into a minor war as both M'Bla'Ko and M'Bwanza and their men appeared on the scene. In the dust and confusion, M'Bwanza took a spear in the side from an unknown party, but it was enough to send his troops into a rage. M'Bla'Ko was surrounded and pummeled to death, and most of his men killed or

imprisoned. Two days later, Abwanze was ambushed on a road outside of Bini and killed by troops loyal to the Chief of Kafin.

M'Bwanza recovered from his wound enough to clamp down on further resistance. He sent out the army to round up any further rebels and secure the countryside (communication from which had been sporadic at best for three months). The lands around Bini and M'Bouda supported M'bwanza, but his troops were attacked as they moved north into the hinterlands of N'Ja'Buda. It became clear soon after that the northern territories refused to recognize M'Bwanza as king. A number of malcontents moved into N'Ja'Buda, declaring the formation of a kingdom hostile to M'Bwanza. They would have to be dealt with later.

With A'Bwanze dead, it now came about that the Yoruban nobles were asking for M'Bwanza to come back to rule them as rightful heir. Wisely, he was able to play this off to the remaining Usama nobles as the Yoruba coming to Usama, rather than the reverse. The absorption of Yoruba by Usama went over with little fuss and the now-unified empire of Usama-Yoruba was born. Things remained somewhat confused, however, as Imbudu, heir to the throne was also father of M'Bwanza, the king.

SOUTH AFRICA

Mercenaries: 9i

The Bakongo Kingdom

Nombato, King of the Kongo, Lord of Great Kongo

DIPLOMACY: Mbundu(f), Giri(t)

Despite continued interest in northward expansion, the northern tribes remained reluctant to share their lands or thoughts with Niken Joi, and rebuffed his entreaties. Fiercely independent, the northerners had customs and mores that the Ba-Kongo had little understanding of, and Niken Joi eventually gave up. "Let them rot, uncivilized barbarians" he thought, as he returned to his City of Gold, Great Kongo. The fevers that came each summer though, did not leave the royal family unscathed, as Niken Joi himself succumbed to the blood-disease that takes so many Kongoese each year. He was buried in a great shrine to the Ocean and a lasting monument raised up to the man who practically built Kongo up from the mud into a great land of prosperity. His son, Nombato, assumed the throne without incident. His assumption was aided by the skill and beauty of his new-found wife, a princess of the far-off jungle land of Giri.

Giri was practically a mythical land to the Kongo - the stuff of children's tales. So when Prince Nombato left early in 1130 to establish an outpost there, many thought him mad. Throughout the markets the common people whispered to themselves: "obviously, he doesn't have the same capacities his father does! Ha!" Well, they weren't laughing when he returned from the Deep Jungle with news of strange tribes and, what's more, a stunning young bride by the name of Neila-Tsu. This young woman learned quickly the ways of the Kongo and helped her husband assume the

throne without any serious opposition. She became a favorite of the common people, but somewhat disliked by the richer hangers-on at court. Only time would tell how much she would miss her homeland, and communication with Giri remained sporadic at best.

The Luba Empire of Malawi

The Big Man, King of Luba, Lord of the Bone Chair, Master of all that he can see (as long as he doesn't stand on too high a hill)

DIPLOMACY: Makura (a)

Tragedy visited the royal family, as the Princess Umara, wife of the Big Man, died in childbirth. Her friend and fellow Princess of Kilwa, as well as the husband of the Little Man also perished a few years later, bringing everyone far and wide to wonder if a curse had not been laid upon the family. What evil had they wrought in years past to deserve such a fate? The Gods were not saying. A grand party, in order to forget the recent deaths, was ordered by the Big Man to celebrate the coming of age of his son, Langalibalele. He was a strong man, and full of the vigour and recklessness of youth.

As part of continuing efforts to carve a kingdom out of the sometimes desolate, sometimes lush but always unpredictable lands and gorges of his realm, the planting and harvesting efforts of the Malawi came to finally bear substantial returns. Whereas previously the tribesmen of Malawi had been uncomfortable unless they were planting small easily harvested crops to feed themselves and their families, the centralization of much of them in the areas surrounding Luba city led to substantial produce markets coming into being. Once it caught on that a fair amount of money could be made by selling cash crops to the city dwellers, a number of tribesmen began to plant year-long crops. The Big Man, being of fair intelligence, saw the value not only in the clearing of land but also in keeping these usually restless tribes in one place and hence under closer supervision. (Once they moved into the hinterlands, they were almost invisible and invulnerable). So, he greatly encouraged the entire dynamic at work by opening up more areas for markets, both inside and outside the city walls, loosening restrictions on trade and city residence, and generally being more friendly to the farming communities springing up. The result, after a few years, was that the areas surrounding Luba became less jungle and more farmland.

Elsewhere, impressed by the fortitude and determination of the Big Man and his subjects in this time of obvious personal loss, the Makuran tribes (who bore a strong resemblance both physically and in terms of their language and customs to the northern warrior tribes of Maasai, but were notably less apt to gut a stranger with their long knives) finally agreed to ally with the Malawi for the greater good of all concerned.

The Mwene-Mutapa Empire

Chakama, Lord of Great Mutapa

DIPLOMACY: City of Chumnumgwa(ea), Matopos(f), City of Rozwi(f)

The royal family, ever on the lookout for threats to their rule, rejoiced at the news that Mutapa was a new father - one of his wives had given birth to a young male-child. In the custom of

the people he was named after the first day of the week - a name he would retain until after his first year of life when he would receive a true Mutapan name. His sibling, the lovely daughter of Chakama, was named Sala in her own naming ceremony.

Lord Ibubwe, while holding negotiations with the outpost city of Chumnumgwa, succumbed to the dry and dusty climate there and expired. Chumnumgwa was truly in the middle of nowhere, deep in the heart of the Kalahari and the last real outpost of civilization in this part of the world. Really no more than a vast collection of markets which ebbed and flowed with the rains, it was inhabited primarily by traveling bushmen and hardy traders. Despite their independent nature, the Chumnumgwa councils were favorable to the entreaties of Lord Ibubwe and agreed to more closely ally themselves with far-off Mutapa. Matopos too, land of the legendary city of Great Zimbabwe, became fully integrated into the realm. This was greatly aided by the marriage of the princess Puyemo to the Chief of Matopos.

Historians will perhaps, hundreds of years in the future, look back on this period of Mutapan culture as one of remarkable urbanization but of an almost unique pattern. Whereas the usual pattern was for urbanization to flow from the center outwards to the peripheries, in these years in Mutapa it began more in the hinterlands of the cities of Rozwi and Zimbabwe. This was due largely to the vast expanses of hostile terrain between these city-outposts which led to a series of more localized, but no less intense city growth as opposed to a more directed city growth in the center of the empire. By 1135, Great Zimbabwe rivaled it's titular ruling city of Mwene-Mutapa in size. In fact, the Mutapan empire might more accurately be called a confederation of three great cities (Mutapa, Zimbabwe, and Chumnumgwa) rather than a more traditional empire of centralized growth and control. Either way, it was a prosperous and rich land.

NORTH AMERICA

The Yokut Tribes

Running Salmon, Bear-Killer

DIPLOMACY: Serrano(nt), Patwin(fa)

The Yokuts tribes had long been waiting for the right time to regain their lost heritage. Finally, in the Seventh Moon of the Third cycle of the Great Bear, what the Medicine Men predicted would come, did. As the Moon spirit was consumed by the dark, the rejuvenation came as the Great Spirit pledged. Now the Yokuts could once again reclaim the mantle of the Bear.

Running Salmon watched the signs of the fish-that-flies and much wisdom was revealed to him. "As the days turn hotter and then colder, the fish-spirits return to their ancient homelands. They assume the Great Journey to revel with their Lord. The servants of the Bear Spirit are their mortal enemies, and only with the help of the Coyote can they reach their homes. But once every two hundred cycles the Fish-spirit defeats the Bear and so it is with us now. We must unite the tribes and our spirits and assume the mantle of the Bear-killers. We shall serve our great spirits as the rejuvenation has shown us we must, lest we perish."

And so the word went forth among the Great Valley. The Valley tribes, however, were at first skeptical. Why should their spirits unite under the Yokut spirit? Surely their spirits were just as powerful as the Yokuts!

The Hohokam Cliff-Dwellers

Tawa, Speaker to Thunder-beasts

DIPLOMACY: Anasazi(a)

The boy, panting, bounded up the ladders. One level, two levels, through kitchens filled with the smell of cooked beans and maize. Startled women and men jumped aside. Finally, the boy reached the dark inner chamber of the Shaman. The warriors stood aside, for it was the custom of the cliff-dwellers that none may be excluded from the audience of the Shaman on this holy day. He brought with him a skin bag, filled with wild plants. Bringing them forth, he showed the small round roots to those present. "My grandfather found these while hunting the running-deer herd in the south. He had been gone fifteen days on a quest after his birth-mother departed to the court of the Thunder Beasts. He says they drew him to it. When he consumed them, he tells me he had a vision that filled his eyes with clouds, his ears with waves, and his soul with light. He says he saw the Thunder-Beasts."

Three weeks later Tawa and the others arrived at the chambers of the man. He was transfixed by the sky, deep in meditation. But he was aware, and relayed what the thunder beasts said: "We are to go forth, and bring the forgotten ones to us, they say. We are to renew the Old Alliance and unite The People again."

And so, Tawa took up the mantle of Speaker to Thunder-Beasts. He departed into the plains with the Gift and returned forty days later, a gaunt, wiry man but whose eyes now saw what must be done. And that was how the cliff-dwellers, long content in their homes, sent forth emissaries to the ancient Anasazi and the other Tribes of the Plains. It was time to renew the Old Promise, and listen, once again, to the words of the Thunder-beasts, muted all these cycles.

With the words from the Thunder-beasts, the Cliff-dwellers became reinvigorated. Long had they been content. But contentedness breeds laziness. As the word spread through the maze of rooms and chambers built one upon the other, something deep in the Hohokam people stirred. Something forgotten and something missed. Although they never knew it before, once again they felt whole. They were proud once again, and complete. The old drawings were again revered and young,

adventurous men once again walked on the old trails. And Grass Lake, in his fiftieth cycle, returned once again to the hunt and tracked down the legendary White Deer and returned to the Cliff with it's heart. This sacrifice - for the White Deer's soul was powerful - was taken with reverence and pride. In the end, the deer allowed the men and women to partake of its soul, and the emissaries to the Anasazi carried forth this news to their northern brethren. The tribes of the Hohokam gathered together to listen to the wise words of Tawa, and he took their measure. Looking among them, he understood well how many and who would serve the cause of the Thunder Beasts. Given the promises of the Thunder Beasts and the new-found confidence of the Hohokam, few were surprised when word reach the Cliff of the pledge by the Anasazi to their cause.

The Moundbuilders

Crow-Horse, Lord of Illini, Master of Michigamea, Spear-master

DIPLOMACY:

The Moundbuilders had long practiced the ancient arts, bringing the words of the Lesser Spirits and the Great Spirit to the People up and down the Snake. Taking their wealth from the grand potlucks and trading meetings up and down the river, they had for uncountable centuries been the caretakers of the Mounds which revered the Spirits. Truthfully, in the past, they had fought with their neighbors and trading partners, but these episodes had by and large been forgotten and forgiven. Now, they were, much as the Atakapa, content to farm, fish, and lead contended lives in harmony with their land and neighbors.

That is, until a traveling warrior committed an unforgivable sin on one of the Mounds. The extent of his irreverence drove the Shamans and Guardians into a veritable froth of anger. At first the stranger vowed his innocence - that he was from afar and didn't know of the customs of the Mounds. Incensed by the compounding of his errors, and obviously a servant of the Dark Aspect of the Coyote, they set upon him. The hands of the Shaman had not known bloodshed for many centuries, but this stranger brought out the worst in them by his spouting of heresies and lies. After they had beaten him about, broken his fingers, and jabbed the red reeds under his muscles to fester and pain, they demanded his origins. The stranger, with an evil glint in his eye, told them he was from the People of the Snake - Ayoel. Vowing revenge, the stranger was slowly killed and his flesh stripped to provide the first banners for the ensuing warrior bands called forth to teach the Ayoeli a lesson. Crow-Horse would avenge their heresies.

The Atakapa Councils

Heap of Birds, Reed-Lord

DIPLOMACY: Chitimacha(fa), Mejcalero(c)

Heap-of-birds was disturbed. For as long as he could remember, the Moundbuilders had been peaceful. Canoe trade had always been profitable for both sides. Now, however, they had not heard from the moundbuilders for over two cycles. And then, three months after the rude stranger had been sent north, an empty canoe had been found floating down the Great Snake past the villages. There was blood in it. Had the Snake spirit come back, despite being banished so long ago? Or had their brethren the Moundbuilders turned once again to the way of the Bear? He was concerned. Greatly. "Send forth Red Feather to the outer tribes. Ask them if they have had news from the Moundbuilders. Are their signs the same as ours? I will remain here with the warriors and listen to what the stones and the birds can tell me...just in case." And so Red Feather traveled south, along the Snake, wary of trouble and watchful of the signs.

Back in Ayoel, many moons after envoys to the Moundbuilders had failed to return, rumours flew of war-canoes on the Snake and the people and Councils were alarmed. And so when Heap-of-Birds heard by runner of the presence of warriors on the far shore of the Snake, it was with trepidation but not surprise. "And so, once again, our peoples are at war. Summon the warriors and prepare your reed-spears!"

Moundbuilder warriors, both on rafts and by the strength of their naked arms swam downstream to the banks of Ayoel. 4 of their war canoes drifted on the water, some made of strong carved oak and others of lashed pine, and drove the wading Ayoeli fishers from the waters. On the shore, waiting to meet the 4600 Moundbuilder warriors were less than half their number in Ayoeli spear and bow-men. As the invaders climbed up on shore, a number of individual duels ensued, but with an overall plan on both sides. Crow-horse drove his men towards the outskirts of Ayoel to trap the Atakapa in the lush forested area there. However, Heap of Birds was no fool, and saw well what a trap that would be. He strove to bring his troops to stand their ground near the bear pits and fish trellises by the shore of the Snake. With whoops and hollers on both sides, a bloody dozen melees ensued. Surprised by the resistance and spirit of the Ayoeli (who were thought to be farmers and fishers, not warriors!) the Moundbuilders took a beating, and retreated back across the Snake under a hail of spear. Crow-Horse looked back in anger as his men faded into the forest, leaving behind 800 of his best warriors, dead.

In the South, Red Feather spent much time with the neighboring tribes, and when word reached them of the treachery of the Moundbuilders, the Chitimacha Chiefs were outraged. "We owe allegiance to none save ourselves. But peace has always reigned in our lands along the Snake. We shall fight alongside you against the Moundbuilders." The attempt to get a wife from them for Heap-of-birds was rebuffed.

CENTRAL AMERICA ~ Where kings and their sons are dropping like flies...

The Canoe People

Chief Barba, Lord of Carib

DIPLOMACY: Ciboney(fa), Taino(h), Ciguayo(nt)

Off in the murky islands, where only hardy folk dwell, lay the villages of the Canoe People. Long known for their journeying ways, they had for years harbored ideas of greater glory. The wealth they amassed was primarily due to their industriousness at home, but over the years successive rulers had become more enamored of riches than their ancestors. This created a problem, for the islands the Canoe People inhabited had little to offer in the way of gold or other riches. Long had they been jealous of the neighboring, and richer, islands. Finally, when Chief Barba came through the Trial and assumed the mantle of headman, he hoped to get the people to throw their energies into exploration and trade with their neighbors. However, as the Canoe People had a rather diffuse society and a bizarre number of rules of social interaction and ranks, Chief Barba realized he needed to consolidate his rule if he were to actually bring his people together to work on the grandiose plans he had. To do so, he ordered the wisest builders in the land to construct the foundations of a strong village and fortress on the shores of the island. By bringing the people together in one monumental task over which he control, he was able to elevate himself above all others who might challenge him. Further, the fortress would protect the inhabitants from nearby island raiders. They might be richer, but a defensive position leveled the playing field. Thus was the fortress of Gli Gli created. Afterwards, Barba spent much time with his wife, but the Goddess did not smile upon them.

Others were sent forth to negotiate for grain and other goods, but also to establish outposts for future expansion by the Carib people. With luck, perhaps one day the Canoe People would reach the rich lands they heard of from passing traders. The Young Shaman Bright Spirit traveled far and wide to speak with others about the ways of the Carib people.

TzinTzunTzan

Tz'yu, Huey Quetzl

DIPLOMACY: Tepuztec (nt)

Old Man Opochtli, in the twilight of his years - all of 60 cycles - realized that he must put his house in order. In addition to marking the record wheel he tried to sire an heir with some of the nubile hangers-on in the court. Instead he finally expired one night in bed with two of them. All his efforts to sire an heir caused his heart to give out and the throne to be left empty. However, TzinTzunTzan was a peaceable kingdom, and little disturbance occurred. Oh, sure, there were a few bloody sacrifices made to ensure the soul of Opochtli passed hastily away, but that was about it. After the mourning period was over, it became clear to all that the machinations of Opochtli's closest advisor, Tz'yu, placed him in an excellent position for the throne. The only wild card in the mix was Lord Copil who pledged his allegiance to his new lord without concern (Copil was a calm man, more prone to spending time with his wife in the garden than gallivanting off on diplomatic escapades - perhaps this new king would let him retire finally!). However, loyal Copil was not to be rewarded with such as he passed away, at the ripe old age of 79 while conducting negotiations with the Tepuzteci. A sad end to a long, yet somehow, unfulfilling life.

Zapotec Kingdom of Mitla

Tzintzunotzlin, Son of Sky-Wheel-Speaker

DIPLOMACY: No effect

Ahuazhantzin continued the offerings to the gods, for had they not been good to the realm and so thus must be thanked. Indeed, in a grand offering to them, he ordered a great temple raised on the shores of Bahia Campeche. This complex, to be called Acatla, was a monument to the engineering and piety of the Mitlans. As the priests and slaves toiled, they brought their families to them to dwell around the temple complex. Soon, a small town grew and local commerce flourished. Dried fish, a variety of fruits, and carvings to the Gods filled the markets and the spirits of the sky looked down with pleasure. This act was, however, the last earthly doing of Ahuazhantzin, for he died, peacefully, in his stone bed at the ripe old age of 60. His son, Huehueotlzin, was summoned back from TzinTzunTzan (where he had practically taken up residence) to assume the mantle of the Wheel. This he did without troubles, except in his second year of rule, just when he was learning just how to manipulate the cunning priests and palace captains, he died. He had been out on a hunt with his wife and newborn son when a pack of wild boars, surprised by the hunting party, panicked and gored the three of them and his retainers to death. This tragedy took the entire ruling family by storm. Grief stricken, the young son of Ahuazhantzin, Tzintzunotzlin became the Wheel-Speaker. All of 15 years old and not the most capable in the warrior arts, he nonetheless proved to be a cunning manipulator of men and scribes. As a precaution against the whim of the Gods, he named his playmate Pachahmtl, who was the son of his uncle and *his* wife, took the mantle of second in line.

The Triple Alliance (Méxica)

Eight Deer, King of the Tiacopan, Lord of Texcoco and Tula

DIPLOMACY: Otomi (a), City of Texcoco(ea)

The Mexica, truly the center of civilization, were content to bargain and barter in the local markets and build ever more elaborate stone-works. The quarries surrounding Smoking Mountain became renowned for the quality of their stonework, and with the discovery of new and impressive rocks the temples were ever more elaborate. The realm was at peace and the cities and towns prospered. And, bucking a trend, Eight Deer was as healthy as an Ox. And just to prove it, he went off into the mountains, and hunted down a pack of hyena with his bare hands. It was good to be the king of a proud and strong land! As far as he could see, all bowed down to him. Even the recalcitrant Otomi had come around to the words of Eight Deer's envoys.

Chichen Itze

Kuere, Priest King of the Maya

DIPLOMACY: No effect

Chumatzl, ruler of Maya these many cycles, speaker to the Snake and the Lightning, Ear of the Water, died in his bed one hot summer night after late-night intrigues with the Priest caste headmen. Unlike the barbarian and uncivilized kingdoms to the West, the Mayans, however, knew very well how to plot and intrigue. Suspicions immediately fell upon certain Priests, and, since they had been the last to see Chumatzl alive, a certain general was easily able to drum up support against them. However, the Priests held much of the true power in the realm. Although they were without a strong following of warriors, they controlled well the coffers and the whisper networks the Maya were famous for. Within a few months, the cities were filled with low-key assassinations in back alleys and a tense populace. In all this, Chumatzl's son, a young

boy of only 12 years by the name of Kuere, was but a pawn of the Priests. And, as Lord Kukal and his troops eventually realized that the Priests would not step down without an all out bloodbath, he prepared to march on the capitol. However, a band of southern bandits ambushed the general's entourage - somehow sneaking past the spearmen - and skewered him. With the general gone, the priests proceeded to establish their rule by slaughtering the families of nobles and prominent citizens who had sided with the general and against the Gods. Kuere, when he reached 15 years of age, was installed as the rightful king by the priests. Doubtless, they believed he would be an easy figure to manipulate.

In the confusion, Chontal and Popoluca ceased paying even slight deference to the Priests in Chichen Itze.

THE INCA COAST

Land of the Moon-Cult

The Moon Kingdom of Quito

Pocomoc II, Moon Prince of Valdivia, Lord of the Moon Cult, Listener to the Great Eye, Eater of the Moon-Pie

DIPLOMACY: Guayami(f), City of Chiriqui(a)

The Moon smiled upon the King these years - perhaps Pocomoc had finally come to accept the truth of the Moon's strength - and a child was thus born to his wife U Yema. Indeed, the strength of the Snake waned, and that of the Moon grew as the efforts of the King met with success far and wide. The Guayami tribes, long skeptical of the power of the Snake, now gladly embraced the Quito since it seemed the Quito had embraced the powers of the Moon. Great feasts and sacrifices were held in honor of the alliance of the Guayami and the Moon Kingdom. The adherents of the Snake, overwhelmed by the growth of the Moon Cult, went underground. A few advisors to Pocomoc still dared, in whispers only, to warn the King of the powers of this heretical cult. However, in all, the Moon Cult Priests solidified their hold over the kingdom, and seemingly rooted out all but the most careful adherents of the Snake. The last public displays against the cult were the speech by a royal advisor on the "evils of the rituals of this new cult." He was dragged from the palace and flayed alive. The last public temple left to the Snake was saved only by the intervention of families of certain rich nobles in Quito who put forth a legal argument that they had for centuries been tasked with protecting the ritual sacrifices to the Snake. The Quito culture was steeped in intricate rituals and laws that pre-dated even the Snake and Moon. Thus, it was a cunning maneuver, as the commoners were not willing to risk the wrath of the Old Gods for the Moon. The Moon Priests, disgusted at being outwitted, vowed to return and obliterate all remnants of the Snake.

The Chimu Kingdom of Chanchan

Viracocha, The Young Sun

DIPLOMACY:

The wealth and glory of the ChanChan lands spread far and wide. The paths were strewn with gold, they said in far-away Nicaro. The fearsome Boen Warriors, renowned for their prowess and fearlessness, ensured that the realm was not threatened and the King was obeyed as a God. But such recourse was not necessary, for it was truly a golden age in ChanChan and King Viracocha was revered far and wide. The markets prospered, and the scribes were busy recording the glories of the realm. Such was the security and prosperity of the realm that the King was able to spend most of his time in his mountain retreat with his lovely wives. The result, not unexpectedly, was a beaming daughter with a wise look in here eyes. Nothing could have made the King and the people happier (well, maybe a son, but oh well.) As a birth-present to the surrounding lands, the King commemorated the birth of his daughter by disavowing all claims to the nearby Huari Kingdom of Ataura. Furthermore, he ordered the Priests to move against this "Moon Cult" - they approached the Moon adherents in Chimu, and learned their ways and rituals. The sacrifices they performed were abominations of the True Way of the Snake! Disgusted, the Priests returned to Viracocha with the bad news. "These Moon Cultists are heretics, and assault the Old Ways. They must be wiped out before they destroy the realm!" Viracocha, however, was not so hasty. A wise man, he withheld judgment. Perhaps some agreement with these cultists could be reached before any more trouble occurred. "Find a way to work with them Priests, not against them. For are these people not of the Realm, as all of you are? Do they not play a role in the Great Cycle, perhaps?" The Priests, upset by this course of action, could do nothing. Viracocha was well-loved by all. For their part, the Moon adherents in Chimu seemed content to consolidate their influence there, and that land remained uneasily split between those who followed the old ways and those of the heretics.

Tiwanaku

Dehol Capac the Fambly, Lord of the City of Seven Walls

DIPLOMACY:

The Tiahuanoco lands remained peaceful, untouched by the ravages of time and war. Nestled high in the mountains, the kingdom was a veritable paradise of colorful birds and frogs, succulent fruits, and elaborate stone temples to strange gods. The only thing of note in these years in this land was the unfortunate death of General Xhojin. While out on the hunt one early morning, he accidentally stumbled upon a clutch of tree frogs.

Used by the mountain people for their poison darts, their touch was known to be deadly. Frightening a few of them out of a tree, they fell <kersplat!> onto the general. It was an ill-deserved end to a great warrior. He was burned rather than preserved, for none were willing to touch his skin for fear of catching the poison too.

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63	The Almohad Caliphate	30.9	82	Open for a player	0.3	alarikfGM@disinfo.net
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79	The Commonwealth of Iceland	15.7	60	Jan Siggurdson	2.8	siggurdson@yahoo.com
80	The Kingdom of Quito	15.6	63	Alessio Conversano	1.9	alessio_conversano@hotmail.com
81	TzinTzunTzan	15.5	77	Allied	1.9	alarikfgm@disinfo.net
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