

## Lords of the Earth Campaign 42

### Turn 1 Newsfax 1101-1105 AD

**GM Note:** Where nations have not submitted orders or are unplayed, I have simply marked them "Slept". There's not much else I can do since I can't play them myself and can't devote time to providing write-ups for playerless positions.

#### Nomenclature:

1 I/C/S: 200 men  
1 FF: 2 strongholds  
1 W: 2 ships  
1NFP: 200 men

- ◆ Submissions by players are welcome (encouraged, actually) though I reserve the right to play with them if I feel like it.
- ◆ Name your cities. No name = no city.
- ◆ Name your leaders. Anyone who gives a leader a ridiculous name (such as Billy-Dol) gets an instant DF. (BTW, this really did happen and it annoys me a very great deal).
- ◆ I've given a certain amount of leeway on turn 1 (no DF's and such) but from now on the gloves are off - CCR and PRA control webs will be enforced.
- ◆ King Auto Admin is very much OFF as some of you will be finding out this turn...

#### Japan:

##### The Insei Government of Japan

Go-Shirikawa, In No Cho  
Capital: Heian Religion: Shinto/Buddhist

The In No Cho spent 1101 travelling between various Buddhist temples in Heian and the surrounding province of Yamato. There were many things for him to do - in addition to his role as Japan's *de facto* head of government, he was a Buddhist monk and had any number of spiritual and monastic chores demanding his attention and the former Emperor, being a man who cared greatly for his duties, did not shirk any of them.

The following year saw Shirikawa In take a tour, with a respectable-sized retinue of saffron-clad monks, of the southwestern provinces of Nippon. The Emperor prayed in many temples, spoke with many with sage men, Buddhist and Shinto alike, impressing all with his humble, patient and pious disposition, before returning to Yamato where he could be near the centres of power and execute his governmental duties. In due

course, the In No Cho informed his administrators that the *teikoku no zeikin* (imperial tax) would be set at one-twentieth for the coming five years. In due course, Insei officials reported that the Taira had sent a sum, a paltry sum, which they claimed amounted to one-twentieth of all their revenues; from the Fujiwara daimyo, who still laboured under the misapprehension that he ruled Japan, not one coin was sent nor one koku of rice; it troubled Shirikawa's bureaucrats but the In No Cho himself regarded the matter with equanimity - if the Fujiwara refused to pay, let them withhold their contributions. It mattered not in the end.

From the Minamoto there came not a contribution but a request that the In No Cho should assist them in the establishment of a seaport in Nigata, the clan's stronghold. Shirikawa was mildly surprised by this for the Minamoto had long been thought the lapdogs of the Fujiwara yet now they eagerly besought the assistance of Insei. Could this be evidence of some rift between the two clans? Whatever might lie behind it, the In No Cho ordered that funds be provided to assist the endeavours of the northerners and that monks and skilled artisans be sent forth at once with the trusted Genma Saotome at their head.

##### The Fujiwara Kampaku

Fujiwara Morimichi, Imperial Kampaku, Daimyo of the Fujiwara Clan

Capital: Heian Religion: Shinto

The Fujiwaras observed the activities of the In No Cho with an emotion that ran somewhere between amusement and disdain. Pah! Let the cloistered twit run hither and yon pretending that he had real power, let him convince himself that Japan listened to the mutterings of the bald-headed buffoon - Morimichi knew that true power, dominion over the islands of Nippon, lay with the Fujiwara clan. The prestige of the Kampaku may have slid a little in recent years but that counted for nothing in the long run. Japan belonged to the Fujiwaras. And the Fujiwaras were led by Morimichi. So it was and so it would remain.

Morimichi took himself off from his splendid estate in Yamato and visited the Imperial Court at Heian where life was gay and no real power resided. He had decided it was high time the links between the Fujiwaras and the Imperial Family were resurrected, perhaps as a means of blocking the influence of the In No Cho (or so the nobles and courtiers said but what do they know?). In any case, he dug around the females at Court looking for a woman who might advance his interests through marriage. There was no shortage of Imperial Princesses but few of them were of sufficient rank for the Kampaku's liking so, in the end, he settled for looks instead of rank and the Heian courtiers quickly arranged for a marriage to the Princess Masako, a distant cousin of the Emperor. She was less than half the age of the Fujiwara overlord but she was uncommonly beautiful with skin like alabaster, as lucent as molten porcelain. A fragile flower, she was, in need of much care and attention but life as the wife of a Fujiwara daimyo should not be overly taxing...

With the marriage ceremony completed, the Kampaku and his bride departed the capital for his grandest estate. They were escorted during their journey by over 4,000 newly-recruited cavalymen - this alone was proof of the supreme power of the Fujiwaras but many new military preparations were made. Fortifications were built around Edo and Heian and, throughout the Fujiwara dominions, it was noted that a great many craftsmen and artisans - masons, smiths and the like - were now employed by the clan. The popular explanation was that Morimichi had taken a very keen interest in siegecraft and that he sought, and was attaining, supremacy among all the clans of Japan in this field.

For his success here, trouble was found from other sources - the charming Masako bore her husband three children, all sons, in as many years but the first was stillborn and the others died within a year of birth. The doctors and attendants debated whether a girl of such patent delicacy as Masako would every be capable of producing a healthy child. Morimichi, meanwhile, took things well. He already had a fine son and heir from his first marriage. It would certainly not be fatal, to himself or the clan, if the girl brought forth no child but, still, to have an Imperial Princess bear his child would be a blow to all those who challenged Fujiwara supremacy. Oh well. One can't have everything. So long as she kept her looks, Morimichi thought, that was the important thing...

Young Tadzane, the very son and heir in whom all of Morimichi's hopes rested, had been off to Aichi while his father visited Heian. The subject clans of that region, who retained a considerable degree of independence, were subjected to what was positively a torrent of diplomatic overtures. The foremost daimyo of the region was even offered the chance to provide Tadzane with a bride to cement the Fujiwara link to the region - the offer was snapped up with alacrity and Fujiwara Tadzane was wed to a plain but very pleasant and surprisingly intelligent young lady by the name of Nohime. The clans of Aichi gradually were integrated into the Fujiwara clan and the last semblance of local independence was shed.

### **The Minamoto Clan**

Minamoto Yoshiie, Daimyo of the Minamoto  
Capital: none                      Religion: Shinto

Development was the order of the day in northern Japan. In rugged Akita, Minamoto retainers and loyal clansmen received new allotments of land and set about improving the yields of their estates by clearing new land for farming. Too, officials of the daimyo travelled all around the clan's lands counting heads and calculating the dues owed by peasant and lord alike. Before much time had passed, the castle of Minamoto Yoshiie was filled with papers, deeds of ownership and receipts for taxes paid and his small corps of revenue gatherers, under the watchful gaze of Yoshiie's uncle Yoshichika, was working around the clock to ensure that the clan's finances were in order and no-one was paying a koku less than they were obliged.

While this was going on, the young daimyo turned his eye to the fishing village of Sakata. The clan had many sizeable estates around that place and members of the clan regularly used it as a waypoint during their tiring journeys from between the

clan's farflung holdings. It was, the young daimyo thought, the ideal place in which to hold court - it sat at the heart of his domain and might easily be expanded to accommodate seaborne commerce. He thought of how swiftly his messengers might travel if they could use the sea instead of being forced to cross the mountains, hills and interminable forests of northern Japan. The more Yoshiie thought on it, the more convinced he was and, so, it came to pass that many people living in nearby villages were compelled to remove themselves and resettle in or around Sakata. Too, many of the daimyo's most trusted retainers were allocated lands near to the village which would one day, if Yoshiie's vision came true, become the Minamoto capital. Help was elicited from the Insei monks for this undertaking; of course, Yoshiie, true to his warrior heritage, distrusted their politicking and their subtle manoeuvrings but, if they had money and manpower with which to further his goals, he would accept it gladly.

To the south, an agreement was reached with the rich and sneaky Fujiwara, traditional allies of the Minamoto. Their relations would become closer than ever - they would defend one another militarily and quite unprecedented cooperation would be allowed. In the months and years following this agreement, the Fujiwara Court was filled with visitors from the north (the Fujiwaras, however, did not visit the Minamoto because they didn't like the idea of leaving their comfortable estates to travel to the half-barbarian wilds of the north - typical).

Not all went well, though. The daimyo's wife, a girl of only 16 years, bore him a son but the labour was hard and she developed a fever and died a few days later. Yoshiie took comfort in the fact that he had offspring, a son and heir. Yet the baby was sickly; his right hand had been twisted during the birth and the doctors and all those who were wise in the ways of medicine told him, most apologetically, that the boy's hand would be withered when he grew and that he would never bear a sword or use a bow. The daimyo was perturbed. Worse, though, as his son grew a little older, his health grew worse and most doubted whether he could ever become leader of a clan such as this.

### **The Taira Clan**

Taira Mosimori, Daimyo of the Taira  
Capital: none                      Religion: Shinto

Slept (and paid their Imperial tax).

## **The Far East:**

### **The Sung Empire**

Hui Tsung Chao Chi, Divine Emperor of China, The Son of Heaven  
Capital: Kaifeng                      Religion: Buddhist

In the comfort of his palace, the Son of Heaven passed his time with a serenity most can only dream of attaining - he spent his days practising his already excellent calligraphy and

hunting out new items to add to his collection of *objets d'arte*. Beneath so calm and civilised a facade, a philosophical struggle for the soul of China was taking place. Hui Tsung, who, whatever his many artistic and scholarly talents, was no soldier, appointed the young but respected Yue Fei as General of the Armies. Yue was one of those who had long railed against the Neo-Confucianist policies espoused by Ch'in Kuei and others of that ilk. Where Ch'in called for appeasement of the Khitan tribes, Yue called for war to restore the Motherland's glory and reclaim her ancient lands now languishing beneath the Juchen yoke. That appointment, in itself, was not of fatal significance for General Yue's influence at court was limited. More important and more worrying for the Neo-Confucianists was the fact that His Majesty appeared to fall beneath the spell of Su Sung, the Minister of Personnel and Imperial Tutor famed throughout the empire for his fantastic astronomical tower clock; he was widely held to be the champion of the reforms of Wang Anshi and, thus, the sworn enemy of the Neo-Confucianists. The pacifistic Neo-Confucianist courtiers worried that the increased favour shown to Su Sung by the Emperor might easily upset their careful arrangement with the barbarians and they didn't have to wait very long to see the fruits of Su Sung's influence...

In mid-January of 1101, as the officials of the Imperial Treasury were scurrying around and working as hard as they might to organise the coming year's expenditure, His Majesty, the Son of Heaven, issued a decree that henceforth no tribute would be sent to Liao or Hsi Hsia - instead, vast amounts of money were spent on the military to improve pay, food, equipment and even the quarters of the soldiers. As soon as they heard, a coterie of ministers flocked to the palace where they found Hui Tsung quietly painting a picture of some finches (truly, the Emperor was never happier than when indulging his art). By and by, the Emperor paused from his pursuit of the aesthetic and allowed the officials to interrupt his peace.

"Majesty," said the Imperial Councillor Ch'in Kuei tentatively, afraid of incurring Imperial wrath but more afraid of what the barbarians might do if they didn't get their money on time. "I and others have heard report of a decree of Your Majesty that no more tribute will be sent to the Juchen barbarians." The trepidation in the Councillor's voice was there for all to hear.

"The report is most correct," replied the Emperor cheerfully. "And I am urgently in need of more brushes and *better* brushes, I might add. These," he said, indicating the ones he had been using, "are terrible." At once, a eunuch scampered off to fine better brushes for the Divine Emperor of the Middle Kingdom.

"I am most apologetic that Your Majesty's brushes are unsatisfactory," said Ch'in Kuei. "Yet I do fear that the northern barbarians might be a more pressing issue. They are liable to see the refusal to pay tribute as a provocation."

The Emperor snorted. "That may be so, Esteemed Ch'in Kuei but I see their occupation of the sacred soil of the Motherland as a provocation. Let the barbarians leave Lu'an, let those damnable Tibetan Tanguts depart Huang, let them go where they belong - beyond the Great Wall and out of China.

Then, if it pleases me, I shall contemplate whether these wretches warrant my generosity. If they will not leave, I shall drive them out with the arrow and the sword. But make no mistake - there shall not be one more brass coin in tribute to these dogs.

"I am not an ungenerous man," the Emperor added as an afterthought. "But, really, there are limits. Shall a man returning to his home and finding an intruder living in his house then be expected to pay rent to the intruder? Is this not what is happening here in our own country?"

"But, Majesty," interjected another Neo-Confucianist minister. "China is weak. We have not the strength to defend ourselves let alone drive them back!"

"I think," said Ch'in, casting a black look at his colleague, "that China is strong, surpassingly strong, but her strength lies in her limitless wealth. Our wisdom, as a civilised people, lies in recognising that we cannot defeat the foe with the arrow and the sword, indeed I might say that we *should* not defeat them by war, yet we can and should conquer them with our riches and our intelligence."

Hui Tsung inclined his head and said, simply: "We are indeed rich. And why should our wealth, my wealth, go to line the pockets of barbarians when I could as easily raise an army, a fine army of bold men, who will drive the foreigners out of China? You would have me bleed China dry to fatten the barbarians, Councillor. That is the diamond truth shining at the heart of this policy of appeasement. Through tribute, we become weak and they become strong."

"Your Majesty's wisdom is as deep as the ocean and as all-encompassing as the air around us," stated Ch'in without a trace of irony. "We could indeed make war against the barbarian but why throw money away in an uncertain venture when we can, by paying only a little tribute, guarantee our security? We ought to use our finesse, our sophistication, our superiority to keep our foes in their place. By engaging in sordid war, we sink to the barbarians' level and become no better than they."

A eunuch scampered back in bearing brushes. His Majesty accepted them and examined them carefully. "These are much better brushes. Take the other ones away," he said to the eunuch then turned to Ch'in "Loyal Councillor, do you consider war for the defence of the Empire to be 'sordid'?"

"Of course not, Your Imperial Majesty, and a thousand apologies if I gave that impression. I lament that my foolishness and gauche inarticulateness are as great as Your Majesty's wisdom. I merely mean that soldiering is not a profession, if I may call it that, to which we, as civilised people, should sink. Our strength is in our coffers."

"No," said the Emperor flatly. "Our strength is in the blades of our warriors. It is to be lamented that this has escaped the attention of so many people heretofore. In our eagerness to buy the love of our blood enemies, we have let our Imperial Army lapse into a pitiable state but no more. We shall raise new armies, Councillor Ch'in, and we shall conscript only the finest

young men that they may bring great honour to the name of China."

"Truly, Majesty, I counsel against such a policy. After all, is it not said 'as good iron is not used to make nails so good men are not used to make soldiers?'" asked Ch'in, quoting the common proverb.

"Do not say that, Councillor. Say, rather, 'poor iron is not used to make swords; poor men are not used to make soldiers'. Let no-one throughout this wide empire of mine ever say the words you have just spoken, Ch'in Kuei. Let the stamp of shame be removed from soldiering that all may recognise that the greatest good and most honourable path for any Chinese is to defend the soil of the Motherland against the jackals who prowl around us, jealous and avaricious. As our ancestors built a Great Wall to defend us, let us build a great army and once more know what security means. Mark you, Councillor, that had we kept our armies strong in generations gone by, we would not now be in this pickle with Khitan tribesmen squatting on Chinese land. You spoke of nails. I say that soldiers *are* the nails with which I shall rebuild China's power and glory."

Ch'in was suitably abashed: "As Your Majesty decrees, so shall it be. May I be forgiven for my impudence and stupidity. Might I suggest, though, if new forces are to be conscripted, that the soldiers be branded on their faces that they may be marked out amongst the people..."

His Imperial Majesty cast a withering look. It was always the same with Neo-Confucianists - no matter how hard one reasoned with them, they were also too caught up in their dogma to realise to see what lay before them. "Guards, remove the loyal Councillor. And then remove the loyal Councillor's head." And it was done. (*GM note: apparently, the Sung really did brand soldiers faces to mark them out because their profession was considered dishonourable*)

The great philosophical debate had ended with victory for the Reformist movement. They, under the able leadership of Su Sung, were to reinstate Wang Anshi's reforms and put an end to the policy of inactivity and grovelling appeasement of which Ch'in Kuei had been the embodiment. Soon news drifted to Kaifeng of Liao mobilisation. This had hardly been a surprise and, under General Yue's watchful eye, dozens of long-abandoned forts and strongholds around Hopei and Bao Ding were repaired and brought back into active use. Too, thousand upon thousand of new soldiers were conscripted; though these new soldiers were neither well-trained nor of particularly high morale, they represented a departure for Sung China - a move towards an active defence instead of supine acceptance of Khitan domination. During the raising of the new troops, His Majesty's agents commissioned some officers of common birth - plain and poor men who showed promise. This shocked many at Court but the overarching policy of the Empire was to do whatever was necessary for China's defence - if these peasant-bred wretches had the brains and courage to make good officers, let them be commissioned and lead the regiments forward against the enemy. It remained to be seen whether the policy would be continued and extended after China was secure once more from the grasp of her foes. Many believed it would and

that the revitalisation of China's army, bureaucracy and economy, under the principles laid down by Wang Anshi, had only just begun.

In a particularly bold move, His Imperial Majesty decreed that pensioned soldiers would receive grants of land in newly conquered regions. Not only was the Empire now recognising and repaying the importance of her army but the Emperor obviously envisioned that the Empire would be expanding. Truly, this was an exciting time to live in China....

### The Liao Empire of the Juchen

Yeliuy Tian-zo, Khan of the Juchen, Liao Emperor  
Capital: Shen Yang                      Religion: Buddhist

The Liao were a powerful people. Only a fool could fail to see that. Assuredly, their land was poor and their cultural achievements were as nothing in comparison to those of the Chinese but, still, they were strong, their warriors powerful, their cavalry widely held to be invincible... T'would be a fool who'd provoke these Khitan tribesmen to war especially since their steppe primitivism was now overlaid by a patina of Chinese ingenuity and technical savvy. It was in tacit recognition of this that the Emperors of the Middle Kingdom had long paid tribute to the Juchen tribesmen but now, if the stories were to be believed, the Sung would no longer send their proper tribute, would no longer pay the Liao not to attack.

Tian-zo and his chief men didn't put much store by this when first the rumour surfaced - stories, rumours, exaggerations... They all meant nothing. The Sung would send the tribute north and the warriors of Liao would leave China in peace. Tian-zo *knew* this with as much certainty as he knew that the sun would rise in the morning. The Chinese were weak. Their days of glory were gone. Their armies were pitiful. They were not fierce as were the Liao. These were the incontrovertible facts and so the Sung would pay a tribute which the Liao would accept and all would be well for both sides.

And then, one day, arrived a messenger from the Sung Court at Kaifeng....

Yeliuy Tian-zo raged and railed against the perfidious Sung, these soft city-dwelling weaklings. In a display of arrogance beyond reason, the dogs not only refused to pay their rightful tribute but actually demanded the surrender of Lu'an and the withdrawal the Liao beyond the Great Wall. Well, they would pay and it would be a dear price.

The Liao Emperor decreed that every Khitan man be conscripted and many Han Chinese as well. From the distant corners of the steppe, boys as young as twelve years were called to fight in the coming campaign alongside their fathers, brothers and grandfathers. In Lu'an, all engineers, artisans and artificers whose skills might be deemed useful to the war effort were dragged from their homes and forced to march behind the Khitan horsemen. Contemptible and cowardly though the steppe lords judged them to be, their knowledge of siegework would surely be useful when the Liao army stood before the walls of Kaifeng... March of 1101 saw the Liao Emperor, Khan Yeliuy Tian-zo, march south more than 10,000 horsemen of various

types, a siege corps numbering around 5,000 men and 7,000 mixed footmen, mostly Chinese conscripts. Too, a strong contingent of many thousands of horsemen had been provided by the steppe nomads.

## **The Great Manchurian War**

April-May 1101: The Liao army moved south into Yen and, by the middle of May, the Liao were watering their horses in the Huang Ho. No opposition was found so, at the order of Tian-zo, a few Han notables, who had either not been able to flee in time or had purposely chosen to remain, were seized by the invaders. Instead of harming them, the Liao Emperor ordered them to form a provincial administration under the auspices of the Liao Empire. The locals saw which way the wind was blowing and acceded to the wishes of their new master. With this done, the Liao marched southwest along the great river's banks into Hopei...

In the border province of Bao Ding, news of the Khitan incursion into Yen reached the Sung General, Di Qing. The General had only just arrived in the region to assume command of the garrison of Chen-Ting-Fu which numbered perhaps 9,000 men, all infantry with a few artificers thrown in for good measure. Realising that Bao Ding was of little import when compared to Hopei and the capital, which were now under threat of imminent barbarian attack, Di Qing struck out southwards to bolster the defences of Kaifeng. He arrived before the end of May.

June-July 1101: Liao outriders began to appear in eastern Hopei at the beginning of June. Sung cavalry attached to General Yue Fei's army tried to engage these interlopers but the steppe horsemen were too fast. The Liao reconnoitings revealed that the Sung were well dug in and, worse yet, Hopei was littered with castles, strongholds, watchtowers and fortifications of all kinds. Tian-zo consulted with his chiefs and advisors before deciding to push on - the Liao were strong and would conquer; the Sung were weak and would perish. The equation was as simple as that and no fort, no castle, no wall would ever change it. Yue Fei felt precisely the opposite - his forces were weak and could not stand against the massed Khitan force in a pitched battle but the region's forts and earthworks would bleed the invader dry. Of that Yue was certain.

August 1101: The first blood was shed in Hopei. Tian-zo passed command of the infantry and the corps of engineers to one of his councillors, the ever-proficient Boon Min, and set him the task of neutralising the Sung fortifications one-by-one whilst Tian-zo himself would take the cavalry and lure out the enemy's field army. As the month rolled by, the Sung forts did begin to fall but it was at a high cost in lives and the work proceeded slowly for the Sung mastery of engineering was impressive and the Liao had to rely on main force to overrun the defences.

With the work of reducing the region's many forts now engaged upon, Tian-zo and the Liao mounted forces sought out the Sung army in order to bring them to battle. Yue Fei, however, had massed the Imperial Army, which numbered almost 25,000 men, behind a series of skillfully-devised

earthworks strung out around the vicinity of the capital. Occasional cavarly skirmishes took place as Yue sent out mounted detachments to harass the enemy's conscripted Han infantry and Tian-zo moved, with typical alacrity, to oppose these raids (for the Liao Emperor was aware that his footmen were not dependable and might desert or defect if pushed). Other than that, the war in Hopei settled down into a stalemate with the Sung Imperial army sitting on the defensive and the Liao host slowly and not always successfully working on reducing the fortifications.

Towards the end of the month, spies reported to Yue Fei, one morning, that the greater part of the enemy army was deployed around a particularly troublesome group of hill forts perhaps fifty miles north of Kaifeng; so difficult was the action around these castles that the Liao had even had to dispatch some of their cavalry to support the attack. This had left an interesting situation, so the spies said, for the Liao Emperor was encamped only a few miles distant from the Imperial Army and he had fewer than 5,000 men with him! Yue held council with Di Qing and Minister Su Sung and, between them, they decided that the opportunity was too great to miss. Whilst the Sung did not want to face the Liao in open combat, Yue might expect to outnumber the foe by almost five Chinese men to every one Khitan warrior. Victory might deliver Tian-zo into Sung hands, severing the snake's head. So it was that General Yue Fei ordered his army to make haste and march forth to do battle. In an effort to avoid alerting the enemy to his intentions, he sent only minimal reconnaissance forces ahead...

The spies had told Yue that the Liao Emperor was encamped beneath the shattered walls of a recently razed fort overlooking the wide Huang Ho river. Sure enough, his parties of outriders reported that this was true - the enemy were exactly where the spies reported - but, to everyone's horror, there were twice as many Khitan warriors as the spies had said and they were ready for battle! Four thousand sturdy Khitan warriors mounted on fierce chargers, three thousand horse archers still brushing the steppe dust from their boots, about a thousand very heavily armoured hosemen and, above all, the Liao Emperor's personal bodyguard - almost two thousand formidable light cavalry and a thousand horsemen armed and armoured more heavily than any the Sung had ever encountered. Yue cursed his spies and wondered if this deception had been deliberate or if they were merely dolts... There was no way to tell and it didn't really matter for the effect was the same - the Sung now had to face the Liao in open battle.

The Sung hurriedly deployed, standing on the defensive with their right flank resting on the river and all of their cavalry on the left to see off any Khitan attempt to outflank them. In the early afternoon, the Liao assault began. The fight was brief and not particularly bloody. The Sung cavalrymen, perhaps 5,000 strong, fled the field at the approach of a single regiment of heavy Liao horsemen less than a fifth that number. Nor did the infantry stand up very well. Some of the sturdier spearmen boldly made their stand against the enemy's charges but most were concerned with saving their own lives and, to Yue's chagrin, fled the field and made their way back to the fieldworks with all haste.

General Di Qing, although not the soundest of strategists, held his corps together impeccably. Wherever he saw men looking shaky, he would ride up and shout hortations, reminding them that they were defenders of their Motherland and that, if China's honour demanded the sacrifice of their lives, they ought to be proud to die. His words worked and the Liao were forced, instead of pursuing and annihilating the fleeing soldiers whom Yue was desperately trying to rally, to concentrate on destroying Di's forces. By nightfall, the army which had marched out so gallantly to rout the Khitan horde was cowering within its fieldworks again. On a positive note, the cavalry who had fled the field had, eventually, found their courage again and rejoined Yue. By midnight, even Di Qing had rejoined the main army with what remained of his detachment. The Sung officers estimated that they had lost 3,000 men, dead, wounded and captured, during the engagement. Yue had to admit, although it was a defeat, it was far from the unmitigated disaster he had expected. But Tian-zo had not finished with him yet...

The following morning saw a determined Liao attack on the excellent Sung earthworks. The attackers were outnumbered and, troublingly, consisted mainly of cavalry though perhaps 5,000 foot soldiers and a small number of artificers had been dragged from their work reducing the castles to assist in the assault. The Liao managed to pierce the Sung breastworks in several places, clearing ditches and tearing down barricades, but the fighting was brutal and the attackers didn't have it all their own way - the Chinese had built up their earthworks carefully for many months and were fighting in their preferred element (viz., from a prepared position) whilst the Liao horsemen had to dismount and fight on foot. The ditches around the Sung position were soon filling up nicely with enemy dead, both Khitan and their Han conscript infantry. The breaches of the Sung perimeter were, of necessity, piecemeal so that, even where the Liao seemed to be enjoying success, they posed no real threat to the overall Sung hold on the position.

All the same, before evening fell, Yue beheld that his men were not going to hold out much longer. They had acquitted themselves admirably, given the invader a bloody nose and, most importantly, taught the barbarians that they could not attack the Sung with impunity but their temperament was shaky and Yue fully expected the rather unpredictable Sung army to run in the face of a renewed attack in spite of its successes. In the darkest depths of the night, the Sung army abandoned its position, except for a skeleton rearguard under the indefatigable Di Qing, and withdrew to the defences of Kaifeng. With morning came the barbarian attack, the destruction of most of the rearguard and the capture of the Sung fieldworks. Once more, Di Qing and a handful of braves escaped the enemy assault and reached Yue again.

Sept 1101-April 1102: This long period saw the Sung blockaded in their capital while the Liao worked on subduing the countryside (no easy task for, despite the retreat of the main Sung army, the region's many castles remained). Much Liao blood was spilt in reducing these outposts. Disease ran rife through both the Liao and the defenders of the castles. But in Kaifeng life went on pretty much as normal. Food was brought by boat and communications with the other parts of the Empire

went on using the river. The Emperor even found time to take excursions south of the Huang Ho before returning to Kaifeng which he evidently felt was as safe as ever it had been.

Such was the case within Kaifeng. Outside, the Liao spent many days in the wake of the Sung withdrawal contemplating the seemingly endless walls and approach forts around the city. At last, they decided that the city could not be taken and settled for slaughtering anyone foolish enough to venture outside. The province of Hopei itself did not fare as well as Kaifeng. After months of effort, the last Sung outpost was smashed down by the Liao and the region was brought under the cruel yoke of the barbarian invader.

May-August 1102: Tian-zo was far from happy. The losses his army had suffered on Sung walls had been far greater than he had envisioned and he resolved that never again would he test his men against such fortifications. The Liao Emperor had planned, originally, on moving north into Bao Ding and reducing it but the steppe riders he had sent to reconnoitre had returned to him bearing news that the province was as heavily fortified as Hopei. All hopes of attacking Bao Ding were given up and Tian-zo cast his greedy eyes southwards along the Huang Ho to the rich province Houma. In due course, his pickets informed him that the place was almost defenceless so the Liao Emperor's young son, Yeliuy Dashi, tore off with a small force to conquer the place. By August, Houma too had fallen to the invader but, as in Hopei, the Liao had no stomach to test the walls of the riverport of Lo-Yang and allowed the city to stand unmolested.

Sept 1102 -April 1103: Very little took place during this period - the northern Sung provinces of Bao Ding, Yun and Shan'si and their great cities fell away from all but nominal Imperial control for the simple reason that they had no means of communication with the capital. None of the regions repudiated the rule of His Imperial Majesty but they were now left to their own devices and there would likely be no end to this situation until the Khitan dogs were swept out of Hopei.

But the Sung were not the only ones to suffer troubles of this kind. April saw the beginning of a revolt in Lu'an. The provincials had long smarted under the yoke of barbarian rule but now they heard tell of terrible losses in the southern war - of thousands of Khitan slain by the glorious Yue Fei and his loyal comrade-in-arms Di Qing and, worse, of thousands of Lu'an men driven to their deaths by Juchen whips in battle against their fellow Han Chinese and the Son of Heaven. Quite a few healthy men of fighting age remained in the region for the Liao had been slipshod in their conscription (a sign of the speed with which it had been undertaken) and, in any case, they had been most interested in drafting men whose skills might be utilised in sieges and had left many farmers and townsmen behind. Now they were in arms against the barbarians and calling out for the Sung armies to march and liberate them!

Remainder of 1103-1105: The revolt in Lu'an was at risk of spreading into neighbouring newly-conquered Yen. The rebels might even make common cause with the Sung hold-outs in Bao Ding. They would have to be crushed without mercy. Tian-zo sent Boon Min off with a detachment of swift

horsemen. By June, they had arrived in Lu'an put down the revolt with surpassing brutality. The rebel "forces" lacked weapons and had no formal training (too, as it turned out, there were less than a couple of thousand of them) so they posed no real threat to the Liao warriors but, still, they were crushed and an example was made. Any rebel Han captive (not that many were actually taken prisoner) was shot to death by Khitan archers in front of the assembled inhabitants of his village; directly afterwards, the home of the rebel would be burnt to the ground (if the Liao felt generous, they would allow the wife and children of the rebel to leave the building first but they didn't always feel generous...). By late Summer, the people Lu'an were cowed once more and Boon Min could strike out for Hopei to rejoin the main army.

Early 1104 saw a sudden Khitan attack, brilliantly executed, on Shensi but, as ever, they failed to take the great walled city of Ch'ang-An. By Summer, Yeliu Dashi, who had headed the expedition, was contemplating an attack along the south bank of the Huang Ho, into Shantung but, although it was a tempting target, he was forced to concede that Liao had overrun a great deal of territory already and there was no point in putting their successes at risk with further adventures.

From this point on, the war rather petered out - the Sung were secure behind their high walls and the Liao had the run of the countryside. Some, on either side, began to wonder if now was the time for negotiation.... (though, mostly, they wondered quietly for none wanted to go the way of Ch'in Kuei). Hui Tsung, imperturbable as always, made great strides with his calligraphy developing a style known as 'slender gold', a singularly elegant and visually pleasing script. Despite the war raging along the great river, the Emperor did not allow such worldly concerns to distract him from what was truly important - his art and scholarship.

### **The Tangut Khanate of Hsi Hsia**

Khan Tehu, Emperor of Hsi Hsia, Khan of the Tanguts  
Capital: Xinghou                      Religion: Buddhist

With the ending of tribute from the south and the appearance of Liao warbands along the banks of the Huang Ho, Khan Tehu was contemplating what he ought to do. He was far from certain. Like the Liao, his poor kingdom relied on the tribute extracted from the Sung. Too, he was certain that his army, bold cavalry supported by foot soldiers armed and trained after the Chinese fashion, would best the Sung armies in any fight. Perhaps it was time for the Tanguts to march south and remind the Sung why they paid tribute in the first place...

Bah. In truth, Tehu was far from eager to embark on such a course for he was already confronted with an endless stream of troubles - the aggressive nobles were manoeuvring against him perhaps with the goal of overthrowing him; even his two brothers were, he knew, testing their support in the Empire and might at any time move against him. Tehu's hold on Hsi Hsia was tenuous at best and he needed no foreign adventures which might provide his domestic foes with an opportunity to move against him. Too, he doubted his ability to hold more Chinese land and foresaw that, were the Tanguts to move

southwards, they would inevitably be drawn into conflict with Liao and that was a war Tehu Khan wanted to avoid at all costs for it would benefit none but the Sung. The Tangut nobles screamed, though, that war must be pursued, that the Sung must be punished, their lands taken and, if the Liao wished to stand against Hsi Hsia in battle, let it be so - the Tanguts would vanquish them and the Sung alike. But what Tehu wanted more than anything was peace, stability and a steady flow of Sung gold to his coffers. What to do, what to do.... To support the Liao in humbling the Sung? No, the Liao would not share the spoils of war with the Tanguts. To make war against Liao and Sung alike? No, that was a conflict whose outcome could not be foreseen. To sit back and do nothing? No, for the winner of the current war would emerge stronger than before - Tehu shrank before the vision of a Liao Emperor enriched by the lands along the Huang Ho or, if anything could be worse, a resurgent and revanchist Sung flushed with victory after driving the Liao invaders beyond the Great Wall.

While such cares attended the Emperor of Hsi-Hsia, news arrived that the Uighurs were on the move. This, of course, might foreshadow anything - an attack on his own domains, a migration westwards, a move against the Liao Empire while it was distracted... There was no way of telling whether they would head or what they would do but Tehu could offer their activity as an pretext for procrastinating over the Chinese war - even the most bellicose of nobles recognised that war could not be waged in China when the borders of Hsi-Hsia were not yet secure from Uighur raiders...

Before too long, it became apparent that the Uighurs were indeed riding for the borders of Hsi Hsi but not, as it turned out, to raid.

### **The Khaganate of the Uighurs**

Temu-Lin, Khagan of the Uighurs  
Capital: none                              Religion: Asiatic Pagan

Life on the Asiatic steppe was hard. The winters would freeze a man to his bones and the summers scorched the earth 'til both man and beast might die for want of water. Truly, it took a special kind of man to live out here where the uncrowded earth stretched out forever in all directions under the sky's blue dome. Only out here could a man be free; only here might a man live and ride and fight as befitted anyone worthy of the title "freeborn". Yes, even the lowest steppe warrior was as an emperor when set against the dogs who sheltered in their little houses and spent days without end breaking their backs as they scraped in the dirt to raise a few worthless plants, never travelling, never taking up arms in blood feud against their neighbours, gaining no glory, singing no songs, never *living!* Aye, life on the steppe was hard but it was real not like the half-blooded existence of the weakling Sung lords or the skinny peasants and fat merchants of China. And as for the Hsi Hsia and the Liao... Pah. Temu-Lin, Khagan by grace of his prowess in battle, spat upon them for they both had fallen to the depths of iniquity. Once they had been great tribes led by fierce and powerful warlords and they had done magnificent deeds, covered themselves and their banners with glory gained in a thousand battles. But now? Now, they had become as the Sung - they took Chinese titles and adopted Chinese manners and

pretended they were the same as the Chinese. They had turned their back on the strength which the endless steppe gave to all those she nourished; they had embraced the weakness and cowardness of the Sung. Now, they were without honour...

...but perhaps a reevaluation was in order, Temu-Lin decided. The flocks of the Uighurs were diminishing season by season. The water holes were even drying up. The climate had, for the past few years, worsened and the whole of the Uighur tribe could no longer support themselves from their ancient lands. Something drastic would have to be done if the Uighurs were to overcome their current hardships so the Khagan turned to that most ancient of solutions - raid, war, conquest. The Uighur tribes and their distant kin and allies were summoned to the yurt of the Khagan that they might take counsel together. By and by, after a week of deliberations, the Uighurs decided to strike out southwards into Hsi Hsia. They would seek safe passage from the Tangut Emperor and head south into China. Loot, food, slaves would be dragged back to the steppes and, for a little while, starvation and the pressures of a cruel climate might be staved off. Such was the Khagan's plan and it was endorsed by the tribal elders and allied leaders. 17,000 Uighur horsemen gathered in Ayaguz and moved south into the Tangut Empire of Hsi Hsia.

The advent of this host put a holy terror into the hearts of the Tanguts who assumed the Uighurs came with hostile intent. They were relieved but perplexed when they saw that the Uighurs were causing no trouble as they travelled through Tangut lands but, instead, journeyed quietly, shunning settlements and seeking no interaction with the locals. The Uighurs rode with their banner of peace flapping overhead. In this way, they declared to all who saw them that they would do no harm to those through whose lands they travelled.

News of the horde's coming reached Xinghou, the Tangut capital, and left all in a terrible quandry. The arrival of this potentially hostile force could not be ignored and many clamoured for the army, which could perhaps equal the invader man for man, to be called out. Others called for dialogue to be opened for the Uighurs had, as yet, committed no overt act of hostility against Hsi Hsia unless one counted the crossing of the border. The Uighurs had been steadfast in their discipline - no farm had been raided, no flock stolen, no person slain. Whatever their goal, the Uighurs did not want to make an enemy of the Tanguts so why should the Tanguts make an enemy of the Uighurs? Tehu was encouraged by this argument and opted to wait at his great capital, Xinghou, with his army close by (just in case).

By mid-summer of 1101, the Uighurs arrived near Xinghou, peaceful enough but looking thoroughly bemused at the depths to which the once-proud steppe lords of the Tanguts had sunk - they dressed in silk, perfumed themselves and drank tea like the Sung; in fact, they only climbed on horses on the rare occasions when their steppe blood called them to hunt. Tehu Khan, Emperor of Hsi Hsia, adorned in his richest robes and accompanied by several hundred finely-dressed and grim-visaged spearmen met with the fleabitten Khagan Temu-Lin of the Uighurs in a royal hunting ground a few miles distant from the walls of Xinghou. The Khagan had eschewed all escort and

had brought only his son, who went by name of Borat Bear-Killer on account of his favourite pastime (viz., killing bears for fun), and Khan Juc, leader of an allied tribe of Nestorian Uighurs.

In his polite way, Tehu Khan enquired why the Uighurs had come here, so many leagues distant from their own lands... Surely they had not come to do harm to Hsi Hsia? Temu-Lin Khagan explained, bluntly, that his warriors were going on a raid, that times were hard in the north and the Uighurs would take food and booty from the Sung to see them through another few seasons; they meant no harm to the Tanguts but meant to pass through their lands one way or another. The Tangut Emperor was most impressed by the Khagan's frankness but, more than anything, the sight of these tough steppe barbarians who feared nothing sparked an idea in Tehu's head... Since the Tanguts worried that they could not match the power of their rivals to the south and east, might he, Tehu Khan, not harness the power of these wild barbarians by buying their loyalty?

"Tomorrow, you shall come to Xinghou and enjoy the full measure of my hospitality. As to freedom to move through my lands, it is granted. If you are intent on making war against the Sung, you may pass through my lands just as you please," said Tehu with his oiliest smile.

The Uighurs were glad to receive free passage but Temu-Lin was anxious at the prospect of travelling to a city - all those walls and doors closing in on a man, restricting him... Truly, to live in a city must be like being buried alive, Temu-Lin reasoned. But hospitality had been offered and Temu-Lin knew two things about this concept - first, to spurn a man's hospitality was an insult equivalent to defecating on the tombs of his ancestors; second, hospitality meant free food and drink. So it was that the Khagan agreed to visit Xinghou and the palace of the Tangut Emperor...

The palace was a grand place to Uighur eyes and the hospitality of Hsi Hsia was lavish - food, drink, dancing girls were there for the delectation of the steppe lords. Not all Tanguts, though, were pleased to see barbarians feted. Many Tangut lords had adopted the mores and prejudices of the sophisticated Chinese from whose culture they borrowed so heavily and forgot that the Tanguts, only a few generations ago, had been uncultured tribesmen like the Uighurs. These lords muttered that, if their Emperor was going to allow the Uighurs safe passage, why did he not push them on toward their final goal instead of dragging them here to the city where they would pollute the whole place with their vile miasma?

At length, after many hours of feasting, Tehu Khan leant close to Temu-Lin, that he might not be overheard, and asked a question: "Great Khagan, why do you travel south to war in China?" Temu-Lin began to respond, repeating what he had said on the previous day, but Tehu interrupted: "If you want food and gold, there are easier ways for you to ride all that way and fight for it. You might find people nearer at hand who would provide all that you need in return for your services as warriors."

"What have you in mind?" asked the Khagan whose simple worldview left him a trifle confused about what was on offer.

"I will give you gold and food. You need not fight for it in China. I will *give* it in return for certain tasks - simple tasks for men of your obvious prowess and courage. For example, have you met my brothers....." said Tehu, indicating a couple of figures deep in conversation on the far side of the feasting room.

A mere week later, Tehu sent forth wagons to the camp of the Uighurs who, for all their talk of free passage, had made no attempt to leave the vicinity of Xinghou. The contents of the wagons remained a secret to all but no sooner had the Khagan and his chief men set eyes upon them than a picked force of a thousand warriors, with Temu-Lin at their head, rode directly for the gates of Xinghou. The Tangut Emperor had declared that the city was always to be open to the Uighurs whether they came bearing arms or not and they were many or few in number so the sentries nervously stood aside and let the cavalry ride through the gates, through the cobbled thoroughfares of the city and directly to a large mansion house set in its own broad gardens near the palace complex. It was the home of the Tangut Emperor's younger brother. Within a quarter of an hour, the building was in flames and the Imperial Prince lay dead with a dozen steppe arrows in him. The Khagan dragged the body behind his own horse and rode straight to the palace of Emperor Tehu Khan. Panic spread before him - soldiers made ready to barricade the palace against these treacherous barbarians and the Chief Minister of Hsi Hsia ran to his Emperor, abased himself before the Emperor's feet and shouted in a wavering voice: "They have betrayed us! The Uighurs have murdered Your Majesty's brother and now they ride here to kill you, Great Emperor! They have betrayed your trust!"

"No, they've repaid it," said Tehu in a calm voice. "Order the gates opened and the Uighurs admitted to the palace. And which brother did they kill? I told them to deal with both."

So began the great purge. Before the sun set that day, both the Emperor's brothers were dead along with their families. Within a month, the Uighurs were riding from one end of the realm to the other at the Tangut Emperor's direction, slaying whomever he commanded. Any noble whose loyalty was suspect received a visit from the Emperor's steppe hirelings. Elements of the army who were thought potentially rebellious were simply massacred. For the first time in his reign, Tehu Khan felt secure. He had been very wise in acquiring a private army who would do his bidding so long as the money held out. And, to keep the Uighurs tied to his cause, he had even given his daughter to be the bride of Temu-Lin; he was considerably older than she (no-one knew exactly how old the Khagan was because the steppe tribesmen didn't keep accurate count of their age), he was uncouth beyond all belief and he stank but what did the happiness of one girl matter when set against the security which, Tehu Khan believed, the marriage had bought?

The Uighurs had good cause to feel pleased too. Their position in Hsi Hsia was supreme - they virtually ruled the place; the Tangut nobles were either dead or too cowed to challenge them. Even the army of Hsi Hsia was, in no small part, dead,

demobilised or deserting, their role in the Empire assumed by the Uighurs. To keep the Uighurs paid and their families fed, the Tangut Emperor squeezed his subjects cruelly, often to the point of starving them, but any dissent was crushed beneath the boots of the steppe lords. More and more Uighur noblemen came to take up residence in Hsi Hsia permanently; they contemned the softness of city-living but still enjoyed the pleasures of courtly life - plentiful food, endless drink and pliant slave girls.

Eventually, during the early months of 1103, Tehu Khan decided that the time had come to join the war in the south. The Liao and Sung were both exhausted by war and would fall easily before the Hsi Hsia assault (which would actually be an Uighur assault but we won't quibble about semantics...). So a council of war was called - the handful of Tangut officers still retained by the Emperor, some of Hsi Hsia's Chinese ministers and, most importantly, Temu-Lin and the chiefs of the Uighurs. In this council, the Emperor of Hsi Hsia voiced his desire to make bloody war upon Sung and Liao alike and claim the rich regions along the Huang Ho for himself. To his utter bewilderment, there was little enthusiasm for the exercise not even from his war-loving Uighurs. They felt that, having found an easy living as hired muscle for a quasi-Chinese king, they did not wish to throw it all away in some adventure down south. But it mattered not - Tehu Khan, Hsi Hsia Emperor of the Tanguts, had proclaimed that they would march to war within the month. He had spoken and his will would be done.

Or so he imagined. The Uighurs, though, had different ideas. During the first few years of their residence in Hsi Hsia, they had realised that the Tanguts did not truly rule this rich little land - the Tanguts issued orders but it was the Chinese administrators who kept the country ticking along. Even Temu-Lin's teenaged bride had explained to him, one night, that the Emperor of the Tanguts would issue dikats and decrees but it was left to his ministers to find ways of executing them. And so an idea had come to the mind of Temu-Lin - if the Hsi Hsia Tangut overlords were to disappear from the face of the earth, would not the kingdom remain in existence and run just as efficiently as before so long as the Chinese bureaucrats and ministers were left unmolested? It seemed that it would. And if the Tanguts were replaced by the Uighurs, would that affect the ability of the administrators to run the land? It seemed that it would not...

On a light evening just after Midsummer 1103, a party of a few dozen Uighur warriors entered the palace of the Tangut Emperor, strolling past the handful of Tangut guards without so much as a by-your-leave; this in itself was nothing unusual for the Uighurs generally behaved as though they owned the place. The group made straight for the private chambers of Tehu Khan. An elderly chamberlain, with many a bow, politely asked the band to wait while he sought the Emperor's leave to admit them. Their answer was the slash of an Uighur blade. A few handpicked Tangut soldiers had been retained by Tehu Khan as a sort of honour guard but they were caught unawares by such vicious treachery and, in seconds, they too were lying on the palace floor with their life's blood emptying from their bodies. The Uighurs broke down the doors to the Inner Palace where all the closest members of the Imperial Family lived. For a full hour they wandered the many corridors and rooms killing any they

met - the wives and concubines of Tehu Khan were slain, his two infant sons killed out of hand by the remorseless mercenaries their father had brought here, even slaves and servants were butchered. Tehu, last Hsi Hsia Emperor of the Tanguts, died that evening, though the details were unclear, with all his servants and family (save only the daughter whom he had given to the Uighur Khagan).

In their assault, the Uighur murderers acted with a single-minded determination - they were not distracted by loot, though there was plenty in the Inner Palace which might be stolen, nor by the concubines who were remarkable for their physical beauty. They had come with only a single mission - to kill the Tangut Emperor. Beyond that, they had no interest in anything. With their job completed and the floors of the Inner Palace wet with the blood of their victims, they left tipping over lamps and candles as they went to spread fire. By dawn of the following day, that entire section of the palace complex was gone forever. It also became apparent that other Uighur bands had been at work slaying all the other Tangut nobles in the city and killing three-quarters of the remaining Tangut army. As news of the massacres spread, most of Xinghou's inhabitants expected that the raiders would next turn their evil attention on them - surely these barbarians, finding themselves in sole possession of a defenceless city, would engage in massacre and rapine. They were surprised, relieved and a little confused when no such massacre came. Instead, Uighur warriors stormed the rich mansion of the Chief Minister and dragged him to the Khagan's yurt outside the city walls. There, he was thrown to his knees before Temu-Lin who said in his simple way: "The tasks you performed for the Tanguts, you will now perform for me. I shall rule here as Tehu Khan ruled."

And so it was done... Before long, a steady stream of Uighurs was migrating southwards and assuming complete control over Hsi Hsia. The day-to-day running of the new Uighur Khaganate was taken over by the ex-Tangut ministers and the capital was effectively abandoned by the new Uighur nobles for Temu-Lin much preferred to rule from and hold court in a cluster of yurts in a royal hunting park a few miles distant from Xinghou's walls. Such Tangut and Chinese regiments as remained unharmed by the purges, demobilisations and massacres of the past few years were inducted into the army but they were few in number and miserably unhappy as, it must be said, were most of the Khaganate's subjects though their complaints were mostly exaggerated - the Uighurs had harmed few ordinary people and life under them was no more harsh than it had been under the Tanguts. In the Northern Chinese provinces of Huang and Ningsia, the locals accepted their new overlords with complete equanimity and continued to pay their proper taxes and send the levy which was asked of them.

Their time amongst the southerners had had quite an effect on the Uighurs. Though they would never become as weak or stupid as the Tanguts, they saw the attractions of a more certain lifestyle in which they, as the overlords, would live not by the hunt or their pastoral activities but from the fruits of their subjects' labours.

That, then, was how Hsi Hsia met its end and the Uighur Khaganate was born - in treachery, murder and avarice.

### The Korean Kingdom of Silla

Sokjong Wang, King of Silla

Capital: Kai-Ching                      Religion: Buddhist

King Sokjong and his chief minister, Byung Yung Kim, set out from the comfortable capital on a diplomatic mission to the north - news had come of the increasing tensions between the Sung and the Liao, rumours of impending war and the overweening pride of Emperors. In such days as these, Korea needed allies and Sokjong meant to find some.

The King reached Suifenhe late in 1101 and immediately sought out the foremost of the local chieftains. All of Sokjong's energies were put into securing the assistance of the clans that lived in this harsh coastal region; month after month, he travelled from village to encampment to township and back again seeking support and allies. Yet, despite his widely-acknowledged gift for the diplomatic arts, despite his mastery of cunning language and arguments, he could not convince the local Khitan tribes to ally with him. After several years of effort, all the King had to show for his troubles was a tentative agreement that the locals would not hinder his officials or soldiers should they need to pass through the region. It was a stark disappointment.

While the King sojourned in Suifenhe, Byung Yung Kim had carried on into Sikhote, further up the coast. He arrived in the Spring of 1102 and visited almost every chieftain of note (and many besides who were quite irrelevant) but they treated him with contempt. Why should the free men who lived amid the wild forests between the mountain and the sea agree to become the lackeys of the city-dwelling, earth-tilling Korean weaklings? Pah! The disappointed Byung Yung Kim met, in the end, with complete and abject failure; still, he counted his blessings - at least the locals had not killed him and one day, he was sure, he would return to civilisation and see the Court at Kai-Ching again. Oh happy day.

Back in Kai-Ching, Prince Yejong Wang, heir to the throne, undertook a sharp new reformist policy. The Prince had had quite enough of the constant bickering between the army and the court officials so both groups were pulled sharply into line - troublesome officers were cashiered, noisy ministers were dismissed - so that, within a short while, the whole Korean government was sharper, leaner and much more effective. The army too was in better shape than ever before - more men under arms and better, more obedient officers.

In this new atmosphere, people began to depend more on their family connexions for advancement instead of on their social class; while one's caste was still important, it was no longer the central aspect it had once been. Instead, it was the favours given and duties performed by the members of one's family years before that guaranteed royal favour. The highest offices, titles, commissions and honours went to those great families which were judged most loyal to the Crown while other equally noble families came to be passed over because their commitment to the Koryo Kings was in doubt.

Yejong looked on all his work with satisfaction but he was not finished for, fearing that recent social problems had led to a downturn in the cultural endeavours of the nation, generous endowments were granted to local Buddhist philosophers and monks. On the whole, despite the diplomatic failures, people in Korea noted a distinct new "feel" to their state - a sense of great energies expended, and more to come.

#### The Thai Kingdom of Nan Chao

King of Nan-Chao

Capital: T'ai-Li                      Religion: Buddhist

Slept.

#### The Malla Kingdom of Nepal

Mahendra Malla, King of Nepal

Capital: Kathmandu                  Religion: Hindu

Slept.

### Southeast Asia:

#### The Hindu Kingdom of Champa

Jaya Indravarman II, King of the Cham

Capital: Vijaya                      Religion: Hindu

Slept.

#### The Khmer Empire of Kambuja

Jayavarman IV, the Deva Raja, God-Emperor of the

Khmer

Capital: Angkor Borei              Religion: Hindu

Slept.

#### Dai Co Viet Annam

Nan Ton, King of the Great Viet State of Annam

Capital: Thang Long                Religion: Buddhist

Slept.

#### The Malay Empire of Sri Vijaya

Nyalatengorak, The Flaming Skull, Malayu Great King of Sri Vijaya

Capital: Sri Vijaya                      Religion: Buddhist

The recent past had been hard on Sri Vijaya - wars, defeats, internal divisions had all conspired to push this once-great empire into a decline, to rob her of her place in the sun. A brief civil war had ended only the previous year earlier bringing to the fore a new King, Nyalatengorak, "The Flaming Skull". No-one had high hopes for the new King - he was a stripling of only 21 years and a scholar to boot who had never once led an army into battle nor a fleet to raid across the High Seas. His ascendancy to the throne had been brought about more because of the military talents of his elder brother and heir, Prince Hukumantaring, "Doom Fang", and few doubted that, sooner rather than later, the brothers would come to blows and Sri

Vijaya would fall back into its usual cycle of bloodshed and dynastic sparring while foreign powers hovered nearby waiting to take advantage. So it was that Nyalatengorak's reign began with only the lowest expectations on the part of the subjects of Sri Vijaya yet the King had set himself the task of restoring the Empire to its rightful place of dominance and the year 1101 saw the beginnings of a new and vigorous policy as Sri Vijaya threw off the indolence of the past...

The Great King's first act was to raise a regiment of heavily-armoured foot soldiers and a smaller regiment of sappers (numbering some four hundred skilled engineers and artificers); to these forces, and the whole of the army and fleet, Nyalatengorak gave a special gift - they were to march, sail, fight beneath the King's personal flag, the Fanged Skull, an ancient symbol of power which the King had resurrected and made his own. The chattering courtiers of Sri Vijaya were hardly surprised at what they believed was an attempt by the new King ("the boy" as they called him when he wasn't around to hear) to consolidate his hold on the military. Having come to power through war, the King would surely move to crush his rivals which meant destroying his brother Hukumantaring and purging his supporters or so, at any rate, the court politicians said. What happened next, therefore, was most surprising - Nyalatengorak summoned his brother, with great solemnity, handed over command of the whole fleet and army and set a task before him - the loyal Prince Hukumantaring was to go forth on campaign. The primitive tribesmen of Aceh had retained their independence for too long. It was now time for them to bow before the power of Sri Vijaya. The courtiers sniggered; a thankless campaign against an unworthy enemy - surely a clear indication of the King's contempt for his sibling.

Doom Fang set out from the port of Sri Vijaya in March of 1101, with a fleet numbering almost 100 ships and an army of perhaps 10,000 men. It was a fiercesome armament indeed and the strongest put forth by Sri Vijaya for some time. By July, Hukumantaring had put his full force ashore in Aceh and soon set about proving that, for all his countless deficiencies in intellect and scholarship, he was a peerless general. The locals tribesmen could field more than 2,000 warriors of whom perhaps a third were equipped to fight in open warfare while the rest were local tribesmen bearing whatever inadequate weapons they could find. What followed was bloody and predictable. For the remainder of the year, one wretched village after another was captured and forced to acknowledge the suzerainty of Nyalatengorak. Resistance was crushed wherever it was offered and the local tribesmen achieved nothing. By the middle of 1102, Hukumantaring had returned to Sri Vijaya where his brother, the King, welcomed him and all the people of the city feted him as a conquering hero. Truly much praise was heaped upon the Prince's shoulders though Hukumantaring, an honest and simple man despite his royal blood, felt quite embarrassed by all the attention. Shortly afterwards, the Prince was married to the daughter of the distant Raja of Johor as part of an agreement to bring about closer relations (see below) ; the King, meanwhile, was married to the charming Javanese Princess Mahendradatta and, from that marriage, no less than three children were born in as many years - the first, a strong and healthy daughter, the second a sickly boy and the third another daughter but weak this time; she, lamentably, died within a week

of her birth. The King was greatly saddened but he and Mahendradatta found some solace in one another (see Javan entry).

While the northern campaign was being waged, the King had been busied himself with reorganising the government of the Empire. As Sri Vijaya's Empire had increased, as more subject princes paid homage to the Malayu Great King, the ministries and officials of the central government had proved themselves unable to keep up with the task of administering the wide realm. Nyalatengorak took matters in hand. New officials were recruited, incompetents were weeded out and new ministries were brought into being. To assist matters, grants of money were given to improve the capital's education system for it was a matter of shame that Sri Vijaya, once famed throughout the world as beacon of learning, was now known only for its bordellos and gambling dens. In this way, then, competent men were trained and brought into the service of the government. Soon, tax collectors and royal agents were travelling the length and breadth of the Empire ensuring that all proper revenues were collected and that corruption among lower-ranking provincial officials was stamped out. At this point, the courtiers began to get the message that the new King meant to change things for the better.

Diplomats were sent forth from the capital - the court functionary Pembantantuan was sent to Java while Ikanbayang was dispatched to the Malay peninsula to visit the client states and bring them more fully into the Empire. His first stop was the province of Johor where the local Hindu Raja, for a long time a tributary of Sri Vijaya, was honoured when Ikanbayang requested a dynastic marriage to cement the close relations. In due course, his youngest and prettiest daughter was sent off to become the bride of the warrior-prince Hukumantaring, the Doom Fang. Of course, in addition to feeling honoured, the Raja felt a distinct sense of trepidation as news was heard of the resurgent Sri Vijaya's campaign across the Straits of Malacca in Aceh. The Raja got the distinct impression that the fierce army led by the Doom Fang might very easily be directed towards the peninsula. Faced with such a prospect, he decided it was far wiser to be a friend of Sri Vijaya than to be the next target for subjugation so he agreed to enter into a formal alliance, pledging himself and his forces to the service of the Great King of Sri Vijaya and acknowledging the formal overlordship of Nyalatengorak.

Ikanbayang's next stop on his diplomatic tour was the province of Kedah. Here, the various Buddhist princelings were less impressed and refused to surrender their independence though they were quite willing to acknowledge the right of the Great King to levy taxes on them. For Ikanbayang, this was sufficient. He left the domain of the Kedah princes during the Spring of 1104, safe in the knowledge that Sri Vijayan tax collectors would soon be crawling all over this rather disappointing province, and headed for the coastal city of Ligor - a small independent and predominantly Hindu port but an important economic partner. Very little energy had to be expended to convince the locals that their interests lay in joining the Empire completely - their fate had long been tied to that of Sri Vijaya and, besides, absorption into the larger Sri Vijayan state offered considerable protection against the annoying

Buddhist nobles of the interior who were a perpetual threat to the city's existence.

That was how things stood in Sri Vijaya at the end of 1105.

### **The Salendra Kingdom of Java**

Kameswara I, Salendra King of Java

Capital: Sunda

Religion: Buddhist

The Javans were afraid. News had reached them of the wide-ranging ambitions of the new Sri Vijayan King and, worse still, his envoy, Pembantantuan, was already en route. Stories circulated in the capital of the massing in Sri Vijaya of a great war fleet and a grand army perhaps for some distant campaign or perhaps for an invasion of Java. Worst of all, those who spoke the Malay tongue of Sri Vijaya explained the meaning of "Pembantantuan" in hushed whispers - the word meant "Lord of Slaughter". Far from surprising, then, that the coming of this new ambassador was met with anything except joy.

In midsummer, a small ship flying the Fanged Skull pennant that was the emblem of the King of Sri Vijaya docked in Sunda and there disembarked a very dapper short young man who announced with a smile that he was none other than Pembantantuan come to Sunda on a mission of peace. In short order, the ambassador was presented to King Kameswara to whom he spoke winged words about the respect Nyalatengorak felt for his southern neighbour, about the need for peace between the Javans and Sumatrans, about how the fates of the two empires were intertwined and how nothing could be gained by conflict... It almost seemed too good to be true and, daily, Kameswara and his ministers waited for the demands to start - territorial concessions, tribute, levies of men, perhaps more. Yet the demands never came. Instead, the Lord of Slaughter announced to the Javan King and Court that his master, the Great King of Sri Vijaya, would be pleased and grateful if the Salendra King would consent to a treaty guaranteeing that neither signatory would make war upon the other. "And His Majesty, King Nyalatengorak, would be more honoured than I could ever express if Your Majesty were to consent to give the hand of the Princess Mahendradatta in marriage," Pembantantuan added.

Swiftly, Kameswara agreed and packed his daughter, a very pretty and endearing young lady, off to Sri Vijaya. One day, he hoped, his grandsons would sit on the thrones of both Sri Vijaya and Java but that was for the distant future - what mattered most was that Java's safety was guaranteed for at least a few more years.

Pembantantuan stayed on in Java for several years to come, becoming a permanent feature at the Golden Court at Sunda. He cut quite the dash around town. Plenty of Javanese ladies fluttered their eyelashes at the Lord of Slaughter and many a beau copied his Malay clothes and head-dress, some even going so far as to take lessons in the newly-fashionable Malay language.

### **The Kingdom of Pagan**

Kyanzittha, King of Pagan  
Capital: Pagan Religion: Buddhist

From his rich and temple-filled capital, the King struck out for Mon. Instead of taking the landward route, His Majesty took ship in Pegu and crossed the Andaman Sea to reach the little Malay Kingdom. The locals were far from pleased to see him for they well remembered the depredations which the Kings of Pagan had inflicted on them in the past - humiliations, enslavement, conquest, sword-point conversions to Buddhism. The wounds Pagan had inflicted on Mon were deep and the memory was not going to be erased with any ease. Kyanzittha had soothing words and hard guarantees to offer the King of Mon but it was not enough to convince him that Pagan's intentions were honourable. At last, Kyanzittha offered marriage as the means by which their old injuries might be healed and old scores settled; he would deign to wed the Princess Nilar, one of the myriad daughters of the King of Mon, as proof that he wished for Mon and Pagan to be united in peace. His offer was accepted but, still, Mon would give no more to Pagan than a promise of safe passage for Burmese officials and armies. Kyanzittha was disappointed but, for the time being, it would have to do.

As it happened, the King was not the only one doing diplomatic duty - Prince Yarza Komer boarded a ship at Pegu and sailed all the way to Bihar to make common cause with the Pala Maharaja. The Prince was well received and some wondered whether an alliance might be presaged by this visit. To the south, far across the sea and past the Straits of Malacca, Ambassador Ma Thida was sent to open relations with the new young King of Sri Vijaya.

But it was not all diplomacy - during the Summer of 1101, General Bohmu Aung, as vicious and ruthless a man as ever walked the earth, raised dozens of new regiments and marched, at the head of 12,000 men, over the mountains and into the rugged little region of Kayah. The natives were scarcely capable of defending themselves and were smacked into line with ease. In the aftermath of this "conquest", 10 strong castles were built in the area before the General pulled back into Thaton leaving the locals to wonder what had just happened and why.

## **India:**

### **The Pala Kingdom of Bengal**

Rampala, Maharaja of Bengal  
Capital: Bihar Religion: Buddhist

From east and west, the Hindus were pressing in upon Rampala. He was distinctly nervous and fully expected an assault at any time; it was, therefore, rather lucky for him that the Muslims of the far west chose this time to begin rattling their sabres. So long as the western Hindu princes were busy trying to defend against these expected incursions, they would be unable to harm Bengal. All the same, regiments of splendid armoured cavalry were raised and new forts were laid out in Gaur as a counter to the any attacks by the Senas. No attacks came though there was a very real increase in brigandage and dacoitry

throughout Gaur which led some to wonder whether Hindus from Assam were sneaking across the Brahmaputra to rob and murder. Of course, no-one could substantiate this theory.

As time passed, ambassadors came to the thriving metropolis of Bihar from the Tamil Cholas far to the south and from Buddhist Pagan. Their entreaties were heard and agreements were made and signed; all of this was fine but still the Senas made no attack and the Palas grew ever more anxious - Rampala and many others in Bihar wished that the accursed Assamese would hurry and make their move instead of keeping the whole of Bengal on tenterhooks. At length, and to the shock of the Pala court, it was not warriors but ambassadors who arrived in Bihar from Hindu Assam. They sailed to Bihar up the Ganges, sacred to Hindus, and presented themselves before the palace of the Maharaja stating that they bore a message of great import from their master Vijaya Sena Raja. Upon admittance to the august presence of His Majesty, the Maharaja, the envoys proved themselves arrogant, obnoxious little men, puffed up by their imagined importance. Having been brought before the Maharaja, they paid him none of the traditional courtesies which are normal even between hostile countries; threats poured forth from the mouth of the lead 'diplomat': "You are beaten, Rampala. Surrender your throne and turn over the lands you now oppress. Flee away to Tibet where you belong! India is a Hindu land and your kind has no place in it."

Rampala was generally level-headed and patient so he paused before responding (lest he act in the heat of the moment and come to regret it later). "Chamberlain," he said, turning to his chief courtier after due deliberation. "Have this buffoon's heart cut out and thrown in the Ganges."

So it was said and so it was done! All the Assamese envoys were put to death and their skulls were used to decorate the the Maharaja's throne. Rampala decided there was only one option left open to him - he had to take advantage of the distraction the Ghaznavids were affording and of the pacific nature of the wise Raja of Kanauj, who was, in Rampala's judgment, unlikely to trouble himself over the fate of the Assamese. The Palas would crush the Sena upstarts once and for all. In 1104, the Bengali general, Mushara, marched forth to liberate Palas...

Whilst this war was being fought, word was brought to Bengal of the boy King of Sri Vijaya. It is not at all clear where the rumours began but, by an by, word penetrated every part of Bihar and everyone in the land knew the story - the Sri Vijayan was said to be a deviant with the most disgusting predilections - such as no respectable person could ever repeat - and, worse, it was reported that Nyalatengorak had been casting his eyes north and had sent his sordid slaving agents to acquire Bengali children for purposes that could only be guessed at. This was too much for the glorious Rampala who, buoyed with the righteousness of his cause, at once declared war on the Sri Vijayan Empire. Bengal would fight not only the Hindus of Assam but their brother Buddhists and, in each case, it would be an honourable war!

### **The War for Bengal**

April 1104: Mushara set out from Gaur at the head of around 14,000 Buddhist warriors (of whom almost half were mounted). Before he had even crossed the frontier, news came of uprising - the Buddhist population, tired of languishing beneath the Sena yoke, had risen up and begun slaughtering the oppressor. The rebellious Buddhists had even managed to take a few of the enemy's castles. Encouraged, Mushara moved into Palas.

When news of the rebellion reached Assam, Vijaya, Raja of the Senas, had begun to move out with an army which numbered a little over 11,000 but, upon hearing of Mushara's invasion, he stopped and rethought his strategy. He knew that his castles would be a tough nut for any enemy to crack. Why not, he reasoned, let the Buddhists bleed themselves on the walls? He reasoned that the Buddhists, probably already weakened by the need to reduce so many strong fortifications, might be caught between the Sena relief force and the enraged garrisons sallying forth. Such was Vijaya's theory, in any case.

May 1104: The whole of Mushara's Buddhist Bengali army had now crossed into Palas where they were welcomed as liberators from Hindu oppression. Mushara's scouts reported that many of the Hindu forts in the region had already fallen to local Buddhist rebels. Some had even been infiltrated by Bengali agents and their local Buddhist collaborators who ensured that convenient gates and portes were left open for Mushara's men. In the end, the 20 or so castles that defended this region proved to be no impediment at all to the Bengali advance. The handful that were unaffected by the rebellion were swiftly overrun by Mushara's preponderance of engineers and sappers.

When this news reached Vijaya, he summoned his officers and ministers and demanded to know why his own agents had failed to crush this rebellion before it got off the ground. The answer (namely that his agents had tried very hard but, lamentably, failed in their task) brought the Sena Raja no satisfaction. Now there was no other option but to engage the enemy and drive them back by main force.

June 1104: With the rest of Palas effectively his control, Mushara had been turning his mind to the question of Sonargaon, a very well fortified and predominantly Hindu city. Since he had no ships, he would have to take the city by storm and he was contemplating this very thing when his spies brought news of Vijaya's arrival on the eastern bank of the Brahmaputra. Mushara smiled (not something he did very often) for now he would finally get the chance to face the Assamese in a decisive battle which might send them scuttling back eastwards never again to threaten Bengal.

Vijaya crossed the river via the bridge at Sonargaon and marched out, with his usual confidence, seeking a foe with whom to do battle. Mushara avoided him for a little while though he knew that an engagement would have to be come before the monsoons began in a few weeks time. All the same, Mushara had good reason to seek a brief delay for he knew something that the Sena Raja didn't....

Vijaya was in hot pursuit of the Buddhist army but his enemy always remained a couple of days march ahead of him.

His absolute self-assurance was buoyed by the Buddhists' unwillingness to fight for surely it meant they were afraid to face him in battle. On a monstrously hot June night, Vijaya and his senior officers were holding a council to plan the route of march for the following day and debate how they might best force the enemy to meet them in open combat. With the heat so severe, Vijaya drank regularly and deeply from a gourd of sweet water proffered by a slave. As the council drew to a close, Vijaya complained of dizziness. This in itself was not all that worrisome for the weather was oppressive; the Raja would undoubtedly feel better in the morning after rest so he and his generals retired to their tents for the night.

With the coming of dawn, a shriek tore through the camp - it originated in the Raja's own pavillion where one of his coterie of personal servants had found the youthful Raja very dead indeed. Soon, the whole encampment was astir and a stream of high nobles and officers was winding its way to the late Vijaya's bedside. The Raja had apparently died, quite suddenly and, from all appearance, peacefully, in his sleep. While the officers and princes were debating precisely what could have caused it, the Raja's water-bearer interjected: "If it pleases Your Highnesses, I know how His Majesty died," said the soon-to-be-executed slave with respectful bows towards the grandees and the late Raja's mortal remains. "I have been administering a poison to His Late Majesty's water for some weeks now. Yesterday, I increased the dose and you behold the result. The oppressor of my people is vanquished."

To compound their already vast troubles, later that day Assamese outriders and pickets reported that the Buddhist retreat had ended and they were now advancing rapidly on the leaderless Hindu army. The officers squabbled amongst themselves over what course to pursue. The heir (who was now Raja of Assam though he didn't know it) had been far north in the foothills of the Himalayas, in Gtsang province, and it might take weeks before he could even be informed of what had happened let alone return to lead the army. Vayu Sabha, formerly the chief of Vijaya's council-of-war, stepped forward and announced that he would assume command of the army arguing, saliently, that he had been the Raja's most trusted officer. A few others were dissatisfied with this but even the most dense of the Assamese officers recognised that a single leader was need to extract them from this mess. Vayu decided that retreat would bring no advantage - they would meet the enemy and drive them out of this province.

Within a couple of days of the Raja's death, the Buddhist and Hindu armies clashed. The monsoon clouds were starting to gather even as the first arrows were put to the bow-strings. Vayu Sabha led 7,000 footmen of mixed type onto the field backed by 1,500 heavily-armoured horsemen and the same number of mounted skirmishers with less than a thousand sappers and engineers. Mushara's Buddhists numbered a touch over 6,000 mixed foot, about 3,500 heavy cavalry and 2,500 lancers and a strong contingent of artificers. The battle these armies fought was singularly brutal - the Assamese had a definite edge in quality though the numbers and weight of the Bengali mounted regiments turned out to be the decisive factor. After a day of bloody murder, Vayu Sabha led his army off the field at dusk; of the nearly 11,000 men who had fought that day for the

Senas, less than 3,000 marched away. The Buddhists had not got off very lightly either for their losses ran to almost 6,000 dead, wounded and missing.

In their retreat, the Assamese left behind most of their baggage including Vijaya's body. When Mushara was told what his men had found, he immediately ordered the corpse embalmed with honey and personally sent the carcass north to Bihar by boat. Slaves brought it before the Maharaja's throne, still bearing their decoration of Assamese skulls (though they had now been tastefully gilded and decorated to make a more fitting adornment), and removed the shroud that His Majesty might look upon his nemesis. With a smile wider than the Ganges, Rampala swore that he would endow a thousand temples to Buddha in gratitude for this victory! And to Mushara he would give anything that the doughty general might ask in return for this gift beyond all gifts! For weeks after the corpse arrived, the monks of Bihar said prayers constantly for the safe rebirth of the soul of Vijaya's assassin - the anonymous Buddhist slave who had poisoned the Hindu dog, sacrificing himself in the process, to secure the safety and honour of his people.

July 1104: Vayu Sabha's force reached Assam. The general opted not to defend Sonargaon despite its brilliant defences for he was afraid of being trapped and that there might be insufficient naval forces available to extract his men should it prove necessary to evacuate the city.

Outside Sonargaon, Mushara decided that he lacked enough forces to make an attempt on the walls so he settled for controlling the region around it.

The war now petered out, more or less, as both sides tried to gather the energy for the next round of fighting.

### **The Sena Kingdom of Assam**

Rahamjit Sena, Raja of Assam

Capital: none                      Religion: Hindu

Rahamjit had been on a mission to Gtsang when news of his dear brother's death reached him. He at once rode to Assam where he met the battered remnants of the proud Hindu army. By blood, law and acclamation, he proclaimed himself Raja of Assam and head of the Clan of the Senas.

The assassination of the Raja had not been the only piece of trouble in Assam, however. Quite inexplicably, the part of the palace complex housing the scribes, tax official, administrators and archives was destroyed utterly in a fire one night. Whether deliberate or accidental, the outcome was the same - government records concerning tax payments and ownership of land matters were gone forever and the officials and bureaucrats were quite at a loss as to what they should do.

The only piece of good news was that the coastal tribes in Arakan agreed to pay tribute to Assam though some questioned whether it was worth the trouble of collecting their pitiful contributions. In a curious event, Buddhist monks arrived in Arakan from neighbouring Pagan and at once set about preaching to the locals. They met with mixed success - the

Arakan tribes were not as hostile to Buddhism as the Assamese and, in some ways, did not see the religions as mutually exclusive - but the chieftains believed that their future lay with the Senas and they saw that they would likely gain the ill-will of the Sena Raja if they had any truck with the Buddhists and, so, the missionaries were driven off, returning to their monasteries and temples in Pegu and Pagan.

### **The Lambakanna Kingdom of Sinhala**

Prakramabahu Lambakanna, King of Ceylon

Capital: none                      Religion: Hindu

Slept.

### **The Tamil Empire of the Cholas**

Kollutunga Chola Maharaja, the King of Kings,  
Emperor of the South

Capital: Trivandrum              Religion: Hindu

The thriving seaside town of Mangaloboho, in the province of Chera, was on the receiving end of the Emperor's attention - if only it were expanded a little, Kollutunga thought, it would make a fine port astride the Malabar coast. And so it was done. Before long ships from all around the Indian ocean were docking in Mangaloboho bringing their own goods to trade and departing with fine cargoes from India and points further east. Kollutunga, who, for reasons best known to himself, took a keen interest in trade, was most pleased. He was further gratified by the conclusion of a defensive agreement with the young Sri Vijayan King. In the past, there had been much bad blood between the two empires but perhaps this agreement marked a change in attitudes. Too, the clan of the Chalukyas to the north agreed to a treaty by which both sides swore to eschew warfare against each other (the realists suggested this was because the cunning and cruel Vikramaditya had other fish to fry rather than because he had any genuine wish for peace with the Tamils).

Kollutunga sent off his diplomats to the capitals of empires near and far - to Bihar, home of the Pala dynasty, and to distant Ghazna, mountain home of Sultan Masud III whose recent decree had caused so much anxiety in India. Too, Prince Gajadhar was sent off to the Maldives to convince the pliant locals to integrate more fully into the Cholan Empire. Shockingly, they refused and, however much effort the Prince put into convincing them of the advantages they would enjoy, they simply would not change their minds. This news was a source of consternation to the whole of the court for the Maldivian tribes were, traditionally, comically easy to bully.

The Emperor dwelt on this rejection while he reclined on the silken couches of his palace; perhaps the Cholas had become too soft and no longer held the respect of their subjects. If that were the case, he wondered what might be done to regain some of the Empire's ancient glory and prestige. Since pondering such things was seldom rewarding, the Emperor spent the greater part of his time working on his latest literary composition - a new epic poem based stylistically on the Mahabharat but with the history of the Chola family as its subject. Untroubled by the burdens of government, he managed to get a great deal written though he was not at all confident

about its artistic merit and, so, refused to show it to anyone. Funds were allocated, since the Emperor was in a scholarly mood, for the hiring of fine teachers and scholars. The teachers based themselves in the grounds of the great temple at Trivandrum which already had a peerless collection of Sanskrit, Hindi and, above all, Tamil manuscripts (in a curious episode, one of the new teachers was shocked to find an Arabic translation of Galen lurking in the depths of the library vaults and wondered what on earth such an item was doing there).

### **The Chalukyan Kingdom of Kalyana**

Vikramaditya VI, Raja of Kalyana, Head of the Clan of the Chalukyas

Capital: Manyakheta      Religion: Hindu

The opening of 1101 saw the Raja of Kalyana marching out of his capital at the head of almost 20,000 soldiers. He struck out northeastwards into Kakitya, a dependency of the Chalukyan clan, and there Vikramaditya and his army spent the remainder of the year. The local ruler, Samirjit, and his nobles were somewhat unsettled by the presence of so many Chalukyan soldiers. Soon, Vikramaditya began waxing lyrical about the benefits and advantages which, he alleged, would accrue if the local grandees allowed the province to be annexed to Kalyana in a formal manner. The Kakityans listened and at least pretended to be convinced. Vikramaditya, though, was a most perceptive man and during his sojourn, it dawned on him that the allegiance of the natives was given grudgingly, at best, and that they were from satisfied at the prospect of Chalukyan overlordship. After a great deal of thought, he came to understand that they were afraid of being sidelined in their own land - the rulers of Kakitya were not kin to the Chalukya clan; indeed, they were far more closely-related to the neighbouring Chandelas. The solution was obvious - marriage to bind the rulers together and ensure that the blood of Samirjit of Kakitya would flow through the veins of Vikramaditya's descendents.

Indulala, the youngest daughter of the Kakityan Raja was wed to Vikramaditya though she was 20 years his junior. The ceremony was lavish but the wealth of the Chalukyas was well-known. In a fit of generosity (or extravagance), new temples were even endowed in the region and a few itinerant poets who happened to be passing through the region were conscripted to write verses extolling the great love Vikram felt for his new bride. The rest of the year was spent idling in Kakitya, enjoying the sport offered by the region's fine hunting grounds, partaking of the hospitality of nobles and worshipping in the great temple complexes which proliferated in this part of India. It was a fine life but the following year saw Vikram march off once more, leaving his wife behind with her family.

The army crossed over into the neighbouring province of Chela, home of the Khajuraho Chandelas. Though once a great power, the Chandelas had lost the will for war and conquest and, little by little, their lands had shrunk to their current modest holdings. The foremost Chendela was Vidyarha, Raja of Khajuraho. He had been enjoying the quiet life in his capital when news came of the imminent invasion. At first, the unfortunate man hoped that it was merely a raid - if that were the case, he could hide behind the defences of the capital until

the invader had gone home. That slim hope, though, was rent away when the scale of the expedition mounted against his realm became known. Vidyarha's forces, respectable on their own terms but not nearly enough to face down an invasion like this, were called to arms and prepared as best they could be then they marched off to see what they might achieve.

Vikramaditya had a deserved reputation for his mastery of the arts of war yet he employed no cunning stratagems in this campaign - he marched directly for Warangal pausing only to pay his respects at every temple he passed (and there were a great many temples). The Chandelas, of course, were unwilling to allow their capital to fall so they arrayed to counter the Chalukyan advance. The enemy's superiority in cavalry meant that the Chandelas could get only the vaguest suggestions of where the invader was but, still, Vidyarha realised that if he stood astride the main route to the capital, the foe would come and he was soon proven right.

Perhaps 30 miles northwest of the Warangal, the armies found one another. Vikramaditya Chalukya VI, Raja of Kalyana, disposed of some 9,000 warriors bearing spear and shield; a strong corps of 1,500 armoured infantrymen bearing axe, sword and shield were in the van with 3,000 horse archers and 4,000 lance-armed horsemen making up his mounted forces; last, in preparation for the siege of Warangal, the Chalukyas had brought 2,000 sappers, diggers and cunning artificers. The Chandelas could field only 5,000 mixed infantry and a similar number of horsemen.

What followed was predictable. The gallant Chandelans stood their ground but they were never in a position to win - as well as being outnumbered, they were outclassed by the veteran Chalukyans; too, they were outmanoeuvred as the Chalukyan cavalry chased the local horsemen from the field after a brief and bloody melee. The footmen held out for as long as they could, standing shield-to-shield against the fierce assault of the armoured Chalukyans but, in the end, they stood their ground just a little too long for, when they finally decided to withdraw, they found their route of escape cut off by the victorious enemy cavalry. All order collapsed among the Chandelan regiments - men ran this way and that with no hope of escape. After a couple of hours, the Chalukyans tired of the butchery and began to take prisoners - it was then that they discovered, hiding among the heaped up dead, Vidyarha Chendela himself. He was dragged before Vikramaditya who ordered that he be placed in chains and dragged behind the victorious army.

Now that the battle had been won, the Chalukyan army turned away from the capital and fixed its attention on reducing a handful of Chandelan castles which dotted the region. Once these fell, only Warangal remained free and that not for long. By September, as the monsoon rains were abating, Vikramaditya and his army, looking remarkably bedraggled considering the scale of its victory, advanced on Warangal which capitulated at his coming. Those who expected the conquering Raja to pause and be grateful for the victories granted him by the gods were disappointed. The following year saw an advance into the northern province of Dahala. Here, there was little to be done for there were very few soldiers or strongholds to conquer. Still, the people were left in no doubt that they had been conquered.

A garrison was installed and anyone whose loyalties were suspect was handled very roughly indeed. A curious anecdote was related by some of the returning Chalukyan warriors - they had been scouting near the northern frontier, around the old tracks dipping down from the plateau to Jihjoti, when they came upon a very large wandering band of men; at first, they took the men to be smugglers, dakoits or even Chandelan spies (for they looked thoroughly suspicious). A brief conversation was held during which the men were most willing to cooperate with the new authorities - they explained that they were on a pilgrimage to a shrine in the south of Dahala. When searched, the men proved to be carrying weapons (of very fine manufacture too) and sums of money. Once more, their leader explained that they had heard of the collapse of law in this province and wanted to be safe from bandits and deserters and other desperadoes hence they bore weapons; the money was, of course, a donation to the shrine they were visiting - a donation made by the merchants of distant Kanauj to guarantee that the life and marriage of their beloved Raja Chandraveda would be long and productive. Since none of this was actually illegal, the soldiers let the travellers pass but, all the same, it stood out as a peculiar event.

### **The Chandelas of Khajuraho**

Vidyarha Chandela, Raja of Khajuraho, Head of the Clan of the Chandelas

Capital: Warangal                      Religion: Hindu

With the Raja in chains and the capital occupied by the treacherous Chalukya clan, the royal family and most of the leading nobles had fled northeast into the remaining provinces where they swore they would continue the war until their lands were liberated.

### **Paramara Kingdom of Malwa**

Munja Paramara, Raja of Malwa, Head of the Clan of the Paramaras

Capital: Dhar                              Religion: Hindu

The Paramaras, like the Chauhans, were most worried by the words coming from Ghazna. Many new troops were raised to drive the fanatics back should they come and a tentative defensive agreement was reached with neighbouring Ajaimeru by which each would defend the other in the event of a Muslim incursion.

### **The Chauhan Kingdom of Ajaimeru**

Ajaipal Chauhan, Raja of Ajmer

Capital: Ajmer                              Religion: Hindu

The Raja of Ajmer, rattled by what amounted to a Ghaznavid declaration of war, order that many fortifications be built throughout the kingdom. Ajaipal was determined that the Muslim horde would find Ajaimeru no easy target for their evil depredations.

### **Gahadwala Kingdom of Kanauj**

Chandraveda Gahadwala, Raja of Kanauj

Capital: Kanauj                              Religion: Hindu

The Raja took a tour of the outlying regions which had not yet fully accepted His Majesty's gracious and benevolent rule. First, he went to Chandela on the southern banks of the Holy River and met with the leading nobles and brahmins. Chandela was, indeed, very close to Kanauj in political and economic terms - the local princes looked to Kanauj for support against encroachments from the south and east; in return for such support and protection, they contributed much of their revenues to Kanauji coffers. After long discussions, in which Chandraveda Raja displayed the intelligence, tact and political acuity which have made him a legend in Northern India, the foremost of the local Rajas consented to give the hand of his sister in marriage to the Gahadwala Raja and, furthermore, it was agreed that, in light of the increasing tensions further south and the possibility that a great conflagration might at any time erupt, Chandela should contribute auxiliary forces to support the warriors of Kanauj. Chandraveda left the province feeling quite pleased with his achievements and moved on to Jihjoti.

Jihjoti was a far less welcoming place; the locals recognised the suzerainty of the Raja of Kanauj and they performed military duties on his behalf with all due propriety but they guarded their independence fiercely; they could accept Kanauj's overlordship but not direct rule. In any case, it took a great deal of effort before the natives would countenance a change in the status quo. Another dynastic marriage was offered - this time, His Majesty suggested that a Jihjoti noblewoman might provide a suitable for his brother and heir, Dalavayi. However, the locals knew about Dalavayi - he was deformed with a cleft palate which was surely a sign that he had done great evil in a past life. It was tantamount to an insult to suggest that he could take a Jihjoti woman as wife. On the other hand, there was no getting around the fact that, deformity or not, Dalavayi was a man of great political power. After long debates amongst themselves, the provincial nobles agreed to a marriage and even to allow tax collectors from Kanauj to impose their dues here in Jihjoti. In return, however, they withdrew all military service from the Kingdom of Kanauj (this was, in fact, a price Chandraveda was more than willing to pay so he turned for home and the many affairs which demanded his attention there).

During the Raja's absence, Prince Dalavayi (he of the cleft palate) had seen to the day-to-day governance of the country. He had also overseen the construction of a fine fortress in the province of Uttar Pradesh for rumours were sweeping the Ganges valley of an imminent Muslim invasion and Dalavayi was determined that no-one would catch Kanauj napping. Too, given the new, cosier relationship with Chandela, the heir decided that the time had come to oversee the construction of a new urban centre in the province. He settled on the site of the old shrine at Ratanpur. It was already a fair-sized town and contained many temples of significance so it would surely be the ideal location for a provincial capital. Work began, officials of the government were installed, new edifices were constructed and many workers were attracted to the place. Within a few years, the place was bustling though it had the feel of being rather "rough-and-ready" - the water supply left much to be desired and many of the houses were shoddily constructed. Around Ratanpur, new walls were built and this was the case in the Kingdom's other larger and more important cities - Benares, Kanauj and Thanesar all

had their defences increased. The new walls were, perhaps, meant to increase confidence and convince the inhabitants that they were safe from attack but they had the opposite effect - many people reasoned that the walls would not have been built unless there was some pressing danger which would surely fall upon the Kingdom at any time. And most people could make a stab at exactly what that danger was - the accursed Ghaznavids (though the people in Benares were rather more fearful of the Palas).

By the time the Raja had returned to the capital, preparations were being made for the grand weddings. The Raja's uncle, the kindly but inept Padavalu, had taken charge of all preparations for he was widely acknowledged to have the most marvellous taste and a discerning eye for colour. With Padavalu at the helm, Chandraveda's marriage passed off easily; he had not, as yet, seen his wife-to-be and he was quite relieved when she turned out to be a very fine-looking girl.

Prince Dalavayi's marriage, on the other hand, did not go smoothly. To begin with, the Prince was afflicted by a recurring dream - a great voice from far away spoke to him but he could not clearly understand the message it imparted (though he had no doubt it was a message of the utmost import) and whenever he awoke, he had the clearest sensation that he should turn his attentions to the east. The brahmins could offer but little help in trying to unravel this conundrum and, as time went by, the unfortunate Prince became certain that some supernatural force, whether god or evil spirit, was toying with him. Then, of course, there was his wedding....

Uncle Padavalu had ensured that everything was done with the greatest pomp and circumstance - the bride and groom were to be transported to the ceremony on the backs of elephants, accompanied by regiments of royal lancers; from the walls of the city, great saffron-coloured banners would be flown; the magnificence of Dalavayi's clothing and jewellery would be such that no-one would even notice his hideous personal appearance and the countless sins he must surely have committed in a previous incarnation. Such a grand affair would be spoken of for decades to come! And, to be sure, Padavalu's preparations went off without a hitch. It was every bit as glorious as he had imagined. Even the grubby denizens of the city who turned out to watch had tried to tidy themselves up for the day. There was only one problem - the noble lady from Jihjoti who was to wed the deformed prince turned out not to be quite so attractive as Chandraveda's wife. In fact, some wags and rascals even remarked that when the lady stood beside her elephant, the only way one could distinguish her from the animal was that she did not have a howdah on her back. It was an exaggeration, of course, but she was on the large side and had been left scarred in her childhood by smallpox.

Curiously, neither marriage resulted in issue and eyebrows began to be raised. Of course, uncle Padavalu had never married or produced children but people usually skirted around that sensitive point.

## Central Asia:

### The Sultanate of Ghazna

Masud III, Sultan of Ghazna, Scourge of Allah

Capital: Lahore (was Ghazna) Religion: Sunni

Islam

#### *Decree of His Imperial Majesty, the Sultan Masud III of Ghazna*

In the name Allah and the Prophet and of His Most August Majesty, the Sultan Masud III, Scourge of Allah, Right Arm of Government, Successor to Mahmud, We declare a holy struggle against the tyranny and oppression of the heathen Hindu Rajas of Ajaimeru and Malwa. Time and again they have robbed Our merchants, raided our borders, and spat upon the Faithful to an extent which no Believer may tolerate any longer. To prepare ourselves for this arduous struggle, We decree that taxes be increased for the next term of five years and, to show the craven Hindu dogs that We know no fear of their prowess, Our imperial capital shall be transferred from Ghazni to the city of Lahore, upon the very frontiers of the Ummah. To pay for the great arms and hosts of men, a port shall be founded upon the shores of the Indian Ocean, that we may bring the riches of trade to our coffers.

Know that the struggle shall be long but shall end in victory and, in the wake of Our triumphant arms, all that we have sacrificed shall be returned to us five fold. Not one man, from the highest noble to the lowest peasant, shall find himself denied in the land and riches which shall fall to Us. Yet know that those who oppose this sacred endeavor shall be as Our enemies and share their fate.

The issuing of the above decree caused quite the stir in the Ghaznavid Sultanate. Not only had the Sultan made a declaration of jihad against the cow-worshipping Chauhans and Paramaras but he was shifting the capital of the Empire from Ghazna, deep in the valleys of Afghanistan, to distant Lahore. Surely the Ghaznavids were planning some great conquests in India - perhaps Masud even hoped one day to water his horses in the waters of the Ganges as his ancestor, the glorious Mahmud, had. It was an exciting time in the Ghaznavid Empire; adventures, war and glory were at hand...

As if to leave no doubt that the future of the Sultanate lay in India, Masud summoned one of his loyal and learned ministers, Lakhud, to the grand palace of Ghazna; there, quite without warning, Masud announced that the provinces of Sistan, Registan, Siahn, Shadad and Baluchistan would be severed from the empire; together, these regions would form the Beylik of Registan and Lakhud would become their new ruler, the Leyerbey. Of course, the provinces in question were poor and not vastly significant in the grand scheme of things but, all the same, to be made a Great Prince, the ruler of one's own empire, was something beyond Lakhud's wildest imaginings and not a gift to be sneezed at. In due course, he received the pearl diadem which was the marker of royal authority from the hand of the Sultan and, having done great obeisance before the throne of Masud and sworn eternal fealty to his benefactor, Lakhud departed for his personal fiefdom. For most members of the court and royal council, the shedding these provinces was largely symbolic, a sign that Iran and the western marches of the Empire held no attraction for Masud and that his attention would, hereafter, be fixed eastwards.

While such business was being conducted in Ghazna, the indefatigable Vizier Mehmet had begun the mammoth task of shifting the government and ministries from Ghazna to Lahore. Few ministers were sorry to be leaving behind the high mountains which made communications so slow and difficult but no-one particularly enjoyed the long journey through the Punjab and into Sahis; then, of course, new governmental complexes had to be acquired for the Sultanate's officials, a new treasury and even new pleasure gardens and palaces for the Sultan; further complications came from the fact that the inhabitants of the new capital spoke their own bizarre local dialect which was radically different from the Turkic language preferred by the Sultan and aristocracy, the Persian his ministers favoured or, even, the Pushtu spoken by the bulk of the Empire's populace. It was a hard task but Mehmet saw to everything and never once showed the least sign of being troubled by all the energy he had to expend in His Majesty's service.

While all this was going on, the Sultan himself took over the reins of government completely in the absence of his most important officials and acquitted himself very well. In accordance with his decree, the Sultan sent forth his soldiers to extract extra taxes from the people - stored grain was seized, the merchants were bled dry, aristocratic estates were compelled to pay a full fifth more than was their legal obligation. Any who objected received a good beating from the Sultan's men. None of this made Masud especially popular but the Mullahs and Imams assured everyone that it was a short-term solution, that it would not continue for long and that, above all, it was a necessary evil for the good of Islam and the Faithful. Most of the populace muttered that *they* were Faithful and they were seeing no benefits from Masud's extortion but, on the whole, no real damage was done - the attendant economic problems were relatively minor.

In happier news, Artaq, a Ghaznavid minister, swept into Edrosia during the summer of 1101 on a diplomatic mission. The local nobles and grandees were delighted by Artaq's honeyed words as he spoke of the great prosperity which Edrosia would enjoy - a great port and university would be built and all the produce of the world would be traded in the bazaars and markets of Edrosia. It sounded fine but they were far from convinced that the benefits outweighed the disadvantages they would incur for few in Edrosia had the stomach for a war against the Rajputs yet, they reasoned, if they accepted Masud's suzerainty they would be committing to just such a war. In the end, the offer of a marriage between the Sultan and a local princess went some way to encouraging them but only just - they agreed to pay tribute to the distant Sultan but nothing more than that. Just as Artaq had promised, a new port was begun at the village of Karachi - the local fishing docks were extended to make something suitable for mercantile activity, new settlers (from the Punjab mainly) were brought down to inhabit the place and several nearby coastal villages were forced to combine with Karachi and become a part of this the Sultan's newest project. For all that, ships were soon sailing into what was, in effect, the only real entrepot for goods from overseas to reach the Ghaznavid Empire; too, a steady stream of merchants came from the north to establish places of business in the port in the hope that there might be opportunities to sell their wares to traders from Egypt, Arabia and the Malabar coast.

In less materialistic matters, Karachi also saw an influx of scholars and their students for Masud had provided generous funding for a great university in that city. The university was good (it wasn't in Samarkhand's league but what is?) but many learned men wondered if the Sultan secretly hated scholarship and, for that reason, had banished all the students and teachers in his realm to this flyspeck of a town in the middle of nowhere. There's no pleasing some folk...

The only other news of import was the arrival of the Tamil diplomat, Koothbiran, from the distant Chola dynasty who spent a long time attending the Sultan's court. Although he was a Hindu and, thus, innately the enemy of Ghazna, most courtiers agreed that he wasn't a bad sort and he was probably the kind of man the Ghaznavids could do business with.

### **The Seljuk Great Sultanate**

Berk Yaruk, "The Despoiler", the Great Sultan,  
Qaaghan of the Seljuqs, Shahanshan of Persia  
Capital: Isfahan                      Religion: Sunni Islam

The Great Sultan was restless. He had known the luxury and temptations which courtly life in Persia could offer - sweet-tasting wine and fruits without blemish, the willing attentions harem girls, the exquisite verses of courtly poets, comfort without end... But he had also known the joys of the victorious charge and the glory of battle. For a Turk like Berk Yaruk, no earthly pleasures could match the delight of driving one's enemy from the field, the joy that came from counting the severed heads of the foemen, burning their homes, storming their walls, carrying off their wives and daughters and hearing the songs composed in one's own honour. These were the truest and greatest pleasures which any mortal could know and it was high time that the Great Sultan knew them once again...

So it was that Berk Yaruk ordered preparations for war and the raising of new troops - fierce horse archers were recruited from among the Turkish tribes and, in equal number, noble cataphracts covered from head-to-toe in brilliant armour and each bearing an axe and heavy scimitar. These new troops were placed under the command of the Qhan of Khurasan, Jamuka, a trusted kinsman of the Great Sultan, who immediately set off northwards from Isfahan leaving the Sultan to follow with the slower troops. By August of 1101, Jamuka had arrived in the desert around Merv with 4,000 horsemen and perhaps 1,500 Persian psiloi armed with bows and short swords and wearing no armour other than their cloaks. It had now become apparent that the Seljuks would make war either on the Qarakhanate or on Khwarizim but which?

September saw the answer to that question as Qhan Jamuka led his army across the frontier to Turkmenistan. It was a rich region, densely populated and largely undefended - neither the locals nor the Shah in Khiva had expected this attack, this treacherous fratricidal butchery, so barely any warriors had been posted to guard the frontier with Persia. But, in any case, Jamuka came not to conquer but to raid; farmsteads, villages and towns were all looted and burnt, their inhabitants either butchered or, if they were lucky, merely driven out of their

homes by the raiders. The heavily-armoured cataphracts fell on one settlement after another and presented a simple ultimatum - everything of value must be surrendered, down to the last brass dirham, or the place would be razed. All too often, the vicious Seljuks razed them anyway even after ransom had been paid. Before the harsh Central Asian Winter set in, the raiders had fallen back to Kophat Dagh, their packs groaning under the weight of the loot. The raiding force found that, while they had been away, the Great Sultan had arrived with the main army numbering some 10,000 Iranian and Circassian auxilia armed with spear and sword, perhaps 4,000 Persian and Kurdish mountaineers and psiloi, 5,000 fine Seljuk light horsemen and around 4,000 lance-armed Turkish askaris. It was a magnificent force and Berk Yaruk looked forward to the glory and slaughter yet to come...

March 1102. As the snows of Winter began to clear, Jamuka took his raiding force back across the border looking for more loot. He had expected the enemy to be waiting but they were not; that being so, he and his men set about visiting those areas which had escaped his attentions the previous year. By the time he left, Turkmen was a wasteland - its population, such as were not dead or dragged off to the slavepens of Merv or Herat, had fled northwards to escape Seljuk depredations. Scarcely was there a single functioning settlement in the whole province. All the traders had fled too (either after being robbed or in order to escape same). Satisfied both with his haul and the with the general effect of his raids upon the populace, Jamuka withdrew once more to the environs of Merv where he linked up with Berk Yaruk and waited...

In fact, they waited the whole year out and some rogues even remarked that perhaps the Sultan had lost his taste for war now that he saw its dangers stretching out before him; perhaps he preferred to idle his months away in the rich palaces, pleasure gardens and harems of Merv where his ego could be massaged by sycophantic poets and empty-headed slave girls... But this was a gross calumny. The Great Sultan was a man with many a cunning stratagem up his sleeve - he waited because he expected the Khwarizimi to pursue the raiders back into Kophat Dagh where he and his great army would pounce. But, for all his cunning, he was disappointed. The Shah of Khwarizim had refused to be drawn out into a pursuit; instead, he kept his army close by Khiva awaiting the real invasion.

As 1103 opened, the Great Sultan saw no other option than to begin the conquest of Khwarizim in earnest (though he was sorely disappointed that he hadn't been able to tempt the enemy into the trap so carefully laid). No sooner had the Persian host, who numbered almost 30,000 men, begun to cross the frontier in March than Khwarizimi riders hared off to Khiva to report that the time had come. The Shah Qutb al-Din Muhammed had massed such forces as he had at his disposal; they numbered 4,000 footmen drawn largely from Khiva, around 2,000 Turkish light horse of the finest type, armed with both bow and lance and drawn from the Shah's own clan, more than 4,000 tribal horse archers and about 2,000 askari lancers mounted on heavy chargers.

By April the two armies were facing one another across the great open plains of Turkmenistan near a recently-abandoned

town called Ashgaban. The Shah had no doubt that the battle would be hard and that the odds were stacked against him but, still, he would persevere and push the Seljuks back. Qutb al-Din had been wounded to his heart by the attack, not only because he saw how his people suffered but because he had trusted Berk Yaruk and had believed that there would ever and always be peace between his small empire and the Great Sultanate. Obviously being so long amongst the Persians in distant Isfahan had led Berk Yaruk to adopt Persian ways and Persian treachery. But he would learn his lesson here and now (or so the Shah hoped, at any rate, though, given that the Sultan's forces outnumbered the Khwarizimi by a factor of more than two-to-one, it was perhaps rather a vain hope).

Battle was joined on a warm late April morning. The Sultan's army deployed with its phalanx of Persian infantry in the centre, light cavalry and askaris spread evenly between both wings and the elite cataphracts massed on the right. The Khwarizimi recognised that the Persian infantry were the weakest point in the invading army so they concentrated all their efforts on breaking them in the belief that, if the infantry centre could be routed, the whole of the enemy army might follow suit. Repeatedly, the Khivan horse archers rode within bowshot of the Persian foot, released their arrows and fled back before the Persian foot archers could respond; more than once, the uninspired Persians came close to breaking and had to be kept in their place by the whips and blows and curses of their Turkish officers. So, the Persians stayed, and died, under the rain of Khwarizimi arrows.

A confused cavalry melee developed as each side's askaris clashed and the masses of extremely mobile light horse darted hither and yon. Into this fray, Qhan Jamuka led a massed charge of the Persian cataphracts which drove the Khwarizimi askaris from the field in short order. Though the Khwarizimi horsemen were both courageous and skillful, they were simply not a match for the impossibly-heavy Seljuk cataphracts. Taking advantage of the one thing in their favour (their greater mobility), the survivors of this combat fled the field hoping to regroup and return but it was not to be. The Shah Qutb had led the men of his clan, almost 2,000 strong, throughout the battle and they had acquitted themselves admirably proving to be bolder and more skillful than any who stood against them. Even Berk Yaruk and his officers were impressed and dearly wished that they could field regiments of such obvious excellence. But none of this was enough to save the day. The sheer weight of Seljuk numbers pressed upon them - while the Khwarizimi had concentrated on (and succeeded at) killing as many foot soldiers as possible, the 7,000 Seljuk horse archers had done their damage to the Khwarizimi army (as had the charge of those damnable cataphracts). As more and more of the Shah's warriors died or fled, whether to seek their homes or an opportunity to regroup, the Shah and his kinsmen became increasingly isolated until, at last, they were surrounded on the field. Those survivors who had stopped to observe the final outcome of the great battle saw the Shah's banner fall. It did not rise again. So the battle ended and so too did Qutb al-Din Muhammad Shah. His body was never found among the piles of the slain but there was no doubt that he had fallen, on the bloody field of Ashgaban, alongside the other men of his clan. 1,500 Seljuk horsemen were left dead on

the field or injured and more than 4,000 Persian infantry; no-one was ever able to get a proper estimate of the Khwarizimi dead.

With this great victory gained, Berk Yaruk finished subjugating the region and then he dug in and waited for a possible counter-attack, wintering in Turkmen. No attack came and, in March of 1104, the march on Khiva, golden city of the Khwarizimi, began. He met no resistance for Arslan's son, now Shah, had fled north towards the desert or the steppe taking many refugees and all of his surviving warriors. The Khwarizimi state had effectively collapsed when Qutb al-Din Muhammed died on that bloody Turkmeni battlefield. This left the Sultan in a quandry - he had planned to loot rich Khwarizim and take every last thing of value but, now that it had fallen into his lap without any resistance, he opted to spare the unfortunate natives feeling that this was a province which might easily be integrated into his own Empire. So, he turned his attention on Khiva and made ready for a siege... Yet, no siege was necessary. The gates of the city were opened to the conquering Sultan; the ministers and administrators came to pay obeisance to the Sultan who, they said, was now their new lord and master; the Vizier even presented Berk Yaruk with the keys to the Khivan treasury. Berk Yaruk was fairly pleased with his achievements.

So ended the conquest of Khwarizim.

### **The Qara Khanate**

Jibril Arslan, the Qara Khan of Samarkhand

Capital: Samarkhand      Religion: Sunni Islam

The Qara Khan heard news of the war in neighbouring Khwarizim and became greatly distressed. Jibril had no wish to see his wonderful realm wrecked, looted and burnt as Khwarizim had been so, though a peaceful man by nature, he ordered the construction of many castles and strong towers with which he might resist invaders (from whatever direction they might come!).

In more pacific affairs (which was always where the Black Khan felt most at home), Jibril began investing money in attempts to lure scholars to Samarkhand. Indeed, he practically emptied the Khanate's vast coffers to draw learned men of every stamp to his heavenly capital city - Sufi mystics came to debate with Sunni theologians; Persian poets arrived to impress upon the city's youth the importance of getting one's metre right; even critics followed close behind to teach how best to pick apart the works of the poets; Greek philosophy was taught alongside Orthodox Islamic theology (mathematics and science were also taught but they are not very interesting and, for the most part, students dodged these lessons whenever they could so that they might spend their time in the study of racy Persian poems about the pleasures of wine and women). It was a most cosmopolitan environment and, in a short while, Samarkhand's already fabulous reputation had grown yet further and the princes of nearby realms began to contemplate sending their sons to receive an education in the Qarakhanate.

So cultured was the Black Khan Jibril Arslan that, in the confines of the palace, the women and girls of the harem were tutored in the poetic arts (alway under close supervision by

eunuch guards lest the tutors get ideas from their close proximity to so many attractive young ladies). Too, in a move that made some wonder whether Jibril Arslan's fierce steppe blood had been diluted by the ease of life in Samarkhand, he ordered that the sons of the Royal House be schooled in the "*Kutadgu bilig*" (The Wisdom of Royal Glory), a book with many distinctions - finished in Kashgar, in the year 1070, by Yusuf Khass Hajib, this was one of the only books written in the Turkish language. It was a manual for Princes and contained the radical proposition that the Prince ruled with the consent of his subjects and it was his duty, first and foremost, to ensure the happiness and prosperity of the people.

While such enlightened things were taking place in the capital, the heir to the Qarakhanate, Ahmed Jibril Tigin, struck out for the as-yet independent region of Tadzikistan. Here, he met many chieftains who were willing to talk but few who were willing to commit themselves to join the Khanate. At last, he was able to extract a promise to pay tribute but only after committing himself to a marriage to the pretty and demure teenage daughter of the foremost of the Tadzik Khans.

Overall, this was a period of peace and considerable happiness for the Black Khanate yet, over it all, lay the shadow of events in neighbouring Khwarizim and an unspoken fear that, perhaps, the Seljuks were seeking to secure the northern marches of their empire in which case one had to face the possibility that Samarkhand could be the next city to attract the attention of the Great Sultan's horde....

### **The Empire of Khwarizim**

Qutb al-Din Muhammed, Shah of Khwarizim

Capital: Khiva      Religion: Sunni Islam

After the great defeat and death of the Shah, the boy heir, Ala al-Din Aziz, proclaimed himself Shah and, with all his available cavalry (who were few in number) and Turkmeni refugees (who numbered many thousands), he abandoned the city and all that he had known and set out northwards to find sanctuary in the empty lands whence his ancestors had first come. One day, he or his son or his son's son would return and take vengeance but, for now, he would survive and that would be a kind of vengeance all by itself.

## **The Middle East:**

### **The Seljuk Sultanate of Rum**

Kilij Arslan, Seljuk Sultan of Rum

Capital: none      Religion: Sunni Islam

The encroachments of the Franks had left the Sultan worried and angry. The infidels had to be answered decisively. For three decades, the Turks had been pushing the Christians back and had made Anatolia their own through the benevolence of Allah and the strength of their arms; Kilij Arslan was not about to be let the recent setbacks stem the inexorable Turkish advance westwards. Great new regiments of cavalry were raised numbering 2,000 warriors in all but these were not the usual Turkish light horse - they were far more heavily armoured, akin to the Frankish knights or Byzantine cataphracts. It had not

escaped the Sultan's notice that, when Turk and Frank had met in battle at Dorylaeum in 1097, the Turkish horse archers with their steppe tactics had proven far from capable of inflicting any real harm on the iron-clad chevaliers. If Kilij wished to defeat the infidel, he would have to reconsider the composition of his army but he did not completely abandon the traditional Seljuk dependence on light horse - in addition to his cataphracts, he raised a new regiment of 1,000 of the outstanding horse archers, easily the finest such force any Seljuk ruler had fielded in recent memory.

All the horsemen currently in the service of the Sultanate were massed together and handed over to Malik Shah in preparation for a new expedition. With over 10,000 such warriors, Malik wandered down from Psidia to arid Pamphyla and, from there, he launched what he and the Sultan hoped would be a great raid into Byzantine Phrygia, a province which those feeble Greek cowards held only because the Franks had captured it on their behalf! He was to be disappointed. The Byzantine Emperor had established very many strong fortifications in Phrygia - the many watchtowers on the borders of the region gave the Byzantines some warning of the approach of this great and unwieldy mob while the local castles together with the well-walled city of Sardis gave the inhabitants places of refuge. A little loot was taken but, really, it was a paltry haul and, to make matters worse, the local Greek forces managed to ambush a couple of cavalry detachments before the Turks pulled back to Pamphyla. Barely had the Seljuk host recovered from the exertions of its first raid before Malik drove them on over the Taurus mountains into Cilicia. Things went even less well there and it was a gravely unhappy Malik Shah who returned to Pamphyla with his demoralised and humiliated army. Even new heavily-armoured Seljuk cataphracts had acquitted themselves poorly - they had turned out to be far too heavy to engage in such raiding.

Kilij Arslan, meanwhile, had been erecting a great number of castles and strongholds in Psidia. And when that work was done, he began overseeing changes to the rather slipshod Seljuk governmental structure but he had no great success (pretty much par for the course with the Seljuks of Rum at the moment).

#### The Danishmendid Emirate

Emir Malik Danishmend Ghazi

Capital: none                      Religion: Sunni Islam

A chieftain of the Seljuks of Rum, Hudayi by name, arrived as an envoy to the Danishmendid Turks in the late summer of 1101. His presence in the camp of Malik Danishmend was tolerated but not welcomed; the two Turkish states had fought each other in the past and, most people reasoned, would do so again. On the occasion when they had united to drive back the Crusaders, their alliance had borne no great fruit for the Crusaders had beaten them and pushed on to the Holy Land (shoring up the collapsing Byzantine Empire at the same time). After several years in residence, Hudayi's patient efforts had some kind of effect - while strong suspicions continued to be held, the Danishmendids were at least willing to

contemplate talking with their Seljuk neighbours. And that was something, wasn't it?

#### The Burid Emirate of Damascus

Emir Tughtigin

Capital: Damascus                      Religion: Sunni Islam

Slept.

#### The Seljuk Emirate of Mosul

Mahmud Nur, Atabeg of Mosul

Capital: Mosul                      Religion: Sunni Islam

Slept.

#### The Abassid Sultanate of Baghdad

Al'Mustahzir Sultan, Commander of Commanders, the Caliph

Capital: Baghdad                      Religion: Sunni Islam

Things were fairly quiet and uneventful in Baghdad. The Abassids continued to stand aloof from matters in the wider world; no move was made against the Franks in the Holy Land nor was assistance rendered to the Sunnis of Syria or Mosul both of whom looked, in theory at least, to Baghdad for spiritual leadership.

The Caliph himself saw to the reformation of his cavalry. Having heard of the general ineffectiveness of Muslim light cavalry against the Franks, it was decreed that the army's large contingent of light horse should be re-armed with the heavier weapons of the askaris. Prince Al 'Khalam, meanwhile, began the dull and laborious process of overhauling the tax system, setting it back on track after many decades of neglect and disruption. Too, large amounts of money and manpower were invested in clearing new land for agricultural use, extending the irrigation canals and generally repairing much of the damage that had accrued in Mesopotamia in recent times.

Little else of import happened though, many noted, there was a distinct hint that the Abassids were inching away from their traditional spiritual role in Islamic life and towards a more completely secular existence. Al 'Mustahzir spent very little time performing his duties as Caliph and delivered fewer and fewer religious judgments and pronouncements to the faithful as the years went by. He did not formally renounce the Caliphate but, still, he did nothing to promote its power or to suggest that he took it at all seriously. There were even rumours (ridiculous, of course) that he had attempted to engage in usury and that great sums of money had been set aside to fund loans (charged at interest!). No-one really believed these stories but, still, it made people think....

#### The Azeri Emirate

Eldigiz, Yazdid of Shirvan

Capital: Tabriz                      Religion: Sunni Islam

Slept.

#### The Crusader States of Outremer

Baldwin I, Latin King of Jerusalem, Defender of the Holy Places of Christendom  
Capital: Jerusalem Religion: Roman Catholic

Praise be to God Almighty! Through His grace and succour the faithful pilgrims had prevailed. The infidel had been put to flight on every occasion they had confronted the armies of the Christian West. Now fair Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre itself lay within the embrace of the Lord and Holy Mother Church. The heathen, who had so recently despoiled the Holy Land, were in disarray, cowering in the dark places whither they had run. From points east and south there came couriers from the Muslim potentates professing friendship and desire for peace. Verily, had the Men of Faith not been true to God's Will?

As King Baldwin looked out over the Holy City, the early light from the rising sun fell upon the Holy Sepulchre. The cross atop the shrine scattered the rays, enveloping it in a resplendent halo. To the pious leader it was yet another reminder of the duties that lay at hand. For now, the rivalries between the crusading lords had been overcome, their competing claims to these new lands resolved as best both sense and pride would allow. Now it had fallen to Baldwin to provide the earthly guidance needed were the late travails to be made truly worthy in the eyes of the Lord.

For the victorious advance of the Crusaders had delivered unto them lands of much potential. The soil was rich, the markets prosperous and the natives cooperative. Now a firm hand was needed that this rich bounty might be turned to the advantage of the Latin East. In this, Baldwin was prepared to leave such matters to the discretion of those lords who had pledged loyalty to him. They in turn were to prove most energetic in their actions. Across the Christian domain, these lords and their enfeoffed subordinates set to protecting their newly-won possessions with the raising of many fortified estates. Strong-walled manors were established by the great barons; stone watchposts sprang up all along the boundaries of the Crusading realms lest the infidel approach the frontiers of the Holy Land unseen; sturdy, easily-defended farmsteads were built so that the Frankish chevaliers might work their holdings in safety using local Mahometan labour. Those fortunate to have had bestowed upon them particularly bountiful lands parcelled out their holdings such that a freshly-ennobled group of knights might deliver service to the Holy Land. King Baldwin was quick to take advantage of this and invoked their obligation for military service.

So it was that, from the four corners of Christendom, stout-armed and well-horsed knights flocked to Outremer - from England rich in ships, from cultured Aquitaine, from the rich Low Countries and the Rhine Valley, from the Kingdom of Italy and the Calabrian and Apulian Duchies... Franks, Normans, Flemings, Germans and others besides rushed to place themselves in the service of the King of Jerusalem. Count Baldwin of Edessa kept careful note of the feudal desmains and fiefdoms to ensure that the Crusader Princes received their full due of coin, grain and service from their feudal underlings. In this, he enjoyed singular success and was granted the thankless task of administering the realm, an undertaking which brought

the Count no great joy. 1102 saw the birth of a daughter, named Margaret, to the Count though of greater import by far was the birth of a son and male heir - Raymond of Edessa - in the following year. In the birth of this boy, God had granted them a sign that their rule of the Latin West over the Holy Land would be enduring.

But, in equal measure, the men of surrounding lands, infidel and heretic alike, sent signs that they would not accept God's judgment and the victory of Mother Church for news filtered down from Constantinople of a claim laid by the Greeks against Antioch, the fief and great fortress of Prince Bohemond. Count Raymond of Tripoli had travelled to distant Byzantium to seek the support of the Emperor of the East, at whose behest this whole expedition had first been called, and he had found nothing but the stern countenances of arrogant Byzantine courtiers and demands that Antioch be surrendered to the Empire. It was a disheartened and offended Raymond who returned to the Holy Land to report on the overweening pretensions of the Greeklings and of their towering ingratitude. (see Byzantine entry)

When first the news reached Bohemond of Taranto, now styled Prince of Antioch, that Constantinople laid claim to his fief, his anger was boundless. The Christian army had taken the impregnable fortress, had fought its way to the heart of the Holy Land, had taken Jerusalem and shed an ocean of infidel blood to do it. All the while, the Comneni had skulked in the depraved luxury of their heretical city yet now they, those worthless Greeks, dared to demand lands they were too feeble or cowardly to capture by themselves! There was only one answer....

"CRUSADE! Let us march against Constantinople, let us take it by storm and visit the Lord's retribution upon those heretics!" cried Bohemond in council with the great Crusader princes.

Fortunately (or not depending on one's perspective), cooler heads prevailed. There was not a single Crusader who was not wounded to his heart by the arrogance of the Greekling Emperor but, still, there were more important matters at hand than avenging this slight. For all his words and ultimata, Alexius was simply incapable of threatening Outremer; the worst harm he could ever inflict would be to close the Byzantine treasury to the Crusaders. Of infinitely greater concern were the Fatimids who might counterattack at any time or the Damascenes who might attempt to push God's warriors back into the sea; too, there were the Atabegs and the Turks to the north... Those were the true enemies of Outremer's bold knights not the bloated, perfumed, silk-wearing Byzantines. Still, perhaps some rapprochement could be reached for Byzantine gold would be useful in the furtherance of God's Holy labours.....

More troubling than the news from Constantinople were events in Cilicia - the Summer of 1101 had seen raids from the infidel Seljuks of Rum. Fresh from their depredations in Phrygia, Malik Shah had boldly thrown his horde across the Taurus Mountains and into Cilicia, the heart of Lesser Armenia (jointly, Cilicia and Cappadocia formed the Kingdom of Lesser Armenia, a state which had been founded after the original

Bagratid Kingdom of Armenia had been destroyed by the Seljuks). Unfortunately for the Turks, King Thosos I and an army of several thousand fine Armenian gens d'armes were waiting ready to defend against incursions by the thrice-damned Turk. Malik managed to take no loot from the locale while leaving behind almost a thousand Seljuk horsemen dead or captured.

While such travails had been afflicting the other parts of the Crusader states, in the mountains of Cappadocia trouble of quite a different order had broken out. Cappadocia was part of the Kingdom of Lesser Armenia, an Orthodox state but one which was committed firmly to the Latin cause. There had been tension for years between the Orthodox Greek natives and their Armenian overlords (who belonged to the similar but different denomination of Armenian Orthodoxy which rejected the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon and clung resolutely to Monophysitism). The local clergy had overcome the most salient doctrinal divergences between the two brands of Orthodoxy by the simple but effective tactic of ignoring their theological differences and, in this way, a united front had been presented by Greek and Armenian alike in the face of Turkish pressure. Recently, however, with the coming of the Catholics and the spread of Islam in Anatolia, there had been new influences on the minds of the people; to make matters worse, the Great Council of Constantinople (see Byzantine entry) had provoked a new theological restlessness - differences once buried were now resurrected. A few local Armenian monks had begun to speak out against Icons, adopting the Muslim view that they were graven images and abhorrent to God; too, they promoted Hesychasm as a point of faith arguing that it was only through this peculiar and deeply controversial form of monastic meditation that one could commune with the Godhead and come to know God's Will. Before long, a priest or two had declared support for this heresy and then a Bishop. By this time, the Neoiconolcasts, as the heretics styled themselves, had a firm hold in Cappadocia (their opponents had a different name for them - *sarakenophrontes*, "Saracen-minded"). Worst of all, the heretics attacked not merely Icons but condemned the very authority of the traditional Orthodox clergy, Greek and Armenian alike; most of all, they damned the Latin Crusaders as servants of Satan and demanded that the Catholicos, the head of the Armenian Orthodox Church, should step aside and repent of his sins for supporting the Latins; nor did the Patriarch of Constantinople come in for softer treatment for he, the heretics claimed, was no better than the Roman Pope - just one more head of the Beast of Revelations. Even the Byzantine nobles were targetted for their extravagance - they called themselves Christian but their harlots wore the price of a thousand meals around their necks while the poor starved in the streets of their pernicious city. By the time the Winter of 1105 set in, the nobles of Cappadocia, either through belief in the heresy or fear of the heretics, had broken off their relations with the Crusaders and the Armenian King, Thosos I.

### The Christian Kingdom of Georgia

David II the Builder, King of Georgia

Capital: Tblisis      Religion: Eastern Orthodox

Slept.

## **Eastern Europe:**

### The Byzantine Empire

Alexius I Komnenus, Basileus kai Autokratos, Head of the Eastern Rite

Capital: Constantinople      Religion: Eastern Orthodox

The Empire was gearing up for war. The infidel Turk was played the stalking tiger to the east, waiting for some opening, some sign of weakness which would give the opportunity to pounce. From the west, the ruthless Normans threatened Greece and the islands while the Magyars stood as a perpetual threat to the Balkans. Looming over everything was the shadow of the Crusade. With enemies on every side, there was only one thing to do - fortify! In almost every province of the Empire, all through Asia Minor and even on Rhodes, Crete, Cyprus and along the Danube frontier, new castles and strongholds were built with great alacrity.

The Emperor himself set out on a trip to Bosnia. He saw that the Byzantine grip on the Balkans was slipping - ever since Basil II Bulgaroktonos (the Bulgar-Slayer) had broken the Bulgarian Empire, the Balkan Slavs had viewed Constantinople with much bitterness and little trust; now, under Alexius, taxes and conscription had left the Slavs with even more resentful of Imperial authority. At the same time, the strategic value of the region, as a buffer between Greece and Hungary, increased constantly as the power of the Magyars grew and that of the Empire waned; Alexius could not countenance the loss of so vital a region.

Early in 1102, accompanied by the massed Byzantine army, Alexius arrived in Bosnia and began to press the Slavic chiefs and nobles to accept his rule more completely. During his discussions, it became apparent that the Slavs did not truly consider themselves to be a part of the Empire; rather they felt oppressed by Imperial rule - they were the victims, not the loyal subjects, of Byzantium. At the risk of alienating the urban aristocracy of Constantinople, Alexius sought to win the Slavs over by awarding Imperial titles to the Bosnian chiefs, heaping honours upon them and, perhaps, creating the illusion that they too had a share in the Empire - the Slavic chieftains became *patriciani*, *protospatharii*, *nobilissimi*; their foremost prince even received the coveted title of *curoplates*. Of course, these titles meant very little - they fell in and out of use over time, were occasionally resurrected only to be forgotten a generation later and, most importantly, they gave their bearers no real authority - yet they implied a great dignity and this did not escape the Bosnians who felt themselves singularly honoured by the Roman Emperor. Having been offered what appeared to be a share in the Empire, they grasped at it greedily. Such of their number as were opposed to Byzantine rule and spurned the Emperor's overtures soon came to regret their decision - the lucky ones were sent into exile in distant Anatolia whilst the others were blinded or mutilated at Alexius' command. The Emperor of distant Constantinople offered rewards and punishment, generosity and ruthlessness, in equal measure. The Bosnians understood this and pledged themselves and their swords to the service of the Empire. When his negotiations were complete and the northern frontier rendered more secure, the Emperor marched off for Anatolia to hold the eastern border

against any further Seljuk raids for rumour came of Islamic mullahs marching through Byzantine lands telling the people that the only way to escape the coming storm was to bow to Allah. Naturally, the locals lynched these would-be missionaries with zeal but the mere fact of their presence was troubling to Alexius.

To Isauria the Emperor had sent the learned envoy Eumathios Philokales. This rich and important frontier province had, lamentably, slipped further and further away from Byzantine rule over the past few years so that now her governor and magnates were virtually independent - such a state of affairs had to be remedied. Eumathios approached the most powerful of the nobles of Isauria but they were far from inclined to integrate further into the Roman Empire. Warnings of the danger posed by the cunning Turk or the brutal Crusader fell on deaf ears - the Isaurians trusted in their strong castles and fierce fighting men. By and by, the Byzantine envoy suggested to the local overlord, a dux of the Maniaces family, that the eldest son of the clan might provide a suitable mate for Her Highness, the Princess Anna, whose intellect and beauty were renowned throughout Christendom. This offer tempted the arrogant Isaurian and, soon, an agreement was in place under which the Isaurians would pay tribute to His Imperial Majesty but it was very limited - a small annual sum to acknowledge the supremacy of Constantinople without compromising the practical independence of Isauria. Eumathios returned to Constantinople with Anna's husband-to-be, Leo Maniaces the Isaurian, in tow.

The couple were wed in short order but they were not happy. Anna had hoped for a far better match than this provincial bumpkin while Leo, who was no intellectual heavyweight, felt himself truly out of his depth with such a clever and strong-willed wife. Just to rub salt into the wound, when John Comnenus came of age, he was swiftly designated heir by the Emperor. For Anna, who had hoped and expected that she would receive the Imperial Crown upon Alexius's death, the appointment of John (who was, to her way of thinking, a witless temperamental little sneak) was a slap in the face - a sign, in conjunction with this worthless marriage, of exactly how little her father valued her. She spent much of her time sulking and even more time hoping that something painful would happen to John. But it didn't (at least, not yet).

In Constantinople itself, Count Raymond of Tripoli came from the Holy Land seeking support, for surely the Empire and the Crusaders were brother travellers on the path of Christ. Yet he found the Byzantines to be supercilious and uncompromising - the Latins may claim the Holy Land and whatever else they wished but Antioch must be surrendered to the Empire. Unless and until that happened, Constantinople would offer no support of any kind to Jerusalem - not one single brass denarius would be given over into Frankish hands. Raymond departed and relayed the stance of the Roman Empire to his fellow Crusaders - distrust between the two sides increased sharply.

In foreign affairs, a non-aggression treaty was established between the Norman Duchies of Southern Italy and the Empire. Alexius was glad to see such a pact in place but he wondered whether it would truly prevent the Normans from attacking - he well remembered the treachery of Robert Guiscard

and how, only a generation ago, these same Duchies which now espoused peace had been set up over the ruins of Byzantine Italy.

With the treaty in order, the Emperor decreed that a tax would be levied upon the Pisans and Venetians who traded in Constantinople - fully 10% of their earnings would be stripped away into the Byzantine exchequer. Both sets of Italians were fairly upset by this and muttered dark things...

## **The Great Ecclesiastical Council of Constantinople**

At the order of the Emperor and under the authority of the Patriarch, Nicholas III Kyrdiniates Grammatikos, a Grand Church Council was convened to discuss the differences in doctrine and dogma between the Armenian and Greek Churches. In these difficult times, it was the will of the Emperor that efforts be made towards achieving a reconciliation of the kindred branches. With the independent Armenians supporting the Catholic West and with most of the other Armenians languishing beneath the Turkish yoke, some in Byzantium (and the Emperor not least) feared that they might lapse and be latinised or, worse still, abandon their Christian Faith altogether in favour of the lies professed by their Mahometan conquerors. Whatever the differences between Armenia and Constantinople, neither Emperor nor Patriarch could allow this branch of Orthodoxy, though its doctrine be in error, to slip away from the embrace of Orthodox Christendom.

The Council went ahead during the summer of 1102. The Patriarch took great care to ensure that such Orthodox clergy as attended could be depended on to fudge any areas of contention - no controversial theologians or idealogues would be allowed to upset the proverbial apple cart. Yet, on the Armenian side, no such restraint was in evidence - the elderly Catholikos of the Armenian Church, Gregory II Martyrophile, had come all the way from Cilicia to the great city because he hoped that something concrete might come from the convocation and he brought with him his most fierce and argumentative theologians to debate the Greeks into rejecting the false doctrines of Chalcedon. In addition to the Cilicians, some bishops even managed to reach the city from the Turkish territories, risking their lives in a journey through lands groaning beneath the chains of the infidel. Still others came from the recently-liberated Crusader County of Edessa. But, wherever they came from, the Armenian clergy had at this one thing in common - they believed that the Council of Constantinople was to be a genuine effort to solve the differences between the churches.

The first issues touched on by the Council concerned things which, to the Armenians, seemed quite irrelevant - both Churches reaffirmed their opposition to the Latin *filioque*, recognised the Roman Pope as "first in honour" among the Churches but dismissed his claim to be Vicar of Christ; similarly, they confirmed that the Conciliar system was the proper method for all Church matters to be settled and they reiterated their rejection of the Roman Monarchical system. Many long days and weeks were spent dwelling over these fine points of ecclesiastical polity. This was all very bothersome to the Armenians since they saw no point in worrying over things held

in common - indeed, things held in common by *all* the non-Roman Churches; the Greeks, on the other hand, wanted to emphasise the common ground as heavily as they could, to minimise the differences and disputes.

By and by, the question of Hesychasm was raised by the Armenians, a controversial form of monastic meditation which had found a degree of popularity but not formal doctrinal acceptance after its promotion by Simeon, the "New Theologian", during the previous century. Here, too, the Armenians could get nothing from the Greeks but clever avoidance of the issue and failure to commit one way or the other - the Greek theologians refused either to accept or to condemn the practice but instead pontificated about the need to balance the spiritually-positive aspects against any potentially negative consequences such as the added concentration of power in the hands of the monks. When one Armenian bishop, a pro-Latin logician and long-time critic of Hesychasm, voiced his distaste for the superstitiousness which, he felt, was embodied in the rite, the Greeks rushed to concede that there was most assuredly a need to consider whether the practice was truly holy or was mere superstition yet the Greeks simply would not come down on one side or the other on this or any other topic.

Whatever the theological views of the individual Armenian clergymen, they all realised that the Greeks had no intention of addressing the true fundamental issues at stake. The fudging of the issues became so vexatious that, at last, the Armenians themselves raised the most vital question - the dogma relating to Christ's divine and human natures. In effect, the Armenians wanted to debate the Council of Chalcedon, the findings of which they, and all other Monophysites, rejected. Yet the Greeks were not prepared to discuss this divisive topic - one particular Greek logician even went so far as to argue that the doctrine of One Nature, as espoused by the Armenians, was not incompatible with the Chalcedonic view of a Dual Human and Divine Nature if only the Armenians were prepared to accept that the One Nature was the Nature of the Word Made Flesh - thus, a united One but not a numerical "one". Such sophistry and casuistry had no effect on the Armenians other than to convince them of the fruitlessness of the whole endeavour. In desperation, the Greek delegates declared that no benefit could accrue from arguing these centuries-old points - what mattered, what was truly important, was to present a united front against the invaders, Catholic and Mahometan alike. Irrespective of their differences, the two branches of Orthodoxy has infinitely more in common with each other than they ever would or could with the Latins Heretics or the Infidel Turk.

At all events, by the end of the year, the Council had broken up with no firm outcome though, in some areas, the event provoked a great deal of theological debate and the revisiting of old issues which had long been thought to have been dealt with. Some Armenians agreed that their interests lay more in aligning with Constantinople than with the Crusaders; others acrimoniously pointed out that it had not been the Catholics nor even the hated Turks who had destroyed Bagratid Armenia but these self-same mealy-mouthed Greeks who now came begging for friendship and fudging their own religious doctrine to gain it. In the aftermath of the Council, the Armenian Church began to appear less united than it had formerly been and, worse still,

there was a very obvious polarisation of opinion between those who opposed cooperation with the Greeks and those who opposed cooperation with the Catholics; some felt it was significant that the factions defined themselves not in terms of what they supported but of what they opposed. In this unfortunate environment, with the Church's whole philosophy, policy and worldview up for debate, some bizarre new ideas began to appear in the more isolated areas. (see Outremer entry).

### The Grand Principality of Kiev

Sviatopolk II, Grand Prince of the Kievan Rus

Capital: Kiev

Religion: Eastern Orthodox

The sprawling and unwieldy Kievan realm saw tremendous reforms. Administrators and advisors under the leadership of the minister Stavros Dukas arrived from distant Byzantium to assist in holding together this vast confederation of principalities. Sviatopolk was most pleased to be thus favoured by the Emperor of distant Constantinople - Kiev owed much or even most of its cultural and political outlook to the Greeks. It was a good thing, Sviatopolk reasoned, that so great a people as they should recognise his importance and his supremacy amongst all the Princes of the Rus.

Stavros the Byzantine, renowned as much for his bad luck as for his good looks, was less pleased. He had been enjoying life in the Golden City of the Caesars when, quite without warning, he had been exiled to this log-built hell-hole full of unwashed illiterate Slavic barbarians. What had he done to offend the Emperor? What had he done to offend God? For, surely, he must have performed deeds of surpassing wickedness to find himself abandoned in the middle of this wasteland. He took some succour from the fact that he was not alone - many scores of Greek clerks and bureaucrats had come along with him.

Sviatopolk aspired to rule a centralised state akin to Byzantium of old - he wished that he might become as a Byzantine Caesar, an absolute ruler, instead of merely the *primus inter pares*, foremost of the many Rus Princes for Sviatopolk realised that he was a leader under suffrance rather than a ruler in his own right. The Grand Prince would change all that. He would model his government and his rule after that of the Greeks. Many new officials were trained (in addition to those brought to Kiev by the Greeks) and, even in the most distant and farflung regions of the Rus, it became increasingly common to see officials the Prince of Kiev moving hither and yon organising the payment of all proper dues and monies. His Highness, the Grand Prince, personally tried to reform the outdated feudalistic taxation system but his efforts were, lamentably, in vain for administrative problems had arisen when native Kievan officials had misunderstood the Greek writings of the Byzantines (and, of course, the Greeks had a hard time dealing with the Slavonic tongue of the Rus) and these had effectively stymied the planned tax reforms and census.

The Grand Prince's retainer, Rostislav, was dispatched to the far north of the Rus confederacy where he met with the Prince of Novgorod and tried to convince him of the need to align more closely with Kiev. Union of the principalities would result in the creation of an even more powerful empire while the

current situation, whereby Kiev and Novgorod were merely allies, would inevitably lead to splits and rivalries. Vsevolod of Novgorod listened to the Kievan arguments but would agree to nothing which might further compromise Novgorod's independence. The actual city of Novgorod, lying by the muddy shores of Lake Ilman, also hosted a visit Rostislav who addressed the Vecheh (city parliament) and the city was soon finegled into acknowledging the rule of the Kievans so the Kievan mission northwards was not in vain.

This was, indeed, a time of great activity and change in Russia, of more power gravitating towards the centre - Kiev and her Grand Prince. But, for all that, Sviatopolk ensured that even the outlying regions were not neglected - Orthodox monks trooped off to pagan Livonia to preach Our Lord's word to the heathen. Curiously, none of the monks was ever seen again so it is reasonable to assume that they achieved a martyr's death (though the Livonians will surely deny it if you ask them).

### The Kingdom of Poland

Wladyslaw I Herman Piast, King of Poland, Defender of the Western Slavs  
Capital: none. Religion: Roman Catholic

The aging King Wladyslaw was most alarmed by events in the Empire. The Piasts had no truck with the Franconians or their challenge to Papal authority but they did fear the aggression of the Saxon Welfs and wondered whether the warlike Magnus might turn his attention to the Empire's eastern marches one day soon. While he brooded over such matters, His Majesty concluded a treaty with the Kievan Rus which guaranteed that the two realms would maintain the peace for a period of 25 years; too, each recognised the other's claim to certain lands - Poland recognised Kiev's claim to Estonia and Latvia while, in return, the Rus recognised the Polish claim to the lands immediately to the south of those regions. With the treaty concluded, the King assumed the title Defender of the Western Slavs and promptly sent the loyal knight, Ladislav, to invade the Holy Roman Empire...

While such exciting affairs were taking place, a collection of scribes, clerics and monks arrived in Poland at the behest of the Curia to assist in governing this large country. The King was more than happy to accept their aid but a scandal swept Poland a short while later when rumours began to be whispered that His Majesty had been trying actively to undermine the authority and influence of the Holy Father. No-one could substantiate the charges and, perforce, no-one would openly state their accusations before the King but it mattered not for the rumours flew and were widely believed.

Scribes were not the only people to arrive in Poland - the Swedish emissary, Astidis Hallbjornsdatter, arrived to improve relations between the Poles and the Swedes. She was well-received (given that she was a commoner, a woman and, worst of all, not a Catholic) but few of the grandees and notables at the Piast Court had much confidence that her promises about Swedish good intentions would ever amount to anything. Old King Wladyslaw, though, was quite taken with her, though she was young enough to be his granddaughter, and the two of them spent many hours closeted together in private discussions. The

lady had many plans which caught the King's imagination - whether they were her own or those of the Co-Kings of Sweden, none could say. Not that it mattered. The King was convinced that her word was reliable and her plans would benefit Poland and the Piasts - the nobles had no option but to fall in behind the King's wishes.

The Swedish lady was not the only Scandinavian emissary to arrive in Poland. Crown Prince Niels of Denmark arrived with considerably more pomp than Astidis managed and was, at once, feted by the Polish nobility. Here, they said, was a proper ambassador - a prince of royal blood who would one day wear the lofty crown of the ancient Danish Kingdom. Wladyslaw liked Niels well enough but they just didn't hit it off the way he did with Astidis...

In other news, Prince Boleslaw, the teenaged heir of the King, was wed to a lady of the court (she was a few years older than him, as it turned out). In five years, five children were born - all survived but, regrettably, only one was male. The Duke of Volhynia, meanwhile, pledged himself and his fief to the Polish Crown.

### The Kingdom of Hungary

Koloman, King of the Magyars  
Capital: none. Religion: Roman Catholic

Slept.

### The Kingdom of Croatia

Peter Svacic, King of Croatia  
Capital: none. Religion: Roman Catholic

Slept.

### The Khanate of the Volga Bulgars

Khan of the Volga Bulgars  
Capital: none. Religion: Sunni Islam

Slept.

### The Duchy of Bohemia

Borivoi II Przemyslid, Duke of Bohemia, Cupbearer to the Emperor, Prince of the Empire  
Capital: Prague Religion: Roman Catholic

Duke Borivoi observed the blood-letting in the neighbouring Empire with dismay. Theoretically, he was a Prince of the Holy Roman Empire and held many Imperial honours but, still, he was disinclined to throw his forces into the bloody German fray. Magnus of Saxony was an ambitious and potentially aggressive ruler who had never shown any sign that he would abide by the recent Papal Concordat; to that extent, Borivoi sympathised with those who wanted to bring him to heel but not if it involved the commitment of Bohemian manpower and the spilling of the precious blood of Borivoi's loyal vassals. Instead, His Grace the Duke massed all his forces around the capital and had his many artificers and sappers prepare a series of fine breastworks. All this in case the war spilled over from neighbouring Germany. But, as fortune would have it, the war did not come.

His Grace married a young cousin of the Przemyslid dynasty and, to general delight, bore him two sons - Jozef and Danousek. While such personal joy attended the Duke, the peasants had much cause to praise the Duke as a wise and caring ruler - out of every twenty parts which were due in taxation to the Duchy, His Grace took only nineteen. As a result of this unwonted generosity, the Moravian peasantry and gentry found themselves with a deal more income than they had expected. Most of it was, very wisely, invested in efforts to drain local marshes and clear woods to make room for more farmland. The effects of this undertaking were limited but at least a start had been made and the Duke and many of the local feudal landowners could look forward to the myriad advantages that would accrue with the clearing of the forests.

In Prague, a small city by anyone's standards, large sums of money were poured into the university and local cathedral school. Although these institutions didn't quite match the grand affairs of Western Europe, their scholars still made a considerable albeit fairly uncontroversial contribution to the great theological debates of the day; too, the task of translating Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* into Slavonic was begun.

## Northern Europe:

### The Kingdom of Denmark

Erik I the Evergood, King of Denmark  
Capital: none                      Religion: Roman Catholic

Poor King Erik, like everyone else in this part of Europe, was concerned with only one thing - the Civil War in Germany. Some in Denmark argued that there was a chance for Denmark to enrich itself by seizing the Welf fiefs in Holstein; others argued that Denmark should stand aside and that she had nothing to gain from involvement in the fratricidal war but plenty to lose. The King prevaricated as long as he could but, in the end, feeling that his hand was being forced by the pressure and threats of the Salian Emperor and Saxon Duke alike, His Majesty called all his forces to arms and invaded Holstein in June of 1104.

In other affairs, a Swedish fleet under the Co-King Philip put in at Copenhagen and there ensued a diplomatic incident of some kind - the Danish chieftain, Rane, who commanded the greater part of the Danish fleet, seemed not to like the attitude of Philip and the two men came very close to exchanging blows. The precise details of what passed between them will likely never be known by anyone else but they parted not as the best of friends but as the most bitter and bloody of enemies. When Erik, in the field with the army, heard of what had passed, he shook his head in disbelief at the pride and pretensions of his lieutenants and longed for the day when the Lord might call him to heavenly repose.

The Crown Prince, Niels, went off on a trip to the distant Polish court where he provided quite popular in some quarters.

### The Kingdom of Norway

Magnus II "Bareleg", King of Norway, Earl of the Orkneys, King of Man  
Capital: Christiana                      Religion: Roman Catholic  
  
Slept.

### The Kingdom of Sweden

Inge II the Younger and Philip Halstensson, Co-Kings of Sweden  
Capital: none.                      Religion: Roman Catholic

*Excerpt from the Apologia of Blaeen Fornasson, a Pagan of Uppsala.*

I am Blaeen, named by the elders after the raven - the messenger of Odin, wisest of Gods. The elders believed at my birth that I would aspire to great things yet I am but a humble man in training - training to remember the stories of my people.

As I write these words, the world is changing. We see now the end of our old world and the beginning of a new one. The Christ Child has come to our lands and he challenges our old gods. Already many bow down to the God of the Romans rather than chant for the glory of the Old Gods.

The past few years have been a turbulent time for my people. Inge I was challenged by his brother in law for the Crown of Sweden. The events of those years - armies marching across hill and dale, brother pitted against brother... These were dark years. The priests of the Green Christ sang of peace and love but they have brought to our lands only war and hatred. For this I weep but cannot act to change for the fate of our people lies not in my hands but in the hands of those chosen by the gods. If the choice was made by Odin or the Christ child, I know not, but the Fates will have the final say.

When the brothers fought over the Crown, the people cried out for peace, and the Landstig called the claimants to task. Many voices called for reason, and reason was spoken. Now the lands of Sweden are ruled in council. Inge and Philip are the two greatest Jarls of Sweden. Inge the Younger is the son of the past true King, and has the support of many amongst the nobles and the Christian fathers. But the Old Gods would not be silenced, and the people of Halland and Uppsala cried out for their leader - and Philip was appointed as he was a devout and pious man consecrated to Tyr, Champion of the Gods.

While I see why they support Philip, I have seen much of the ways of the world and worry for my Gods if they are protected by his hand. He is indeed a great warrior, but he speaks as he fights - with directness and force and, all too often, with cruelty. He is a wise man to defend the people but not one to unite them.

But the Gods will be heard. We are lucky in Philip's directness and distaste for the forms and rules of court. In his younger years he took a lover Ástdís, a woman of common birth who has used her influence with Philip wisely and has gained for herself a place in court. Sweden has a strong voice in her for, although she will never be acceptable as a queen, the nobles have seen her wisdom and her power with words. She has become a valuable asset for Sweden, and a trusted advisor to both Philip and Inge.

As I write these words though, the Fates are leading us along a treacherous path. Inge has shown his ability as a leader - but he has been influenced by the shadow of his father, for he concerns himself greatly with the stability of the kingdom. Truly, this is no bad thing yet it is the tree which bends that weathers the storm and I fear that Inge may break when the storm reaches our shores for, while Inge has taken a wife from among the nobles and slowly gathers support amongst the people, Philip has reached for the traditions, to grasp the hearts of the people. If only Ástdís had had more care with her words and deeds. For Philip and Ástdís have disappeared in the night - claiming to sail to Denmark - and have gathered to themselves those who wished for blood, for

a return to the old ways. We all await to see how the man of action will avail himself in the realm of appearances and deception that is the Royal Court.

As for Ástíðis. She spends too much time in the company of Philip for an unmarried woman, but seeks to influence the Christian King of Denmark. The Kingdom of Denmark has long been an influence for peace in the Northern Lands, and she must have some plan for our future for it is certain, that the two proud Kings of Sweden would never bend their knees to a Dane, a woman has not the reckless pride of a man, and she can make arguments that are not available to a King. And, while she is not Queen of Sweden, she has the heart of a royal lady, and it was a cruel jest of Loki that placed such a heart and mind in a commoner who may never wear the crown. She is bold, and fights with her heart and mind for the Swedish Kingdom.

But it is here that I must rest my quill, and return to my lessons, as the words of our forefathers must be kept true in our minds to pass on to our children, and only once I am acceptable to the Gythia and Skalds shall I carry on this holy task and, perhaps, have a chance to influence the Fates and see my people through this coming storm.

But for now we must wait - wait for the return of Philip and his hotheads, as well as to hear word of what Ástíðis has brought back from the Court of Denmark.

*Blaen Fornasson.*

Things were quiet in Sweden but it was a restless quiet - there was a sense that great things, for good or ill, were on the horizon. The pagan Co-King, Philip, had sailed off with the whole of the Swedish fleet and his peasant-bred mistress, Astidís, eventually arriving in Copenhagen. God alone knew what mischief they would get up to...

In Sweden itself, the handful of Catholic priests in the Kingdom set about trying to work things out with those annoying pagans - a real effort at drawing people together was made. They introduced Christian Holy Days to coincide with existing pagan celebrations - thus, the Feast of St. John was celebrated at Midsummer, a sacred day for pagans; and Christ's Mass was held during the pagan Yule Tide.

King Inge, as a good and even devout Catholic, naturally wanted to see his subjects introduced to God's Grace and he was willing to take the soft approach and allow the pagans to meld slowly into the Christian faith instead of having it imposed by Christian blades. It was hardly the stuff of epic poems but, still, it suited Inge's more peaceful nature. A great assembly, the Landstíg, was held and many things of no importance were debated; bickering continued between pagan and Christian though it was, many noted, less heartfelt than in the past; a wife was taken by Inge from one of the prominent Christian families and three sons were born in as many years.

As a result of the very careful attention Inge paid to the government of the kingdom, more ministers were appointed and the hand of officialdom found it could reach ever further into the distant regions of the realm. This was a time when the power of the great nobles was obviously being curtailed and the King's role, as centre of government was being more clearly defined; in truth, it was a time when servants of the King, ministers and monks, might exercise more power than a nobleman or chieftain of ancient and honourable lineage. The great nobles were not happy about it but there was little they could do and everyone

had to admit that the political scene in Sweden became much more stable during this part of King Inge II's reign. Yes, there were no two ways about it - life in Sweden was quiet...

...until that rambunctious pagan, Philip Halstensson, the Co-King, showed up in Stockholm in the Spring of 1105 with great squads of followers (most of whom, to Inge's displeasure, were warriors). They didn't stay long but poured ungodly amounts of gold into the pockets of local hostellers and victuallers, bought up every barrel of ale, side of beef and barrel of salted fish in the city of Stockholm and finally hared off to Philip's great estate out in the forests of southwestern Uppsala. Many pagan nobles flocked to Philip's estate (which some called, in a most provocative gesture, his "court") and a disgracefully good time was had by all including, some noted, young Eyvindr Tallberg, the ruler of Gotland. Eyvindr and Philip spent many hours talking together, in their cups, about things they chose not to share with anyone else. Most wondered what plots Philip was engaged upon now and what new trouble he would inflict upon the Kingdom. While not drinking and plotting, the Co-King spent most of his time weeping drunkenly for the mistress whom he had not seen in almost 5 years. How sad. Still, there were other young ladies who could offer him comfort in Astidís' absence.

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### **The Icelandic Commonwealth**

Capital: none. Religion: Roman Catholic

Slept.

## **Western Europe:**

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### **The Norman Kingdom of England**

Henry I *Beauclerc*, King of England

Capital: London Religion: Roman Catholic

It was a typically wet February night; heavy brooding skies had emptied a sleety rain over the south of England and few were abroad in such dark and cold. At the Tower of London, the centre and epitome of Norman dominance over England, the smattering of gens d'armes and watchmen unlucky enough to have been allotted sentry duty sheltered wherever they could and thought of the sunnier days and drier climes of France whence most of them hailed. No-one was treating sentry duty with especial seriousness - at a time when the new King, Henry the Scholar, was preparing his great expedition to the Continent, there were probably fewer safer places for a soldier to idle his time than at the Tower. If only something could be done about the weather, it'd be the perfect duty.

Such soldiers as were present were, in any case, not guarding against danger from without but from within for the Tower was now home to an august guest. Within one of its higher cells was incarcerated Rannulf Flambard, Prince Bishop of Durham and Treasurer of England under William Rufus. In his uncomfortable little cell, Bishop Flambard awaited the King's Pleasure - judgment both for his rapacity in extorting blood-sucking taxes and for his seditious slander against King Henry for Flambard had been foremost amongst those who had accused Henry of fratricide, of having connived in the murder of Rufus. Indeed, Bishop Flambard would have fled England

altogether to seek safety with Duke Robert in Normandy had the accursed *Beauclerc* not had him arrested. And now Henry's swaggering churls stood guard over him (or, at least, they pretended to stand guard while in fact trying very hard to avoid exposure to the elements). Well, it mattered not. Flambard still had a surprise in store and knew that, before long, he would see Henry locked up in a cell...

A couple of hours after midnight had passed, a small party of horsemen approached the Tower through the sheets of rain. They rode up from the direction of the river, three or four men armed and bundled-up heavily against the English weather; behind them, they led a riderless horse. A single sleepy guard at the gate (actually a Breton boy who had not yet seen 20 summers) challenged them but only in the most desultory fashion. "Who goes there?" the guardsman asked uncertainly.

The horsemen didn't even pause. As they bustled past, the lead rider barked at the guard in a thick Norman accent, "We are about the King's business! Out of the way, stupid boy!". That answer was good enough for the guard who had a deep understanding of his purpose in life - namely, to do whatever the nobles ordered.

So it was that the horsemen rode in unmolested and stopped only when they were beneath Flambard's cell in the great White Tower. They looked around uneasily. It really couldn't be as easy as this. The leader nodded and one of the other riders whistled sharply; an instant later a rope, smuggled into the Tower and hidden by Flambard in readiness for this moment, dropped past his face; at the top of the rope, clambering down as quickly as he could, was Bishop Flambard. Before very long, the Bishop was on the ground then on a horse and then riding hell-for-leather out of the gate with his rescuers, trusted retainers of Duke Robert, down towards the Thames and a ship bound for Normandy. The young guard watched them go thinking to himself that, for men on the King's business, they had been very quick.

It was morning before the villain's escape was even noticed. Almost simultaneously, a sergeant-at-arms spotted the still dangling rope and a sentry within the tower, bringing Flambard's breakfast, found the cell empty. As the whole story emerged, there were many red faces at the Tower. When King Henry heard the news, he exploded at the unwonted idiocy and incompetence of his guardsmen. Though not normally a vindictive man, the King ordered that all those who had stood guard at the Tower that night be inducted into the force being prepared for the expedition to Normandy. If they were too stupid to stop a fat bishop from climbing out of a window, perhaps they would be able to swing a pig-sticker with a better degree of success....

## **The Conquest of Normandy**

1101: As soon as the winds were favourable, ships packed with Anglo-Norman soldiery began slipping out of London and the other great ports of southern England bound for Brittany, still loyal to King Henry. The Scholar himself was on one of the first ships to depart for France. His poor young wife,

the Scots girl Eadgyth, had been heartbroken to see him go especially as it was no secret he would be warring in France for several years but such were the travails which attended a king and they could not be avoided.

On the final night before his departure with the vanguard, a most curious event took place. His Majesty was feasting with his most loyal vassals and ministers; it happened that there was a Scottish envoy present, having come to Henry's Court to secure English acquiescence for a treaty. By and by, as talk turned to affairs on the Continent, a servant brought a new flask of wine for His Majesty but Henry, being moderate by nature, had already taken more than his fill and demurred; the Scot, though, could always find room in his gullet for more liquor (as is the way with Scots) and so commandeered the flask and set about downing it.

Before an hour had passed, the Canmore envoy complained of feeling unwell and, sure enough, a sheen of sweat covered his face and he had become unnaturally pale. As he rose from the table to retire, he collapsed! Servants and noble guests alike rushed to his side - he was alive but his breathing was shallow. A doctor was sent for and, at the King's direction, the ambassador was carried off to an antechamber to be treated. While the Court waited to hear whether the Scot would live or die, the Steward of the Royal Household approached King Henry bearing in his hands the flask from which the ambassador had been drinking so liberally; his countenance was graven and he whispered something in the King's ear....

"Poison?!?" Henry blurted out with a look of sheer incredulity on his face.

"So it would seem, Majesty," answered the Steward. "I cannot explain how such a thing could come to pass but someone in the kitchens would appear to have introduced a noxious drug. It is quite beyond me."

Henry was shaken. That his brother would stoop to cold-blooded murder was barely comprehensible. Surely His Holiness would excommunicate him for this piece of treachery. In the meantime, with Henry's absence approaching, the task of hunting out the would-be assassin devolved to his Chamberlain, Hervey de Gistellas, who went to the job with a kind of zeal. Before long, all the servants in the kitchen had undergone examination within the Tower and all manner of suspicious characters - foreigners and poor people and other unpleasant elements - were being roused out of their homes by the King's men. It did not take long for the trail to lead to a very minor merchant from the Continent who resided in London. He, it turned out, had introduced the poison to the palace and had paid certain servants, who were ignorant of the bottle's contents, to ensure that it was delivered to the King and no other. Gistellas had the man imprisoned until such times as the King himself could attend to the case.

(The envoy, for those who are interested, lingered for a day and a half before succumbing to the drug and shuffling off this mortal coil).

1102: Having arrived in Brittany, King Henry chose to dig in while reinforcements were brought from England. While the King was waiting, by the most amazing coincidence, May 1102 saw a particularly intense Norse raid along the Norman coast. When "Curthose" (now assisted by the able Rannulf Flambard) was told of these attacks, he assumed that the fratricide Henry had arranged them and marched off to put a stop to them with an army that numbered almost 13,000 men (most, though, were untrained and poorly armed peasants from Normandy and Maine, pressed into service against their will). Robert managed to drive off the raiders and even captured four of their swift ships and a few dozen raiders whom he quickly put to death for their piratical depredations. That done, he turned to wait the invading Henry but no attack came that year. It was, to everyone's annoyance, April of 1103 before the Anglo-Norman army could advance against "Curthose" and his Norman rebels.

No sooner had Henry's advance begun than rumours swept through the rebel army. The Pope had, by all accounts, sworn to excommunicate Robert if he didn't bow before Henry forthwith; not only that but all those who supported the Duke would be damned to Hell by the See of Peter. Desertions at once struck the Ducal army. Many of the deserters argued that they had, in any event, fulfilled all their feudal obligations by serving Robert in repulsing the Vikings. The law, they said, was on their side. Others made no bones about their reasons for abandoning their Duke's cause - Robert was opposed by the Holy See and, while they might imperil their lives in Robert's cause, they would not risk their immortal souls. And what a cause it was that Robert fought for! He had already been promised rich compensation by the Pope if he acknowledge Henry's suzerainty but that was not enough for him. No, he had to pursue this pointless war against King Henry and spill other men's blood to soothe his overweening pride...

By the time Henry and Robert met in June, at the town of Evreux, the Duke's army had shrunk to around 6,000 men, of whom about a thousand were mounted knights, while the King could deploy over 10,000 (including 3,000 gallant chevaliers). The battle lasted only a little while but it was bloody work. Those peasant levies and conscripts who had not yet deserted the Duke soon showed that they could not stand against Henry's army and were routed from the field; a good many of Henry's knights left the field to ride down these fleeing peasants and slaughter them (this was not something Henry encouraged but, still, it went on). The core of Robert's army, though, were veterans of the Crusade and a large contingent of professional gens d'armes many of whom had seen service in the wars in Italy or Sicily. These men held their ground for an hour against the opposing foot soldiers but, eventually, were outflanked by Henry's knights and were either slaughtered or forced to lay down their arms. Later, while reviewing the captives taken here, it was discovered that Bishop Flambard was amongst them.

With the Ducal foot soldiers defeated on field, Robert was disinclined to commit his knights to what could only be a losing battle so he withdrew them from the field (losing about half to the fierce Anglo-Norman pursuit). Robert arrived in Maine at the beginning of July but the natives, who knew well what had passed at Evreux and that *Beauclerc's* army was only days behind the Duke, refused to help him. He drove on to Ile

de France to see whether the Capets might provide him with succour but he had no great expectations. Soon after Robert's departure, Maine was liberated by Henry's forces.

With the completion of the reconquest/ liberation of his French possessions, King Henry began the laborious process of embarking his armies onto the ships that would return them to England. It was the end of 1104 before the last soldier was back in England though His Majesty had arrived in London during the Spring of that year. He took up residence near the capital and turned his attention to the tasks of running the government and being a husband to poor Eadgyth (or 'Matilda' as those stupid Normans insisted on calling her). May 1105 saw the birth of a son to the couple named William (in honour of his grandfather, The Conqueror, rather than his uncle Rufus).

In matter of government, Henry found that many things had been done in his absence - Hervey de Gistellas had taken himself off to Bristol where he soothed the nerves of the merchants and burghers, convincing them that, under the wise and beneficent rule of Henry the Scholar, they would not be subject to the same extortion they had suffered under the villainous Rufus. Indeed, it seemed like life for the city-dwellers was good all over with Henry as King - in East Anglia, the town of Lynn was thriving and it was widely believed that the Town Council might soon petition the King for a Royal Charter granting them the much sought-after status of City.

The only other pieces of news of any account came from North Wales where Earl Robert de Mowbray of Northumberland had undertaken an extended diplomatic mission. The Earl tried hard to convince the Princes of this rainy, hilly land that their own security demanded recognition of Norman suzerainty but it was to no avail. After four years in this place, where everyone had impenetrable accents and there seemed to be a severe shortage of vowels, Mowbray almost committed the sin of despair but he knew that one day, one sweet day, he could return to his Northumbrian estates. Or perhaps he might die first. Either fate was better than four years in Wales, he reasoned.

### The Duchy of Aquitaine

William IX "the Troubadour", Duke of Aquitaine,  
Count of Poitiers  
Capital: Toulouse                      Religion: Roman Catholic

The Duke was most pleased to be back in the heart of his beloved Aquitaine after long years of bloody service in the Great Crusade. He had undergone more than one narrow escape during his time in the East and had never truly expected to return alive - indeed, many of the gallant Occitanian chevaliers who had marched off to the Holy War never did return and their bones now lay where the Turks had slain them, in the valleys of far-off Anatolia. Still, William reasoned, there was no point getting maudlin about it... His Grace remained in comfortable Aquitaine for five whole years and engaged, however half-heartedly, in the work of governing his rich little realm - new administrators were employed, effectively doubling the Duke's civil service; William himself had no particular liking for the dull and bloodless bean-counters who spent their days in candle-lit rooms calculating taxes and counting coin as the collectors brought it in but so long

as *they* were performing that joyless task, William could spend his time on more pleasing enterprises...

Each year, at Whitsun, His Grace would take pleasure in announcing that he would personally provide stipends for a number of poets and troubadours (His Grace, after all, was widely recognised as one of, if not *the*, most accomplished of minstrels). There was a goodly proliferation of Occitan love poetry throughout the Duchy and, even in neighbouring Burgundy and the Capetian domains, troubadour poets singing in the Occitan tongue began to appear (though their popularity was as nothing compared to those in Aquitaine). William actually wrote and performed a number of poetic works about his affection for several married ladies (of course, His Grace would never actually do anything about his feelings so the poems were entirely proper); this led to some serious debate in Toulouse about whether love and marriage were compatible; it was eventually agreed that they were not though people on *both* sides of the debate, to the general amusement of the Occitanian Court, latched onto Philip Capet's marital adventures as proof either for or against the compatibility of love and marriage.

At home, a daughter (Petronella) was born to the Duke and, in international affairs, treaties were concluded with the Burgundians and Navarrese which added to the general feeling of security in southern France.

### The Kingdom of France

Philip I Capet "The Amorous", King of France

Capital: Paris Religion: Roman Catholic

(Excommunicated)

The French observed events in neighbouring Normandy with more than a little concern. Neither the King nor any of the great nobles of France were best pleased at the prospect of *Beauclerc's* Anglo-Norman army rampaging across the Continent. The House of Capet's position was scarcely secure at the best of times and now they were presented with an expansionistic King of England backed by that interfering twit in Rome... As news of Henry's victory and reclamation of his ancestral domain reached Paris in 1103, the nerves of the Capets became more and more frayed.

During October of that year, to the horror of all Paris, Robert of Normandy, brother and sworn enemy of the King of England, arrived outside the French capital fresh from defeat on the field of Evreux. "Curthose" had first bethought himself of Maine where he might raise a fresh army but, finding no support there, he had fled to the only place where he might find safety - the Court of King Philip. With him, he brought a retinue of a few hundred loyal chevaliers, footmen and retainers plus his wife and infant son, Count William. Philip could hardly have imagined a more difficult position - an Anglo-Norman army active on the Continent and the most bitter enemy of the King of England arriving at Louis' door to beg for sanctuary. With the King unwilling to commit himself one way or the other, the Archbishop of Paris intervened and agreed to keep the Duke of Normandy and his followers at his estate, some way distant from the city, until some more permanent arrangement could be made.

For the benighted French, their only bright spot came when they realised that they alone had escaped the depredations of the Norse raiders. Soon, though, a second source of joy was found when messengers from Brittany reported that Henry's army was embarking for a return to their island. The immediate danger to French liberty was gone but, naturally, that did not mean it could not return.

In Paris itself, Philip generously endowed the cathedral school where the philosopher William of Champeaux busily spent his days pushing his theory that Platonic ideals were real. Despite academic dissidence in some quarters (particularly from one huffy little Breton who insisted that the ideals were abstract), Paris soon became a thriving centre of Realist thought and William achieved some considerable prominence within the Catholic Church.

In his personal life, Philip spent a good deal of time with his wife, Bertrade of Anjou, which resulted in the birth of three children to the couple (sons Charles and Francis and a daughter, Melissante). These births, in normal times, would have been happy events but for Philip they caused great political concerns - Bertrade, according to the laws of France and the Church, was still married to Count Fulk of Anjou and, were that not bad enough, Philip was equally guilty of bigamy by having repudiated his first wife in favour of Bertrade! Naturally, this left the precise status of the children unclear - no-one in Paris openly came forth and pronounced them illegitimate but, still, there was a certain doubt hanging over them....

### The Kingdom of the Scots

Edgar Canmore "the Peaceable", King of Scots

Capital: none Religion: Roman Catholic

The Canmore realm was far removed from the troubles of the continent - the dynastic squabbles in Normandy, the religious upheaval in Germany, the Norse raids all over the continent... None of these things touched Scotland and its peace-loving monarch. Treaties were signed with England and Denmark - with the English, close cooperation was guaranteed, freedom of movement across English territory was granted to Scottish merchants and, in the event of war, each signatory agreed to aid the other. With the Danes, the treaty simply promised that neither signatory would attack the other.

The merchants of Berwick got singularly excited about the new business opportunities that might be open to them if they were allowed to operate from English ports. King Edgar went up even further in their estimation when he poured a considerable amount of gold and manpower into improving Berwick - could there be a more obvious demonstration of Edgar's understanding of the importance of the merchants?

Little else happened to the Scots. Prince David went off on a diplomatic mission to Dublin and managed to convince the Norse rulers of the city that they should pay tribute to the King of Scots. Finally, King Edgar set aside stipends from the treasury to pay for teachers of theology and Christian philosophy. An effort was begun to translate some of St. Columba's more esoteric Gaelic works into Latin that they might enjoy a wider audience in Christendom.

### **The Serene Republic of St. Mark**

Ordelafo Falier, Doge of the Serene Republic

Capital: Venice

Religion: Roman Catholic

The city of Venice was fast overflowing its traditional boundary walls. His Serenity, the Doge, had no wish to tear down the city's magnificent defences so he hit on a most inventive solution - he decreed that henceforth extensions to the city might be built outside the great walls (which would now be called the Inner Walls). Sure enough, within weeks of issuing the decree, the energetic citizens of the Republic had set their most competent builders and engineers to work partially draining the marshy area the landward side of the city; that done; they planned to sink strong foundations to sustain their buildings and then extend the fine network of canals. And, in order that Venice might always be safe, new city walls were to be built beyond the newly-added quarter (this quarter was called the New Town and the new walls on landward side came to be known, unoriginally enough, as the Outer Walls). While such work was being carried out, the arrangements for the storage of food in Venice were much improved, the beginnings of a real sewage system were made and new large stone water cisterns were built to hold clean potable water. Truly, young Ordelafo was gaining himself quite the reputation as a man who had a vision for Venice.

In other respects, the Republic was no less vigorous. Through cunning manoeuvres and not a little bribery, Venice cozened the nobles of Verona into abandoning Tuscan leadership and joining the Republic. Of course, this was a provocative step - the Tuscans would surely be enraged by it and there was no telling what the new Emperor would do in response to an assault on his Italian possessions - but Venice was feeling confident, cocky even, and would not let fear of the eternally-squabbling Germans or their Italian vassals distract them from their purpose. Illyria, too, was finessed away from Croatia - unfortunately, the strategic port city of Zara was left out of negotiations and promptly became independent though they had but little hope that they might retain their position in the face of such extreme Venetian expansionism.

In the Eastern Mediterranean, the Admiral Aliano was commissioned to lead out a contingent of 150 ships from the Fleet of the Serenissima to guard the Christian-held ports of Tyre and Tarsus and ensure that the routes between the Holy Land and Europe remained open. Aliano came across many an Egyptian merchantman and thought of dragging them into port as a prize of war yet the merchants swore, with Allah as their witness, that they were not hostile to the Christians and that they were, in fact, sailing to trade with Europeans. Fearful of provoking a war where none existed, Aliano let them go on their way though he had determined that, should he meet any Fatimid warships, he would waste no time in boarding them.

### **The Duchy of Franconia**

Henry V, Duke of Franconia, Holy Roman Emperor,  
King of Germany, Italy and Rome

Capital: Frankfurt

Religion: Roman Catholic

(Imperial)

It seemed that the time had come for the Salians and Welfs to settle things once and for all. For decades now, they had sparred using the vexatious question of the investiture of bishops as a perpetual *casus belli* but, at last, the Emperor and the Papacy, the two branches of God's authority on earth, had laid aside their differences and had begun working towards some manner of final solution. For that much, all of Christendom was pleased but the essential differences between Saxony and Franconia remained unresolved. Magnus Billung, Welf Duke of Saxony and Grand Marshal of the Empire, made no secret of his desire to see the Salians cast down and his own line raised to the purple. It seemed that war was inevitable and His Imperial Majesty, seeing that his own days on the field were behind him, granted to his fifteen year old son, the Imperial Crown Prince Henry of Franconia, command of the Ducal and Imperial armies and instructed him to defend the borders of the Franconian Duchy against Welf invaders. This duty young Henry executed most vigorously.

One dark morning in November of 1101, before the sun had even risen over the horizon, the increasingly melancholy Emperor went out to hunt near his great castle of Trifels with only a handful of his closest retainers. There was little game about, in the snowy German forest, but His Majesty cared not for he rode mainly to clear his head of the cares of State, Church and Empire which were fast wearing him down. As his horse cantered down a woodland trail, it dawned on the Emperor that he had become separated from his companions. Peering hard into the forest's gloom, Henry thought he saw the dark shape of mounted men approaching - his retainers no doubt. "Who is it?" His Majesty asked. "I cannot make you out!"

"I shall tell you," said the lead figure (for there were four, the Emperor saw) who, to Henry's discomfiture, had his sword drawn. "We are knights of Christ come to lay the Lord's vengeance upon thee!" And he struck the Emperor down. The other men dismounted and hacked away at the Emperor, now prostrate in the snow. In the most horrifying act of brutality, the top of His Imperial Majesty's head was lopped off and his brains spilt upon the snowy forest floor. Before mounting and departing, the lead murderer spat upon the desecrated corpse of the Holy Roman Emperor, the greatest of the Kings of Christendom. It was some hours before there was sufficient light for Henry's body and fate to be uncovered. Riders were sent at once to Prince Henry, who was busily occupied with martial business in Worms, informing him that he was now Duke, King and Emperor.

It was rumoured but could not be proven definitively that Henry IV's last words were 'Vulnera plango fortunae'. Since none but his assassins could have heard these words, it was generally dismissed as a fabrication of the poets and romantics.

All that winter, the young man, now Emperor Henry V, met with the foremost nobles of Germany and received oaths of fealty. Too, envoys of the Holy See came to see him at in Worms and expressed His Holiness' unstinting support for the new Emperor. At Christmas, His Imperial Majesty issued the following edict forfeiting the rights for which his father had spilt so much blood:

### ***Edict of the Emperor Henry V at Worms, in the Duchy of Franconia, in the year of Our Lord 1101***

In the name of the holy and indivisible Trinity, I, Henry, by the grace of God august emperor of the Romans, for the love of God and of the holy Roman church and of our master pope Paschal, and for the healing of my soul, do remit to God, and to the holy apostles of God, Peter and Paul, and to the holy catholic church, all investiture through ring and staff; and do grant that in all the churches that are in my kingdom or empire there may be canonical election and free consecration. All the possessions and regalia of St. Peter which, from the beginning of this discord unto this day, whether in the time of my father or also in mine, have been abstracted, and which I hold: I restore to that same holy Roman church. As to those things, moreover, which I do not hold, I will faithfully aid in their restoration. As to the possessions also of all other churches and princes, and of all other lay and clerical persons which have been lost in that war: according to the counsel of the princes, or according to justice, I will restore the things that I hold; and of those things which I do not hold I will faithfully aid in the restoration. And I grant true peace to our master pope Paschal, and to the holy Roman church, and to all those who are or have been on its side. And in matters where the holy Roman church shall demand aid I will grant it; and in matters concerning which it shall make complaint to me I will duly grant to it justice.

With the ecclesiastical matters dealt with, His Majesty turned his attention to Saxony (by now embroiled in a war with the Poles). There was a strong suspicion, though little proof, that the Saxons were behind the murder of the old Emperor. Although everyone admitted that the old man's death had made life easier for everyone in Germany, the horror of the deed could not go unavenged. The defensive war which had been planned was scrapped in favour of a mighty invasion of Saxony! Huzzah! Too, the following two edicts were promulgated during the New Year celebrations of 1102:

#### ***Edict of the Emperor Henry V***

In the name of the holy and indivisible Trinity, I, Henry, by the grace of God, august emperor of the Romans, declare any Duchy of the Empire to be "Traitor to the Crown", who provides aid or succor to the Pariah state of Saxony. Those traitorous lands of the Duchy to be declared forfeit and distributed amongst the remaining Empire members.

#### ***Edict of the Emperor Henry V***

In the name of the holy and indivisible Trinity, I, Henry, by the grace of God, august emperor of the Romans, declare Saxony a Pariah and Rogue state. All lands of Saxony are declared forfeit and will be distributed as the Emperor sees fit.

Those who had believed that the coming of this young man to the throne might herald a new period of peace through the Imperium were shown to have been most sadly mistaken. More bloodshed and more tears added to the endless sea already shed. As new soldiers were conscripted, most knew not whether they fought for the rights of investiture or for this dynasty against that. All they knew was that they were being torn from their homes to be thrown against the fortresses and swords of a merciless foe. Dark times to be a German....

A strange moment for the new Emperor came when, just as he was preparing for the initiation of the campaign, richly-attired emissaries arrived from far-off Constantinople bearing a fine golden crown as a gift to Henry V (it had, originally, been intended for Henry IV but now it would make a magnificent coronation gift). And, in fairness, it was a beautiful ornament of gold and pearl fabricated with all the skill and mastery of artifice for which the Byzantines were so rightly famous. Imagine the Emperor's horror, however, as he uncovered the inscription: '*Rex Germanorum Romanorumque de manu Imperatricis Romanorum*' - King of the Germans and the Romans from the hand of the Emperor of the Romans. Young Henry exploded with all the passion of his youth - the crown declaimed, for all the world, that he ruled Germany only by the leave of the Byzantine Caesar!

"I am Emperor of the Romans!" he shrieked. "Go back to your Greekling master who cannot even defend himself against the Turk and tell him that I rule the Romans! I, not he, am the Emperor and he will learn to mind his manners before I am finished with him. Mark you my words, the Comnenus will learn to respect my authority!"

The emissaries shuffled off with very little concern about the rage of the boy emperor. Henry, though, stewed and brooded and ground his teeth and kicked servants and swore that, once he had driven the Welf filth into the ground where they belonged, he would teach these upstart Comneni what it meant to be an Emperor. But first he had a war to win....

#### **The Duchy of Saxony**

Lothar Billung, Duke of Saxony, Grand Marshal of the Empire  
Capital: none. Religion: Roman Catholic

It was clear enough that war would come so Magnus Billung did what any self-respecting German Duke would do - he ordered a general conscription. His knights and sergeants-at-arms went from farm to farm, village to village dragging out every single Saxon male over the age of fifteen and inducting them into the motley army being raised for the defence of the Duchy. The few Jewish moneylenders who had survived the passage of the Crusaders and still dwelt and did business within Welf lands were also visited and huge sums extracted from them. Most expected that they would never see their money again but willingly surrendered their gold (taking the Duke's promisory notes in return) for fear of the violence that might be unleashed against them were they to refuse.

Soon enough, the war began...

#### **The Salian War**

August 1101-1102: The first blood in this German Civil War was spilt not by a German at all but by the Poles who invaded the Eastern Marches of the Billungs (specifically, Lausatia). There were no Saxon forces present to defend the region nor, to everyone's surprise, did any Ducal forces move to repulse this invasion of the Empire. The Lausatian nobility could scarcely rattle up more than a few hundred ill-armed levies who promptly surrendered to the Poles as soon as the two forces

met. The Polish commander, Ladislas, in an act of magnanimity released all the peasants back to their homes and paroled all the nobles. Unfortunately, Ladislas' generosity was not to be rewarded in this world. A Saxon knight, Thomasin von Zerclaere, with only a few personal guards at his side, ambushed Ladislas in a Lausatian forest and slew the Polish invader! According to Thomasin's report, he challenged the Pole to single combat and smote him a mighty blow with an axe separating head from body; according to the more popular version, Thomasin shot Ladislas in the back with a shortbow while the latter chevalier was stooping over a stream to water his horse. Whatever the truth, Ladislas was dead and Thomasin was feted as a hero in Saxony.

March 1102: The Boy Emperor, Henry V, began leading 13,000 men across the frontier into Saxony. Some 2,000 lightly mounted squires and scouts rode ahead of the main army, screening it from the enemy and keeping the Franconians apprised of the location of the heavier and much less mobile Saxon force. They also scouted out the location of the many castles which peppered the Saxon countryside and would surely render this a bloody campaign.

On the Saxon side of the fence, Magnus was giving serious consideration to what he would wear at his coronation when the Pope himself came from Rome to place the Imperial Crown upon Magnus' head. Victory for the Welfs was certain - he had 14,000 men under arms and more than a dozen strong-walled castles with which to perturb his hated foe. The Saxon Duke was, of course, disappointed that his Welf kinsmen in Bavaria had failed to rally to his side but their involvement was probably unnecessary - what could an upstart 16 year old do against a seasoned warrior like Magnus?

And so it was that, while he contemplated his ineluctable triumph, some trouble broke out in the main encampment of the Saxon host... As was natural, few of the Saxons truly wanted to be fighting and some even had the temerity to ask *why* they were now warring. Some religious zealots had started the first protests and they had been joined by the conscripts, boys and old men, who wanted nothing more than to return to the calm certainty of life at home with their families whence Magnus had dragged them.

"We do not fight this war for the Pope! Nor do we fight for God! The Holy Father has made peace with the Boy Henry. The son bows before the Pope and pays him the respect that his father never would! Why, therefore, do we make war upon the Emperor when the Emperor has committed no sin?" cried the leader of the zealots (a man by the name of Ludwig of whom little was known except that he had once been a farmer in the little village of Hersfeld). "God has removed Old Henry and placed the Boy at the head of the Empire so that all Christendom might be united and there might be no reason for Christians to spill one another's blood! So I say we must not fight. I say there is nothing to fight about! While the knights of France and Flanders liberate the Holy Land from the Godless Ones, our Christian knights and barons and dukes war on each other. No more!"

Irrespective of whether one believed the rhetoric of Ludwig (and the others like him), he did present a very attractive case for the average Saxon soldier and soon the army was immobilised by internal dissent as soldiers refused to obey their lords. Magnus would have none of it. He was a tough man and he knew his place in the great scheme of things - he was the Duke and Grand Marshal and he *would* be obeyed. At his order, a dozen of the troublemakers were seized and whipped, each man receiving fifty lashes from the knout (Ludwig managed to escape this punishment as his faithful followers hid him away, quite against his will, when the Duke's sergeants came looking for the chief troublemakers). The whippings did little to end the dissent within the army and Magnus became afeared - the Salians were getting closer day by day and the Saxons must move to oppose them. A proper example had to be made and the man who had started this whole mess needed to be removed - Magnus decreed that Ludwig of Hersfeld would be executed. Common soldiers were seized by Henry's knights and beaten in an effort to get them to reveal the man's location; when the beatings proved ineffective, they gave way to branding and mutilations but these, too, were to little avail. By now, a full week had passed and the whole Saxon army, with the exception of the knights, noblemen and professional soldiers, was refusing to obey orders. At last, the men became fed up with the whole affair and simply began deserting (actually, they dumped their weapons at the feet of their sergeants and walked out of the great encampment quite openly). The trickle of deserters very quickly became a flood...

In a rage, Magnus and a squadron of his cavaliers blocked the path of one group of a few hundred deserters and demanded that they return and do their duty for their lord and master. A tall, saturnine man stepped out of the grubby mob of conscripts and said, calmly: "Your Grace, we *are* doing our duty. The Lord has commanded us to have no part in this un-Christian slaughter. We will follow you wherever you may lead so long as you lead us not against brother Christians."

"Hang the bastard," said Magnus. So it was said and so it was done. Only a little while later did the Duke find out that the bastard in question was Ludwig of Hersfeld, the zealot who had sparked this whole affair. When Magnus found out, he was delighted - the mutiny was surely now over and he could get on with the business of conducting the war. Squadrons of gallant knights charged off at high speed to capture the deserters and bring them back. Soon the army was close to its proper strength and Magnus was ready for war...

...but it was not to be. Ludwig's death, in the very act of explaining the Lord's Will to the overweening Duke, accorded him the status of a hero and martyr amongst the common soldiery and they were moved to take revenge. Jammed together in the camp, they plotted together and soon blood was shed as the mutineers set upon Ludwig's murderers - the sergeants, knights and nobles. One band of doughty Believers even managed to secret themselves in ambush near the Duke's pavillion and, when he stepped out, they rushed him. Most were cut down before they got near Magnus the Murderer but one man, whose name was never discovered, got close enough to jam a poorly-made knife into the Duke's chest. Mangus was dead within the hour.

When it became apparent that their Duke was lying dead, the strife calmed a little. It began to dawn on the peasants that they had risen up and murdered their lord, their Duke, a high noble of the Empire. Even the most pious and faithful mutineers had to have some doubts about so extreme a course of action. Command of the army was assumed by Margrave Gero of Brandenburg who moved to quieten things - he ordered no reprisals and sent a messenger to the new Duke, Lothar Billung, who had remained at home organising the governance of the state while his father had led the army to war. Gero requested that Lothar come at once and assume leadership of the Duchy's defence as well as to arrange the many issues that were now resting upon Lothar's decisions as Duke. The army waited but Lothar did not come. As the end of the month neared, Gero sent more riders to beg him to come quickly. To Gero's horror, they returned with a message that Lothar had departed within an hour of hearing of his father's fate but he had not arrived yet... Had he been murdered? Had he been kidnapped? No-one knew. He seemed to have vanished into thin air!

April 1102: Gero was now in effective charge of the Saxon army though he could not, for the life of him, motivate them to move and actually do anything. Worse, news came that the van of the Franconian army was now well inside Saxony.

In Frankfurt, a small barge docked only to be met by the Imperial Constable and a detachment of men-at-arms. They dragged a shabbily dressed and mud-caked figure from the barge - it was none other than Duke Lothar of Saxony, spirited out of Welf lands by means which no honest man would ever want to know about...

It wasn't long before the Saxons were aware of their Duke's fate and the Duchy would likely have collapsed but for the intervention of Magnus' daughter, Wulfhilde. She was an imposing woman, married off to Welf of Bavaria, but she had happened to be resident at the ancestral lands in Saxony during this time of crisis. Gero was contemplating throwing his lot in with the Imperials when she arrived and pushed the Margrave to lead the army out against the invader! A weak man, he acquiesced in principle though he could do little to make the soldiers move - fully one-third of the army had simply deserted never to return and the rest would obey no orders. He feared that his men were a short step away from disintegrating into brigandry or worse...

May-July 1102: The war truly began. Henry swept over the Saxon castles - many men fell beneath their walls or in fierce combat upon their craggy battlements but the inevitable advance of the Franconian army seemed unstoppable. A few half-hearted combats took place between Gero's rabble and elements of the Imperial army but they ended, uniformly, in Franconian victory. The Boy Emperor proved himself a soldier of great skill, courage and subtlety. As the end of July drew ever closer, almost the whole province of Saxony was under the Emperor's control and Gero fell back to Westphalia with Wulfhilde harping on at him all the while.

Henry calculated that the subjugation of his foe had cost him less than 3,000 men. Shockingly, he did not press his

victory. The Salian War, as it had come to be called, wound down to nothing. Lothar was in a cell in Franconia; Magnus was in the ground; Wulfhilde and Gero were stuck in Westphalia with an army of indeterminate number and purpose.

June 1104: In Holstein, a Welf holding which remained loyal to the captive Duke Lothar, there still stood about 10 strong Saxon castles holding out against the day they could reclaim the Duchy from the Salian invader. They expected an attack - had expected an attack since 1102. When it came, though, it was from an unexpected direction for it was not the Franconians who invaded Holstein but Erik the Evergood of Denmark with army of 5,000 men who swept down out of Jutland. It was 1105 before the conquest was complete and Erik lost a good many men in the endeavour. He made no effort to conquer Hamburg which promptly declared its independence.

1105: With the war, the lawlessness and the general collapse of the Duchy of Saxony, the spectre of famine stalked the lands still under Welf control.

### The Duchy of Swabia

Frederick I Hohenstaufen, Duke of Swabia

Capital: none Religion: Roman Catholic

(Imperial)

Slept (and kept a careful eye out for Bavarian trickery).

### The Duchy of Bavaria

Welf IV, Duke of Bavaria

Capital: none Religion: Roman Catholic

Slept (and pretended the Salian War was not happening).

### The Duchy of Upper Lorraine

Dietrich II, Count of Chatenois, Duke of Upper

Lorraine

Capital: none. Religion: Roman Catholic

(Imperial)

Lorraine, as usual, had managed to avoid getting sucked into the maelstrom of civil war being waged across the Rhine. While the Saxons and Franconians warred on each, Dietrich worked on drawing the great cities of Cologne and Strassburg more closely into the Duchy's sphere. Count Simon of Flanders (who, despite his title, was actually a kinsman of Duke Dietrich) visited Cologne and, after some protracted negotiations, was granted the acquiescence of the Archbishop of Cologne to a marriage between the cleric's niece, Elizabeth, and the Duke of Upper Lorraine. Something of a scandal ensued as some of the more pride-filled Lorraine nobles took umbrage at their overlord marrying a girl whose background was less august than they might have hoped (to be sure, Elizabeth was of noble blood but the marriage was widely considered a *mesalliance* given her absence of Imperial or Royal antecedents). In any case, no child was born to the marriage which caused a few to wonder whether Elizabeth, in addition to being insufficiently aristocratic, might be barren.

Strassburg, thankfully, fell into Lorraine's hands without the need for a marriage. In both cities, new fortifications were constructed - a wise precaution in such uncertain times.

### The Margravate of Tuscany

Matilda di Canossa, Margravine of Tuscany, Guardian of the Kingdom of Italy

Capital: Milan

Religion: Roman Catholic

News that the Papacy had settled its dispute with the Emperor left Matilda in a quandry. She was a subject of the Emperor and governed Northern Italy in His Imperial Majesty's name though she had rejected his religious authority utterly and had long supported His Holiness during the Conflict of Investitures. Now Matilda felt betrayed by the Roman Pontiff. As was well known, she had no heir and had bequeathed all her lands to the Papacy but now she saw that this gesture would have to be reconsidered. In the aftermath of the Concordat between Rome and the Salians, the Emperor had immediately turned on Welf Saxony. The Margravine had no doubt that Bavaria, home of her young husband, would be next and, in the fullness of time, she could expect to see columns of Franconians and Swabians winding their way over the Alps to subjugate Italy... Yet the Pope seemed to see none of this or, at least, he did not care about it. It was as though Rome had surrendered to the Emperor but where did that leave Tuscany? Adrift, Matilda decided, and more than likely an eventual victim of the Franconians. A bold stroke was called for to save Italy from the Emperor's impious clutches...

The loyal emissary, Nicola di Montisanti, was dispatched to Savoy where he sought an audience with Count Robert of Savoy, a close ally of the Margravine. Nicola presented the Count with a letter from Matilda and explained in simple terms the offer which was being made - Robert of Savoy would be adopted as Her Grace's heir. He would inherit the whole of Northern Italy (or, at least, guardianship of same) in return for bringing his independent fiefdom completely into Tuscany's Northern Italian confederation. The Count spent many days mulling this offer over. At first glance, it appeared tempting but, once Matilda was dead, there was no telling what the Holy Roman Emperor and, possibly, the Pope might do. The Kingdom of Italy was, rightfully, the Emperor's domain yet, in years gone by, it had been promised to the Pope. Now it was being offered to Robert of Savoy. Robert feared that blood (specifically, his blood) would end up being spilt before the succession was finally settled but a rich prize was on offer and perhaps it was worth the risk... So it was that Robert of Savoy accepted Matilda's offer and became her designated heir, marked out to inherit the Tuscan Marches and overlordship of the Kingdom of Italy.

While such successory issues were being dealt with, vast new estates, farms and vineyards were marked out for development in Tuscany itself. What little fallow land there was in this rich province was brought into effective use. In Verona, however, news was much worse for the whole province defected from Matilda's control and became subject to the Venetian Republic. Matilda could hardly believe it and wondered whether so base a betrayal, by the Veronese as well as the Venetians, might move the Emperor to anger. Although she had

little hope that the son would prove better than the father, she entertained the notion that a rapprochement might be found with Henry V which had never been possible with Henry IV. Perhaps common cause could be found in this Venetian attack upon the sacred boundaries of the Empire. Well, however it might turn out, Tuscany could never let Venice's treachery in Verona go unanswered...

In other news, Her Grace provided stipends for some of the more conservative Catholic scholars and theologians who taught a very traditional approach to doctrine and theology in stark contrast to the philosophical casuistry being pushed in the iniquitous schools of Paris. Too, from the Holy Land, a great many pilgrims arrived with fabulous tales of Jerusalem, the wonders that might be beheld in the land where Christ walked and the glory that would accrue from serving the Will of Our Lord. In this air of increased religiosity, many Tuscan nobles began to contemplate whether they would better serve themselves by departing their wealthy estates for the unknown dangers of the Orient instead of waiting around to become victims in the Empire's latest round of dynastic squabbling.

### The County of Flanders

Robert II, Count of Flanders

Capital: Ghent

Religion: Roman Catholic

First of all, almost 500 of the stoutest knights in Flanders charged off to the Holy Land to participate in the landgrab going on there. Then, as if that were not annoying enough, a most peculiar thing happened - something not seen in living memory in fact...

In March 1102, a fleet of 62 ships of mixed hulls sailed out of the still frigid North Sea and made directly for the coast of Holland. They flew a black flag emblazoned with a white dragon and bore no other identifying markers on their ships though they were plainly of Norse make. In this peaceful and, frankly, rather dull corner of the world, no-one knew what the fleet's arrival meant though the wise took shelter in the region's castles. Sure enough, the ships spewed forth raiders, iron-helmed and thick-bearded raiders of indeterminate origin. They were Norsemen but that could mean anything. In any case, the farms and coastal towns of the province were looted, burnt and anything of value stolen. Churches were burnt, traders robbed and a few of the locals carried off as slaves. The raiders took flight before anything could be done to resist them and sailed off...

In May, the devils appeared in the English Channel and set upon rich Brabant where their raids were even more damaging - great sacks of loot were dragged onto ships and many an innocent native was butchered out of hand for sport. Even monks were not immune - a small commune of around thirty Irish monks was set upon and slaughtered to a man; their worldly goods - a silver cross that at atop their rude altar and a silver reliquary they had inherited from a local bishop - were carried off to the ships.

By June, the raiders were in Flanders but their depredations here were cut short by the intervention of the Count and his entire army. The raiders fled with only a small haul but, still, damage had been done and the Flemish were left

to count the cost of this indescribably treacherous and brutal attack. Of course, it didn't end there....

A full year later, in July 1103, the raiders returned and sailed along the Flemish coast retracing their original path raiding first Flanders, then Brabant and then Holland before sailing away into the North Sea and, presumably, to the den of iniquity whence they came. In the aftermath of the raids, Flanders became a nervous place - constantly raids were expected and, during the Summers of 1104 and 1105, Count Robert led his army out to patrol the coasts while his son and heir, Baldwin, took the fleet out to stop these vicious Norse dogs ever from setting foot upon the soil of Flanders again. No raids came but, still, the anxiety persisted.

### **The Duchy of Burgundy**

Odo the Red, Duke of Burgundy  
Capital: none. Religion: Roman Catholic

Duke Odo's 85 year old grandmother, Helia, showed absolutely no sign of departing the Vale of Tears yet. Indeed, she celebrated 5 more birthdays and was still as bad-tempered as ever. She had been a horror to the middle aged Duke since his earliest memory. Still, one day soon....

In happier news, the Duke's son and heir, Hugh, was married to a Burgundian girl, by the name of Priscilla, the daughter of one of Odo's many vassals. After a slow start, a son was born to Hugh and Priscilla followed very quickly by twins (a boy and a girl). The eldest son was named Odo, in honour of his grandfather, and the twins were christened Gilbert and Beatrice.

Hugh's younger brother, Henry, came of age and was appointed to perform various official duties by Duke Odo though, in truth, he and most others at court were disappointed by Henry's dimwittedness and general inability ever to do anything correctly. If only he could be more like his elder brother...

To the loyal baron, Sicard de Puylaurens, was given the troublesome task of reorganising tax collection throughout the Duchy. As always, heads were counted and dues calculated. Eventually the task was performed to the Duke's satisfaction and a clearer idea was gained by Odo of exactly how many people lived in his wide desmains and how much they owed him.

### **The Free Commune of Pisa**

Azzo Marignani, Consul of the Pisan Republic  
Capital: Pisa Religion: Roman Catholic

As soon as the winds of 1101 allowed, Senator Ugolino della Gharardesca set out from Pisa on a bold voyage beyond the Pillars of Hercules to find lands which had heretofore been known only to the Infidel. Unfortunately, the esteemed Senator never returned. The evil fate he met would never be known but it was widely held that he drowned or was captured by Mussulman pirates who probably sold him into the slavepens of Fez.

Senator de Capasca took a no less dangerous trip to the heathen region of Libya. The Bedouin tribal leaders were not

sure how to react to the arrival of this Infidel upon their shores and many refused to meet with him (in fact, Signor de Capasca was very lucky not to be skinned alive). In the end, news of Christian raids in Tunisia and the possible expansion of the Normans into Tripolitania sparked a deal of fear in the Libyan Arabs; they began to wonder whether their interests might not be well served by playing the Christians off against one another - if the Sicilian Normans were going to attack North Africa, the Libyans would acquire a Christian patron who would keep the Normans in their place. By and by, the local chieftains agreed to pay a small amount of tribute to the Commune of Pisa in return for Pisan protection against Norman depredations. The Senator was pleased with this.

### **The Norman County of Sicily**

The Dowager Countess Adelaide di Savona, Regent for Count Simon de Hauteville of Sicily  
Capital: none Religion: Roman Catholic

Sicily was enjoying an unwonted period of prosperity. Improvements were made to life on the island by the ever-active Normans - aquaducts were built to carry water to towns which baked in the unforgiving Sicilian sun; new orchards were planted and apiaries became a more common sight; all round the County, one could see the tangible signs of Norman benevolence, vitality and productivity. It was, indeed, a fine time to be a Sicilian. Besides such material benefits, the Dowager Countess was determined that her son would inherit an island which was renowned for its intellectual life as well as its vibrant economy. Generous endowments, therefore, were made to teachers and scholars of all kinds - Muslim and Orthodox as well as Catholic. Indeed, religion was hardly relevant in Sicily for the principle activity of the scholars was in debating mathematics, natural philosophy and Classical poetry - they had no time for the endless theological arguments found in Constantinople or Paris. It was, perhaps, a sight unique in all the world - Arab scholars teaching Greek and Latin and even Arabic to eager Normans while fine Sicilian scholars expounded on the superiority of Demosthenic rhetoric over the Ciceronian (they were, of course, ridiculously wrong about this, as everyone in Christendom and beyond knew, but the Sicilians were biased in favour of Demosthenes and no amount of logic could make them shift their ludicrous stance).

But not all was peace and plenty. Guy de Courtenay, a knight renowned for his skill-at-arms and brilliance in politics along with his complete and utter lack of scruples, spent the early months of 1101 in close council with the Dowager Countess (and much gossip attended them even though she was old, almost 40, and he was still in his prime at 25). By and by, Guy assembled a force of some 4,000 sturdy Norman swordsmen, all well-armed and battle-tested. As soon as the weather allowed, he loaded these men onto a fleet of 50 ships of mixed hull and sailed off westwards. Her Ladyship watched the departure with a knowing smile on her face but, some noted, there was a distinct hint of sadness as she watched the gallant Chevalier de Courtenay sail off into the sunset. (see Tunisian entry for what these rascally Normans got up to)

At all events, with this contingent sent forth on some mysterious expedition, Adelaide saw to the government of the County and its dependency of Malta. Her men visited each village and wrote up a great book containing the values of all the estates on the island; each fishpond was counted (as were its contents!) - of course, since Sicily was now officially Catholic, fishponds were very important especially in inland areas; each freeman was called upon to offer a rendering of his property, his accounts and his annual income; slaves were counted and a tax was fixed on the head of each on for their owners to pay; the enfeoffed Norman nobles were forced to explain how many men they held under arms and how many they would field in the service of the Count by whose generosity they held their fiefs. Nor did merchants escape more easily than the land-owners; each and every ship in Valetta and Palermo was visited and an account of its commercial activities was demanded and written down. Many complained about this, others were fearful of what it presaged and a few, a very few, remarked that, if Sicily wished to continue to enjoy the benefits of Norman rule, they must be willing to pay higher taxes for the privilege. Increasing taxes was what this whole exercise was about - within a couple of years, the *Liber Mangus Siciliae* (Great Book of Sicily) was completed and it would serve as the basis of the County's tax system for many years to come (as well as providing future historians with a snapshot of exactly what Malta and Sicily looked like during the Regency of Adelaide).

In the middle of 1105, during a hot summer in which everything and everyone seemed to wilt, Guy de Courtenay returned with most of his men and ships intact. He related stories of daring battles along the Tunisian coast, of infidel temples looted, of gory battles against vastly superior enemies... Of course, Adelaide and everyone else (with the exception of young Count Simon who was now almost 12) knew that de Courtenay was lying through his teeth but, still, he delivered great chests of Mahometan gold stolen from the Zirids. Too, he brought something quite unexpected - Guy had taken a trip to Tripolitania along the coast and had extracted/ extorted a treaty with the locals which guaranteed freedom of passage to the Sicilian Normans. It was a small step, perhaps, but now, for the first time, the County of Sicily had a foothold on African soil.

### The Duchies of Calabria and Apulia

Roger Borse de Hauteville, Duke of Calabria and Apulia

Capital: none                      Religion: Roman Catholic

\_\_\_\_\_ To the surprise of none and with the blessing of the Duke, a contingent of Knightly Pilgrims set off for the Holy Land to serve the Church, the Beloved Mother, in its great effort. They well-remembered the Papal decree of Clermont that whosoever had sinned would gain full remission by the mere act of travelling to the Holy Land.

In more prosaic matters, the Duke took care of the government of his realm and concluded treaties of non-aggression - one with the Byzantines, who had good reason to fear the Twin Duchies, and another with the Venetian Republic. All the while, the subject Duke of Spoleto wandered around his own little fiefdom and indulged in many activities which were scarcely fit for a Christian knight (but we shall say no more of

them here). Roger's ever-faithful retainer, Hildebrand de Bacqueville, saw to the construction of a great many transport hulls which, inevitably, led the inquisitive to wonder whom they intended to invade.

Sure enough, Hildebrand took command of over 6,000 soldiers - mostly well-girded men-at-arms supplemented by more than a thousand Italian levies who wore no armour and bore a motley assortment of weapons but who were enthusiastic and could prove useful. They were all loaded onto a flotilla of about 60 hulls and promptly set out for the west like their Sicilian cousins. It was 1103 before they returned to Naples, diminished in number a little, but bearing loot - silver specie torn from Zirid merchants, Muslim girls who would fetch a pretty penny in the slave markets, Saracen jewellery unusual in its design and more besides. The returning soldiers found themselves the centres of attention in every drinking dive, whorehouse and gambling den as the loot they had won in honourable battle ended up in the pockets of pimps, shivs and barkeeps. A good deal of cash was transferred directly into the Ducal exchequer, of course. (see Tunisian entry for what Hildebrand got up to and where all that money came from).

### The Papal States of the Holy See

Paschal II, Pope, Bishop and Supreme Metropolitan of Rome, Vicar of Christ, Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church, Temporal Lord of the Papal States, Servant of the Servants of God

Capital: Rome                      Religion: Roman Catholic

His Holiness saw a Germany turned in against itself and a Church weakened across Europe. While Christian unity in the Holy Land has delivered Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre into the sway of Christ, Germany knew only bloodshed and division. For 25 years, Papacy and Empire had struggled over the question of investitures but, in truth, that was only a convenient excuse for conflict. The truer cause of the conflict had been the vexed question of the Church's true role in Christendom - was Mother Church to wield only the spiritual sword or might she become the supreme temporal power too? Indeed, was the power of the Emperor to be allowed to extend into the domain of the Church so that laymen, even if they be princes or kings, might appoint the leaders of God's Holy Church?

Paschal wanted saw two tasks set before him - the preservation of Rome's spiritual supremacy and the return of Germany returned to the Papal fold. His Holiness knew well that the German princes were manipulating this great dispute to serve their own ends and that the Saxon Duke had pinned his colours to the Papacy's mast not because of any great loyalty to the Papal cause but because he coveted the Emperor's throne. His Holiness, though he possessed a reputation as a man of little political cunning, struck upon the compromise which might pull Christendom back from this horrendous mess - the Holy Roman Emperor would receive the privilege of appointing bishops and cannons on behalf of the Papacy. It would be a special right, one extended to the Emperor alone and to no other Catholic ruler because of the unique glory of the Imperial Crown. And so His Holiness decreed it...

## ***Privilege of Pope Paschal II***

I, bishop Paschal, servant of the servants of God, do grant to thee beloved son, Henry IV - by the grace of God august emperor of the Romans - that the elections of the bishops and abbots of the German kingdom, who belong to thy kingdom, shall take place in thy presence, without simony and without any violence; so that if any discord shall arise between the parties concerned, thou, by the counsel or judgment of the metropolitan and the co-provincials, may'st give consent and aid to the party which has the more right. The one elected, moreover, without any exaction may receive the regalia from thee through the lance, and shall do unto thee for these what he rightfully should. Be he who is consecrated in the other parts of the empire shall, within six months, and without any exaction, receive the regalia from thee through the lance, and shall do unto thee for these what he rightfully should. Excepting all things which are known to belong to the Roman church. Concerning matters, however, in which thou dost make complaint to me, and dost demand aid, according to the duty of my office, will furnish aid to thee. I give unto thee true peace, and to all who are or have been on thy side in the time of this discord.

For many, it had the air of a fudge - a deliberate attempt to blur the edges of the dispute so that both sides could pretend that they had won. It mattered not - Paschal wanted and needed a united Christendom; the Emperor needed an end to the wars which wracked his domain and had cost him so much land and power. This provided the solution and if it was a fudge, it was one both sides embraced happily. Much bitterness remained - the Duchies which had supported the Emperor and lay investiture acknowledged the Pope but only grudgingly while in Franconia itself the Pope's power was non-existent. The Saxons and their Bavarian kinsmen, though they remained resolute in their devotion to Rome, felt ill-used, abandoned by politicking priests to buy the Emperor's support. In truth, the settlement was unlikely to hold but then, as if the Lord Himself took a hand, Henry IV met his end in an icy German forest and his son, the more reasonable Henry V, ascended the throne. It was all that Paschal could have hoped for. At last it seemed as though the Conflict of Investitures was truly settled. And it redounded to Paschal's glory that he had succeeded where the Popes before him had failed.

The Norman Cardinal Gilbert was sent north to bring the churches within the cities of Wurzburg, Strassburg and Cologne and the region of Hesse back under Mother Church's protective wing. The locals in these Imperialist strongholds (including many clergymen) continued to feel a strong degree of suspicion. Too, perhaps more saliently, they expected to suffer reprisals of some sort now that the Pope was ruling over them once more. These were regions in which Pope-appointed bishops had been expelled by angry mobs, regions where the Emperor's bishops had enjoyed wide popular support. How could Paschal not take vengeance on them? As it turned out, their fears were misplaced - Rome had either forgiven them or had chosen to bury the long conflict by pretending it had never happened. In either case, no reprisals were taken by the Romans.

In matters not connected to Germany, the Curia ordered that clerics be sent to Poland where they might support King Wladyslaw's government. Too, agents of the Papacy brought great chests of gold from Rome to the treasuries of the Crusader Princes that they might employ God's Bounty to do God's Righteous Work among the Infidel in the Holy Land.

## **The Christian Kingdoms of Castille, Leon, Toledo and Galicia**

Alfonso VI "El Valiente", King of Castille, Leon, Toledo and Galicia  
Capital: Ciudad Leon      Religion: Roman Catholic  
  
Slept.

## **The Christian Kingdoms of Aragon and Navarre**

Pedro I, King of Aragon and Navarre  
Capital: none      Religion: Roman Catholic

The energetic Aragonese undertook many tasks. New castles were built in Aragon and others, long abandoned, were brought back into use. Large garrisons were deployed all along the frontier between Christian and Muslim Spain in preparation for an Almoravid attack but, as luck would have it, the only Muslims to enter Aragon from the south were traders.

The King himself visited the subject city of Valencia, a predominantly Muslim city only brought into the light of Christ and the rule of Aragon a few years earlier. The city's government lay in the hands of the *alcalde*, a Muslim official appointed by and answerable to the Christian King but who was generally allowed to govern the city as he pleased so long as tribute was forthcoming. King Pedro saw that securing this significant and wealthy city more fully would benefit Aragon-Navarre greatly - apart from Valencia's natural economic import, she would surely have a vital strategic role should the Infidel ever invade (and it escaped no-one's notice that, in the province of Valencia, Christians were outnumbered by the Mahometans by a factor of perhaps ten to one!). What the King proposed, however, took everyone by surprise...

During his various sojourns in the city, Pedro had come to know many of the local Muslim emirs fairly well and one, a moderate and highly educated fellow who was a long time enemy of the Almoravids, was known to have a daughter. The girl, ungainly in her youth, had blossomed into a remarkable young lady - not beautiful but pretty and with a fine head on her shoulders. King Pedro actually suggested that this girl might make a suitable wife for his younger brother and heir, Alfonso "El Battalador". Alfonso was well respected and everyone in Valencia, even the more vehement Muslims, saw that this move would raise the city's standing, prestige and influence throughout this Christian Kingdom. It seemed a unique opportunity for a city and a people, who had, heretofore, considered themselves subjects of a hostile empire, to become partners in the very realm which had conquered them less than a decade earlier. They hardly needed to be convinced. The Muslim lady very quickly became a Catholic lady and took the baptismal name of Maria as a sop to Christian sensibilities. She and Alfonso were married in Navarre and, in short order, a son was born and, barely a year later, twin sons appeared! No matter which God one prayed to, His Divine satisfaction at the match was obvious!

But perhaps God's pleasure was not absolute for the King's own son, also called Pedro, was killed at the age of 17 in a tragic accident. Shortly before Candlemas in 1104, the Prince

had been training on horseback with the Captain of the King's Guard. Whilst demonstrating to the youth how one ought to employ one's weapons in mounted combat, the Captain had struck young Pedro with a blunted lance (from which, for safety's sake, the sharp metal head had been removed) only for the shaft to break and shatter. Three great wooden splinters had been driven into the boy's face - one had pierced his eye, a second his throat and a third had torn a deep gash across the boy's cheek on which the down of his first beard was growing. It was a terrible accident and all were at pains to say that it couldn't have been prevented. For two days, young Pedro lingered in a terrible fever before going to the embrace of the Lord whose ways are mysterious to us who dwell in this Vale of Tears.

No sooner had the boy been entombed than the gossips started and many vicious words were directed at Alfonso but, plainly, it was absurd to imagine he had had any part in his dear nephew's demise for there was no more honourable or chivalrous cavalier in all of Spain than Alfonso the Warrior. The Captain of the Guard, distraught at the accident, at first thought of the Holy Land where he might make amends for this terrible accident with a glorious death in Christ's service. By and by, though, he came to conclude that more death and war would displease the Lord and would make but poor penance for this accident so he betook himself to a monastery, high in the Pyrenees, where he renounced all worldly goods and properties, all title and rank, and became a Brother of a minor local order.

In other news, the young Prince Garcia Ramirez was shuffled off to Rome to take Holy Orders and become a Pillar of God's Holy Church. No-one was sure whether this was the idea of the Pope, El Battalador or King Pedro but it, too, pretty much cleared the court of any potential claimants to the throne...

Up in distant Asturias, those infernal raiders who had been terrorising the Low Countries and France showed up in September of 1102 fresh from their attack on Gascony. They found almost nothing worth taking and were more of a nuisance than a genuine threat. The disappointed Vikings, under the black flag, kicked around the Bay of Biscay for a little while before deciding that this particular part of Spain was not worth any more attention and aborting their planned raid on Galacia. There was no gold and Spanish women were ugly so they would go back the way they had come and see what fresh goodies they might pick up....

Little else happened in the Kingdoms (some would say enough had already happened!). Alfonso took over the reins of government and overhauled the taxation system. At his instigation, even the fish ponds of Spain were counted and taxed! This did little to dent his popularity since he was riding high on his reputation as a man favoured by Our Lord who would surely lead the Two Kingdoms to great glory. The uncharitable and insensitive even remarked that the Hand of God had shattered the lance thus removing the only obstacle to El Battalador's ascension to the thrones of Aragon and Navarre.

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### **The al-Murabit Berber Sultanate**

Sultan Yusuf ibn Tashufin

Capital: none

Religion: Sunni Islam

Yusuf beheld his domain and was afeared. Much work was required if his people's rule over Spain was to last. They must become strong and intelligent, taking the learning of the Moorish city dwellers but without sacrificing their vitality as Berber warriors in the cause of God the Merciful, the Benificent. Yusuf's sister, a pleasant but short and somewhat plain young girl called Tani, was wed to the allied Murcian Emir, Muhammad ibn-Sa'd ibn Mardanish Amir. He was formally accepted into the ruling clan of the al-Murabits, an event which astonished many for here was a literate and sophisticated Murcian prince, educated in the finest schools of Cordova, taking as his wife the daughter of some ill-renowned desert tribe. The haughty Iberian Muslims shook their heads at this world turned upside down. Others, more versed in politics, thought it a wise move, a cunning gesture to indicate that the rude and bigoted Berbers were prepared to modify their behaviour and become more like the Iberians.

However it may turn out, the Sultan appointed his uncle, the fierce fat warhorse, Faouzi ibn Abd-Allah al-Murabit, as his heir. Faouzi was a full ten years older than his nephew but that mattered not. To Faouzi fell many dull duties attached to the governance of so wide and poorly-administered a realm. He acquitted himself well - though prone to eat and talk excessively, he was scrupulously honest and would not rest until every last tribe, village or municipality on the tax rolls had paid its full due of tax.

To Talavera, the Sultan granted effective independence under his loyal vizier Waffi ibn Abu-Bakr. This chafed some of the Andalusian Moors but, still, Talavera was a rough place never fully exposed to the light of Islamic civilisation and some of the sophisticates reckoned that the Talaverans would be happier under a Berber Emir than under a Moorish one.

Back in Cordova, the Sultan shocked the local scholars by actively seeking their opinions on the powers and religious basis of the old Ummayyad Caliphate - how had it come into being? Why had it fallen? Above all, was it *right* or were the Ummayyads heretic upstarts? The professors were gratified and shocked that their opinions were wanted and explained to the Sultan that the Ummayyids had faltered and collapsed in the year 1031 of the Infidel's reckoning. It had been the first dynasty to succeed to the Caliphate after the Rashidun Caliphs and had ruled from Syria. By the year 750, they were overthrown by the Abassids who still ruled in Baghdad to this very day. Only one member of the Ummayyad dynasty escaped the bloody butchery of the Abassids - Abd ar-Rahman I who fled to Spain and established the Emirate of Cordova. It was not until the emergence of those accursed Shi'ite Fatimids, in the tenth century of the Infidels, that the Ummayyads resurrected their tenuous claim to the Caliphate as a means of self-defence. They had never been taken seriously outside their own little empire nor did they enjoy any real degree of what one might call religious power.... The humble scholars hoped that this would satisfy the curiosity of His Highness the Sultan?

### **North Africa:**

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### **The Zirid Emirate of Tunisia**

Tamin ibn Zirid, Emir of Tunisia  
Capital: Tunis                      Religion: Sunni Islam

Tunisia was an uncertain place at the best of times. Her recent history was one of steep decline. The Emir didn't even waste his time trying to enforce his rule beyond the coastal cities. Yet, even the most pessimistic of Tunisian would not have predicted the events that followed. May of 1101 saw the appearance of Sicilian raiders in Kabilya - they stormed ashore, stole whatever could be borne away, kidnapped anyone who looked like they might function as a slave and were gone before anyone could respond. Farms and estates were left in ruins - those which the Christians could not loot, they burnt; those which had been looted, they burnt anyway out of spite. It was a dark day for the Emirate.

But worse was to come. Just as the full extent of these raids reached Emir Tamin in Tunis, news came of more raids this time in Tunisia itself! The Emir mobilised to counter them but the Sicilians were too swift for him - in Tunisia, they gained a much greater haul for it was, in most respects, a richer region than Kabilya. The Sicilians sailed away east and the Emir counted up the number of villages razed and wondered how great would be the loss of revenue which would surely follow the raids.

Still, there was worse to come! July saw the appearance off Kabilya of a fleet flying the ensigns of the Hautevilles of Apulia. The natives fled as far as they could expecting that this presaged new raids. They were wrong. The Apulians unloaded their men, slowly and methodically, for they had come not to raid but to conquer. In short order, the Emir led his men westwards into Kabilya arriving in September; he was disappointed to find the infidel invader had largely completed his landing. And, the Emir was terrified to see, the invaders outnumbered the Zirid force by a factor of 3-2. But there was nothing for it - the Infidel could not be allowed to land on the Zirid coast with impunity. The coming of these men was undoubtedly a foreshadowing of the coming of others and that would mean the end of Zirid rule, the end of the Emirate and the end of Islam in this corner of the world. While such affairs lay in the hands of Allah, Tamin could ensure that he fought the Christians and made their triumph a costly one. At worst, he would die with honour.

The two armies met in this difficult region at the end of September near a series of ruined villages about 20 miles from the coast (the villages had been destroyed many years before by the Bedouin). If the place had a name, it had been forgotten. The Autumn skies emptied just as battle was met; the rain was usually heavy at this time of year in this part of North Africa and visibility was reduced considerably but, still, the battle went ahead. Hildebrand de Bacqueville fielded 4,600 infantry who formed a solid shield wall which the fiercest chevaliers in Christendom could not have broken; supporting them were about 1,500 Italian levies poorly armed but surprisingly effective on the rough and increasingly muddy field. Emir Tamin ibn Zirid led just over 2,000 mixed infantry - mainly Moorish swordsmen but with a fair number of local Arabs pressed into service - plus a personal guard of 400 horsemen supported by 1,500 Sunni Bedouin horsemen and 400 sappers.

The battle did not last long - the Normans advanced, though the rain blew in their eyes, and repulsed the brave charges of the Muslim cavalry until 600 horsemen had been lost against the shield wall (including all the Emir's guard). The Norman gens d'armes simply rolled over the Moorish infantry; the Moors fought bravely and many a Norman confessed to a newfound respect for the infidel warriors but, nevertheless, the Normans won and the Muslims died in large numbers - it was as simple as that. Tamin saw the futility of further battle and pulled back his remaining troops, mainly the Arab infantry and Bedouin horsemen, leaving behind almost 1,500 dead, wounded and captured (the Italians, flushed with victory, even overran the Muslim camp and killed out-of-hand all the Zirid sappers they found there). In total, the Normans lost less than 800 men.

With the conquest complete and the Zirids driven back eastwards to Tunisia, Hildebrand next engaged in looting the region - but this was no mere raid; rather, every item of worth in Kabilya was to be taken back to Apulia to the treasure-houses of Duke Roger. The locals, of course, revolted against this (and managed to secure the backing of some magnificent Bedouin cavalry - not the useless sorts who served the Emir but real wild tribesmen). In spite of that, the rebels were scattered - they fielded just over a thousand men in all (even their Bedouin allies numbered only 400) and were crushed in short order. The despoiling of the region continued and, in June of 1103, Hildebrand and his warriors boarded their ships and sailed back to Naples to spend their loot and regale everyone with tales of brave deeds done and great battles won.

As soon as it became clear that the Normans were gone, Zirid troops crept into Kabilya and attempted to re-establish the Emir's authority over the benighted people.

### **The Fatimid Caliphate of Cairo**

Al'Mustali, Commander of the Faithful, Whirlwind of God, Caliph of All Islam  
Capital: Cairo                      Religion: Shi'a Islam

The Caliph Al 'Mustali was feeling decidedly vulnerable. In the space of a few short years, the world had turned upside down. Now malodorous Franks were camped at the very gates of Egypt and Christian warships ploughed through the Levantine waters as though they owned them. The Caliph didn't truly have much of a problem with Christians so long as they were the normal kind, the Orthodox people from Jerusalem or even the Copts of Alexandria - at least a man could have a rational dialogue with them but these new ones from Europe? It was enough to make a Caliph cry. As a defence against further Christian encroachments, whether they originated from land or from sea, a great many fortifications were built on both banks of the Nile.

While such building work was going on, Al 'Mustali personally saw to a reorganisation of the tax system. The allotments of the peasants were counted and their dues calculated (such a task had not been undertaken in many years and caused some resentment amongst the Sunni peasant who now found their taxes spiralling upwards). Too, this administrative task resulted in a marked increase in available

manpower as those who had been able to dodge their duties were uncovered and forced to serve the Caliph. As usual, the Egyptian peasantry grumbled as they foresaw the inevitable conscription of many of their sons, fathers and brothers for the Caliph's bloody wars. The life of a peasant is not a happy one, the Egyptians concluded. Their fellow peasants in Europe, China and India would have agreed...

The distant desert provinces of Al'Diffah, Ghebel Gharib, Aswan and even the Sinai were, for all practical purposes, abandoned by the Caliphate. The local bedouins were told that no more tribute would be required though they would still be required to provide safe passage for Caliphate officials and military forces. The result of this policy was that the Caliphate's administrative system became considerably more efficient than it had been for many a long year as the tax collectors and officials no longer had to hunt down wandering desert tribes to extort a handful of dinars in tribute and could, instead, concentrate on harassing the less transient denizens of the Nile Valley. A less encouraging side-effect was that such Shi'ites as dwelt in these desert regions began to feel distinctly nervous. With the supporting arm of the Caliph now withdrawn, they got the distinct impression they were at the mercy of the Sunnis and, indeed, this proved to be the case in the Sinai peninsula at least. Here, the Sunni chieftains promptly set upon the Shi'ites - for the most part, they merely expelled them but, in one or two places, blood was spilt. Soon thereafter the Sunni Sinai bedouin tribes came to an agreement with the Emir of Damascus and came under his protection.

The only other significant news was the capture of the heir, al-'Amir, while on a diplomatic excursion along the Red Sea coast. Having been sent to acquire the province of Danakil with promises of a new port city and offers of dynastic marriage, the unfortunate Cairene prince found himself caught up in the Makourian invasion. Hearing that his heir clapped in irons, the Caliph was quite torn over what course to pursue - perhaps a war to teach these Nubian fools the error of their ways or perhaps simply a rich ransom to secure his release so that Cairo might avoid any distraction from the more important problems to the north and east, Franks and Sunnis. And, as though losing the heir were not bad enough, the Vizier, al-Mansur, managed to vanish - he had last been seen near the border between Mansura and the Sinai, defending the Caliphate against infidel depredations but, soon after, he vanished without a trace. Some suspected that the newly rambunctious bedouins had kidnapped him but no ransom was yet demanded.

## West Africa:

### The Kanem Empire

Sefawa King of the Kanemi

Capital: Ngazargumu      Religion: Sunni Islam

Slept.

### The Hausa States

Dunama Dibbalemi, Sarkis of Daura, Paramount Chieftain of the Hausa tribes

Capital: none

Religion: African Pagan

Slept.

### The Songhai Emirate of Gao

Nkruma Muhammad, Emir of Gao

Capital: none

Religion: Sunni Islam

The Emir watched the resurrection of Ghana with concern. When the Almoravid tribesmen had shattered Ghana a generation ago, all the Muslims of West Africa had rejoiced for Ghana had long been a thorn in the side of Islam - a rich and powerful Empire which spurned the Word of the Prophet and provided hope to those who clung to the outmoded religion of their ancestors. The destruction of Kumbi-Saleh had been an object lesson for all infidels - the Warriors of Allah could humble even the greatest of the pagan kingdoms and, assuredly, one day the whole of the Sahel would be Muslim. But now Ghana was rebuilding, re-establishing herself as a power in the region. One day, she might even pose a threat to Islamic Songhai. Emir Nkruma was painfully aware of how heavily the faithful in the Emirate were outnumbered by the pagans and animists. Obviously, something would have to be done. The growth of the Ghanaians would be nipped in the bud before it became a threat.

Fresh levies were raised and, at the head of almost 6,000 Songhai warriors (including a thousand sappers and an equal number of horsemen!), the Emir's eldest son, Tourmani, marched off to bring the Ghanaians to heel (ironically, most of his army was pagan). They marched from Timbuktu towards Segou and glory!

While such excitement was going on, Nkruma sent the vizier Okoto, a eunuch who had been promoted to high office because of his outstanding administrative abilities and devotion to the Emir, to bring the tribes of Gorouol into the realm. The locals, being both animists and quite insular, were not at all keen to join the Emirate for they feared that their ancestral ways would be threatened and they objected strongly to any loss of independence. By and by, they agreed to pay tribute to the distant Emir and to allow his armies safe passage but it was done grudgingly.

### The Ghanaian Empire

Niyabinghi, King of Ghana

Capital: Kumbi Saleh

Religion: African Pagan

Niyabinghi was very busy. His loyal minister, Kwabena, was set to the task of counting heads. Land which had been abandoned since the coming of the Muslims was put back into use and villages were resettled. The King's cousin, the hard-headed and ever-practical Mawulawde, was appointed heir. Everywhere, energy was being expended and the King hoped, in the depths of his heart, that peace had at last come to Ghana and that his people might know freedom from their Islamic oppressors. But that was not to be...

In mid-April, runners came from Segou to report that an army from Timbuktu was crossing the border. Niyabinghi at once led out the whole of his army, taking his advisor Botwe along as second in command; the Ghanaians could field about

3,000 warriors, bearing bronze-tipped spears and long knives, plus an equal number of more lightly-armed troops. They entered Segou very swiftly, enjoying the advantage of familiarity with the terrain, and moved to block the advance of the Songhai army which had been busily subduing the region. The Songhai horsemen had spotted the approach of the Ghanaians some days earlier and kept careful track of them; Niyabinghi had no means whatsoever of countering these hated enemy scouts and, being an unoriginal military thinker, he simply ploughed on in the vague direction of the enemy army (the local villagers kept him informed of its location). At last, the two armies met but it was on ground of Tournami's choosing - open fields where his cavalry might operate unimpeded by terrain. Niyabinghi didn't even realise that, by allowing the enemy to choose where battle was met, he was conceding a great advantage. Battle ensued and it was an uncommonly brutal affair.

To Tournami, Prince and General of Songhai Gao, it was clear that the armies were fairly evenly matched except in one important respect - cavalry. The Ghanaians had none and, more importantly, they were inexperienced when it came to dealing with and countering cavalry attacks. Of course, the Songhai had a second advantage namely Tournami himself who was easily twice the soldier that Niyabinghi would ever be but Tournami was too modest ever to think like that.

In any case, on the scorching afternoon of the battle, in June 1101, the Songhai held back on the defensive with their green banners, marked with Arabic legends, fluttering overhead and let the Ghanaians advance across the open ground. Niyabinghi's army was deployed with the light troops on the wings and the rest in the centre with the King at their head (for, Niyabinghi had reasoned, the toughest fighting was always in the centre, wasn't it?). They marched on, determined to expel the invader and free the land from the iron grip of the fiendish Muslims. Tournami waited until he was sure that the enemy was close enough before releasing his warriors but he kept his vaunted cavalry uncommitted for he knew that the Ghanaians were not to be underestimated - they were not cowards and they would not run with the shedding of the first blood; if the soliders of Islam were to be victorious this day, it would take cunning. So Tournami's horsemen waited.

On the field, neither side was able to gain the upper hand completely - the massed Songhai spearmen were slowly pushing the Ghanaian warriors back (at a high cost in Songhai lives, it must be said) but the pagan skirmishers made life very uncomfortable for the less agile Songhai formations. Tournami watched it all from a low hill behind his army. Once he was certain that all the enemy forces were committed to the fray, he personally led the cavalry onto the field and what a glorious charge it was (at first). In no time at all, he swept the enemy left flank, which consisted entirely of light troops, from the field; now, Tournami thought, he would deliver the *coup de grace*, wheeling his cavalry about to attack the rear of the infidel phalanx... Unfortunately, his horsemen had other ideas. A thousand mounted warriors rode hither and yon over the field chasing down individual Ghanaians but they failed, almost willfully, to rally for an attack on the main body of the enemy. They were too caught up in the thrill of the successful charge

and the tremendous joy of spearing and slashing running pagans to worry about the harsh calls to rally to the banner.

Niyabinghi, though no warrior, realised that he was in danger and ordered a general withdrawal. This was carried out in fairly good order - the Songhai foot soldiers were too tired, after a hard few hour's fighting, to harass the retreating Ghanaians while the cavalry, as has been noted, were scattered over the field and unable to prevent the withdrawal. Once off the field, Niyabinghi led his army southwards at high speed to defend Kumbi-Saleh.

Almost 3,000 Ghanaians had been left behind dead or wounded (the wounded were soon despatched by the victorious army). The victory had cost Tournami about 2,000 men almost entirely infantry. In the aftermath of victory, a few local chieftains who saw which way the wind was blowing were appointed by Tournami to govern the region in the name of the Emir of Gao. He, himself, was now to advance on Ghana itself...

It was early in the following year before the Songhai outriders began to appear in Ghana. They reported that this province was quite different from Segou. The pagans had built strongholds in Ghana - mudbrick forts which would slow the advance. Tournami was not worried for he had 1,000 cunning sappers with him and, so, he swiftly set about reducing the forts. Niyabinghi, although not the sharpest general Africa had ever known, realised that he had an opportunity to make life difficult for the invader if only he could surprise the Muslims while their attention was occupied by the local forts. He moved out from the capital with his battered but proud army and headed directly for the Songhai army. Tournami, meanwhile, had already managed to reduce about half the forts when he received reports from his scouts about the defences of Kumbi-Saleh (his final goal) and the approach of the pagan army. After giving the matter great thought, he decided that he simply had insufficient forces to defeat the enemy in the field, neutralise the remaining forts *and* besiege their capital. Instead, he would simply be satisfied with what he had achieved so far - the wresting of a rich province from the hands of the enemy. The Songhai fell back into Segou during the summer of 1102 and Niyabinghi breathed a great sigh of relief and promptly began planning the liberation of the northern province.

In non-war related news, a scandal swept Kumbi-Saleh when it was reported that the King's ministers had been appropriating funds from the treasury to purchase slaves for use on their own estates! No doubt, with the enemy driven off and Ghana saved for another day, the King will look into this embezzlement and heads will surely roll.

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### **The Kingdom of Benin**

Edewa, Oba of Benin

Capital: Benin

Religion: African Pagan

Slept.

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### **The Yoruba Kingdom of Ife**

Oranmiyan, Oba of Oyo and Ife, Lord of the First Men

Capital: Ife Religion: African Pagan

Slept.

### The Akan States

Paramount Chieftain of the Akan Tribes

Capital: none Religion: African Pagan

Slept.

## Eastern and Southern Africa:

### The Eparchate of Makouria

Praetextatus I, the Negus Negesti, Eparch of Makouria

Capital: Dunqulah Religion: Coptic Christian

The Negus had announced his intention of leaving the dusty old city of Dunqulah and making a grand diplomatic tour of the Eparchate's outlying regions - Nubia, where the locals still practised their old animist religion, and the independent but Christian coastal areas of Suakin and Adulis. Little doubt was expressed in Dunqulah that conflict with the Fatimids was ineluctable - it was a question of *when* not *if* war would come. And when it did, the Arabs would find the Eparchate more than ready to defend itself; they had bested the Mohametan invader before and would, through God's Grace, do so again.

Before departing, Praetextatus set military affairs in order. He summoned his son and heir, the Domestikos Nazares, and granted him command of a great part (though not the entirety) of the army - perhaps 10,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry came under the 16-year old Domestikos' command. A further detachment of almost 3,000 horse was granted to the hard-faced young noble, Timurat Nicetius. Yet more warriors of Christ were retained by the Negus as a guard while he went on his tour of places which had either rejected Christ's teachings or rejected his rule (which was tantamount to the same thing). Thousands more troops, strong-armed infantry and well-horsed cavalry, were brought from the distant province of Atbara, a subsidiary ally of the great Makourian state; they had come many miles from their homes to defend the distant Christian city of Dunqulah from incursions by the infidels of the north. On the day when he and his guards marched forth through the great double gates of Dunqulah, set in thick walls of sunbaked dun-coloured brick, the heart of the Eparch swelled with pride - all Makouria resounded with the clatter of arms, armour, shield and helm, the cadenced sound of marching feet and the hooves of the magnificent Makourian chargers. Wherever the Negus looked, he saw soldiers, their weapons glinting proudly under the harsh of African sun. Above it all flew the banner of Christ. How could one see such a sight and not feel the calm certainty of God's final victory over the Infidel?

So it was that the Negus set off in fine spirits. It took several months of travelling over rough terrain before he reached Nubia, a pagan region which paid faithful tribute to Dunqulah. Briefly (for the Negus had a long journey before him), conferences were staged with the local dignitaries and chieftains; promises were given that the Christians would not try to proselytise the locals and there was a recognition by the Nubians

that, if the choice were starkly put - to be ruled by the Christian Makourians or by the Fatimids - Makourian rule would be preferable. This being so, the Nubians agreed to commit themselves to the common defence by providing troops but they would operate only on a limited basis. This was enough for the Negus who departed for Kassala, an arid Christian province whose princes paid homage to the Negus. Again, after brief negotiations, the Kassalans agreed to enter more fully into the Eparchate while still retaining an element of autonomy - they would allow the officials of Dunqulah to impose taxes upon them but their feudal levies remained their own and would not be given to the Negus.

Praetextatus had been encouraged by his modest success so far but it was upon entering prosperous Adulis on the shores of the Red Sea that he achieved his greatest coup - with only the most perfunctory of diplomatic overtures made, the rather nervous men of Adulis willingly accepted the Negus Negesti as their overlord and suzerain. Under the benevolent gaze of Christ, the borders of Makouria now reached the Red Sea. Hossanah! So, with joyful heart, the Negus now went north to Suakin. All the while, his ministers were warning him that the government didn't have even close to sufficient resources to govern these many far-flung regions in any meaningful way but Praetextatus was not going to be put off by these nay-sayers - God had shown him the way and a means would undoubtedly present itself in due course. And it may be that God did not want any further expansion for the clans of Suakin agreed only to give the Makourians freedom of passage and nothing else. They would not be bound by any other treaty and they would pay not one brass dinar to the treasuries of Dunqulah. And, in fact, it was to Dunqulah that the Negus now turned. He reached home near the end of 1105 - his diplomatic tour had lasted more than four whole years and, all things considered, it had been an unwonted success. Yet, for all his faith in Christ, even the Negus could never have imagined that his son, Nazares, would present him with the Muslim province of Danakil and the heir to the Fatimid Caliphate, chained and bound and looking distinctly sheepish. This was clearly yet another in a long series of signs from On High that the victory of the faithful was at hand - that much was obvious but it still left Praetextatus uncertain of what to do with his captive. Decisions, decisions... (read on to find out how he was taken)

While the Negus had been busy, the Domestikos had been engaged on tasks of his own. There was truly only one thing for a 16-year old boy with more than 15,000 men under his command to do - invade someone. Nazares scanned the maps of the realm and contemplated, briefly, an invasion of the high plateau to bring the wild Abyssinians to heel but then he hit on an even more glorious idea - he would crush Danakil, the rich Muslim region on the coast and the site of many mercantile centres. Wealth would flow into the Eparchate's treasuries and glory would redound to the name of Nazares (and God and Makouria but, mainly, to Nazares).

By the end of 1101, his army was storming into Danakil via Adulis (which he entered without anyone's permission provoking a deal of fear amongst the locals and, perhaps, giving the region a very good reason to join the Eparchate). The Arabs and African Muslims of Danakil could

field only a pitiful force of about 800 spearmen and a similar number of lightly-armed skirmishers and archers while the Christians numbered, in full, 6,000 stout Makourian footmen bearing sword and spear, almost 3,000 psiloi, 2,500 outstanding horsemen and about a further 2,000 knights, covered from head-to-toe in chain armour and their horses with barding. There also milled about a few hundred sappers. The men of Danakil chose to stand and fight in open battle though, indeed, there was no doubt on either side about the outcome. A Makourian victory followed but, shockingly, the Christians didn't have it all their own way - the young general proved incapable of handling so vast a host of warriors - there were simply too many men for the boy to control with any kind of effectiveness - and, wherever his guiding hand was missing, officers would follow their own instincts. The Domestikos had planned a careful advance by the entire force followed by a massed charge by the cavalry who would ride the contemptible Muslim phalanx into the ground; in practice, a regiment here or a company there would break away and charge the smaller force without support and would pay for their rashness dearly. After a couple of hours, the battle was won, the Muslims all dead or dispersed, but, nevertheless, Nazares (now styled "the Bold") felt that the indiscipline of the army had placed a stain on the victory by causing unnecessary deaths. Almost 500 good Christian knights lay dead or injured on the field; considering how heavily they had outnumbered the enemy, such losses were as unacceptable as they were inexplicable. None of the more experienced officers had the heart to explain that the fault lay with the boy for failing to keep a firmer grip on the army. Perhaps next time if he had a couple of subordinates to command on the wings....

As the Makourians pacified their newest possession, they uncovered something absolutely fascinating - the Fatimid Prince, al-Amir, hiding out in the home of a local Muslim sheikh. He had been sent by the Caliph of Cairo to secure the friendship of Danakil and he had offered fine incentives - dynastic marriage and a great new port city. So unfortunate that his visit coincided with the Makourian invasion. Nazares the Bold, feeling as pleased as punch at this new turn of events, had the Fatimid heir clapped in chains and dragged behind the victorious host on its march back home to Dunqulah.

While all this excitement had been going on, Timurat had taken his swift cavalry and gone haring off into the desert. This activity was widely met with trepidation at Dunqulah for the oases had never been part of Makouria's traditional sphere - they were the domain of the Bedouin, the Tuaregs and whatever other of the Infidel tribes were stupid enough made their home in so hellish a place. In any case, Timurat arrived at the oasis of Ayn al-Ghazal and swiftly convinced the local Mahometans (who were Sunni and, hence, not nearly so annoying as the Shi'ites) that they should allow the Makourians freedom of passage. This was duly granted (a concession granted perhaps rather more in view of the several thousand Makourian horsemen who now occupied the oasis rather than because of Timurat's cogent arguments and silver-tongued diplomacy).

Timurat pushed on to Al Kufrah where the Bedouin were far more aggressive and refused even to contemplate parleying with the Christian dogs. In short order, Timurat annihilated the oasis' defenders and even pursued a few escapees

into the desert. Planting almost a thousand horsemen to hold the place, he pushed on to Yanaka Dinga where the local traders and tribesmen were a mixture of pagans and Sunnis. They refused to discuss any possible involvement with the distant Makourian kingdom - a place they had barely even heard of and with which they had no interest whatsoever in being associated. Indeed, some of the locals began to encourage Timurat to leave the service of the Negus and settle among the oases where there was much money to be made by those who were canny. Timurat admitted that there were attractions to the idea but he really couldn't do what they asked so he and his men departed peaceably and returned to the oasis of Ayn al-Ghazal and remained on the lookout for any Cairene raiders who might venture this way. None came. Yet.

### The Christian Empire of Abyssinia

Marari, All-Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, King of the Highlands, Guardian of the Ark of the Covenant, Emperor of Abyssinia

Capital: Aksum

Religion: Coptic Christian

Early in 1102, after a very long journey, the Makourian diplomat Ephrem Bassus appeared at Aksum and begged an audience with the Emperor. After a little delay, Ephrem was escorted to a humble little monastery on an island near the southern coast of Lake Hayq where the Makourian found Emperor Marari, a quiet and devout man of middle years.

Relations between the two Coptic kingdoms had always been mercurial though seldom had there been open hostility. To be sure, the Makourians had never been very happy about Abyssinian ownership of Sennar while the Abyssinians always resented the Makourian tendency to treat Abyssinia as a vassal rather than equal; such sources of tension had long led the two neighbours to eye one another with a healthy degree of suspicion but rarely had war been resorted to. Now, Ephrem was trying to convince the Abyssinians that there were great advantages for both sides if only they could put aside their natural distrust and work for the common good. He remained with the King of the Highlands for several years and travelled with him whenever he left the monastery to return to the capital or elsewhere in the wide realm. All things considered, Ephrem's undertakings bore fine fruit and soon there was an increased flow of messengers and envoys between the two great Coptic capitals - Dunqulah and Aksum.

### The Zanj Emirate

Emir of Zanzibar

Capital: Zanzibar

Religion: Sunni Islam

Slept.

### The Cwezi Kingdom of Kitara

the Cwezi Great Chieftain

Capital: none.

Religion: African Pagan

Slept.

### The Sulahyid Emirate of Yemen

Sayyida Arwa, Queen of Yemen

Capital: none. Religion: Shi'a Islam

Slept.

### The Sultanate of Adal

Sultan of Adal

Capital: Saylac Religion: Sunni Islam

Slept.

### The Chewa Kingdom of Marawi

Chewa King of the Marawi

Capital: none. Religion: African Pagan

Slept.

### The Xhona Tribes of Mwene Mutapa

Great King of the Mutapa Tribes

Capital: none. Religion: African Pagan

Slept.

### The Kingdom of Kongo

Imbudu, King of Kongo

Capital: none. Religion: African Pagan

King Imbudu stood down all the warriors of the Kingdom and resettled them and their families, who numbered several thousand, along the Kongoles coast in a series of villages and hamlets all very close to one another. Further, the King absolved the tribes of Cuango from their oath of loyalty to him. For many years, the primitive jungle folk of Cuango had been required to demonstrate their loyalty to the King of Kongo by placing many of their troops at his disposal but no longer - now they were completely free.

The heir, Abwanze, and the minister Mbudu went south on a diplomatic mission to the tribes of Mbundu. Things went well and finished with the locals agreeing to swear allegiance to the King of Kongo and to provide troops to assist the Kongoles should the need arise.

Apart from that, the only real excitement in this little empire came from a perplexing number of disappearances. For no reason that anyone could fathom, individuals - men, women, children alike - would simply vanish sometimes while hunting or fishing and sometimes from the safety of their own huts in the middle of the night. Usually, no trace was found and the event could be ascribed to the attacks of wild animals (if only the disappearances were less frequent). On occasion, however, human remains turned up horribly mutilated leading the Kongoles to assume that witches were at work in their land. A goodly number of suspicious types were butchered out of hand by angry mobs; even animals were not safe (for it was well-known to the Kongoles that witches could assume animal forms) and many pet dogs were killed in case they were secretly witches. Eventually, the rash of disappearances abated and the people grew a little calmer and assumed that they had killed the witches or, at least, had frightened them off.

## North America:

### The Anasazi Pueblos

Eototo, Father of Ceremonies

Capital: none Religion: Northern Amerind

The Great Spirit had sent a vision to Eototo, the most respected of the *kikmongwi* (village chieftains) - a vision of the villages sharing their burdens, linked together like one of the great webs of the Spider Woman. In rain or in drought, food would be available to all and the warriors of every village would unite to bring protection to all the Hisatsinom against the cannibal raiders of the south.

So it was that Eototo sent forth his nephew, the young Aholi, to tell all the Hisatsinom of the vision sent to the Father of Ceremonies. Aholi went first to the arid region of Hopi where only a few of the kindred villages were located; there, he spoke of the vision and of Eototo's plan for uniting all the villages in peace and plenty. Aholi's words were fiery and full of passion but the desert folk had no interest in them - indeed, they poured scorn on him for they were too concerned with the struggle to survive, from one day to the next, to worry about Eototo's fanciful ideas. To be sure, Aholi was disappointed but he persevered with the tasks he had been set and oversaw the construction of a new fortified cliff dwelling in Hopi so that the people, though they might spurn Eototo, should still have a place of safety and a defence against raiders.

That done, Aholi returned to Anasazi and the more populous regions and set about making the vision of the Father of Ceremonies' come true - food and tribute was gathered and stored in a far more systematic way than ever before; heads were counted and dues were calculated. At first, there was resistance to such developments - such radical changes were most unwelcome and not a few of the *kikmongwi* asked in the councils of the tribe by what right did Eototo place such demands on their villages. It was Aholi, ever patient, who explained the vision to the tribal council and, this time, he was rewarded with a more pliant audience, more eager listeners. Soon, word of the vision was spreading throughout all the Anasazi villages and Aholi followed close behind, preaching at every pueblo and gathering yet more followers. The complaints in council stopped and Eototo hoped that Great Spirit would be pleased with his first steps towards uniting the villages in peace and plenty. The message of the Great Spirit was mixed - Eototo's beloved wife bore him twin sons, strong and healthy beyond all hope, yet the exertions of childbirth killed the woman. Eototo was devastated by his wife's death and began to shun the company of others using the excuse that he must concentrate on his spiritual duties and seek guidance from the Great Spirit for the good of the villages. Seeing this, Aholi stepped in and oversaw the rearing of Eototo's twin sons.

### The Hohokam Villages

Hawikuh, First Among the Elders

Capital: none Religion: Northern Amerind

The Hohokam watched events to their north with curiosity and wondered why the Great Spirit hadn't sent a vision to any of their chieftains.

### The Aztalan Mississippians

Unbowed-Moose, the Peace Chief

Capital: Aztalan Religion: Northern Amerind

Slept.

### The Moundbuilders of Cahokia

Arrow Keeper, White Chief of the Ani-Kutani

Capital: Cahokia Religion: Northern Amerind

Dark Wolf, a high chieftain of the Cahokian Moundbuilders, set out in a canoe from the great city by the banks of the Snake - his destination the Caddoan riverport of Hahiwai. And he was only the first of many Cahokian grantees to visit the Caddoans during the following years.

In Cahokia itself, the White Chief, Arrow Keeper, set himself the task of restructuring the taxation system - the villages in the hinterland of Michigamea were to undergo a headcount and their contributions to the Ani-Kutani, the ruling class of Cahokia, were to be re-evaluated. However, the task proved beyond the abilities of Arrow Keeper. Whenever the White Chief or his men came to count heads, the wily villagers would send some of their number off to a neighbouring village to hide out until the officials were gone. They obfuscated their numbers, revenues and agricultural yields in a truly impressive fashion (they even went so far as to don grubby unwashed garments when the White Chief came so that they would look poorer than they were really were!). In the end, the White Chief and his tribute gatherers found themselves at a loss - after more than a year of effort, Arrow Keeper simply threw up his hands in disgust and accepted that his attempt to increase revenues had failed miserably. The Michigameans really were an ungrateful lot, it seemed to the White Chief. In a bit of a funk, Arrow Keeper set off for Hahiwai during the late Summer of 1102 taking 4 war canoes, 2 large rafts and a detachment of warriors. (See Caddoan entry).

While Arrow Keeper had been trying and failing to count heads, Black Bear, the Red Chief of the Ani-Kutani (this being the title given to the White Chief's heir) took over the reins of government and saw to the day-to-day administration of Cahokia. Towards the beginning of 1105, Black Bear too boarded a canoe and set off for the city of the Caddoans to see what he might do to help the enormous diplomatic efforts being made there. Indeed, the only Cahokian chieftain *not* to visit Hahiwai was Crazy Cat who crossed the Middle Snake into the region Quapaw in 1101 and didn't re-emerge from the wilds for 4 whole years. It is not at all clear what he was doing in such a wild place. Most likely, he was up to no good.

### The Caddoan Confederation

Mankiller, Great Father of the South

Capital: Hahiwai Religion: Northern Amerind

Mankiller, the Great Father of the Caddoans, was a trifle bemused to be receiving so much attention. First, Dark Wolf came and he was a big man among the Cahokians. Then, the following year, the Cahokian White Chief arrived - the lord of the great city of the Moundbuilders himself! Both men seemed just about ready to set up home in Hahiwai; they and their functionaries attended the lodge of Mankiller on a daily basis, always bombarding him with requests, always petitioning. It was a good thing Mankiller was patient (more patient than his name suggested for he had only ever killed on man and that guy really deserved it); a lesser man might easily have become annoyed at constantly tripping over these Cahokians but not Mankiller (not even when the Red Chief blithely sailed in and proceeded to explain in detail why it would a wonderful thing for the Caddoan Confederacy if they would only accede to the wishes of the Cahokians).

Of course, it was not all bad. Great gifts were brought from the north - elaborately woven robes, ornaments and beads, excellent flint knives and axes and other fine things. Too, the White Chief took a wife from among the Caddoans - Mankiller's own sister, Blue Raven. Within a few seasons, a son was born at Hahiwai (the child was named Quick Otter) - the future ruler of the Moundbuilders, Mankiller's own nephew, was born among the Caddoans. When something like that happens, one really has no option - Mankiller agreed to establish a much closer relationship with the Cahokians; rafts and canoes of tribute would be taken north and Mankiller would pledge Caddoan warriors to fight alongside the Cahokians whenever the White Chief asked.

However, westwards along the Arkansas River, the local tribes and villages had traditionally had far less contact with the Moundbuilders and, consequently, they cared little for the attention and gifts the Moundbuilders had lavished on the chieftains of Hahiwai. In this way, tensions and a very stark division began to develop between those Caddoans who were enthusiastic about their new relationship with the Cahokians and those who saw it as an intrusion on their traditional liberties and ways of life. "Why should we send tribute to men who live so far away? Why should our labour enrich those who live on the sunrise side of the Snake? What have they ever done for us? What will they do for us in return for this tribute?" - these were the questions posed by many who lived in Onate. And no satisfactory answer was forthcoming...

### The Adena Moundbuilders

Wild-Eagle, the Great Sun

Capital: Adena Religion: Northern Amerind

Slept.

### The Atakapaw Ishak Tribes

Otsitat, Lord of the Tribes of the Sunrise and the

Sunset

Capital: Ayoel

Religion: Northern Amerind

Slept and wondered why they did not warrant the kind of attention the Caddoans were receiving.

### **The Jatibonicu Taino of Capa**

Kelepi, Great Chieftain of the Taino

Capital: Capa Religion: Northern Amerind

\_\_\_\_\_ The Taino tribe did pretty much what they always did which wasn't much - the population slowly increased, more fish were caught, more sugar cane juice was fermented and the sun shone mostly always.

The only break from the old routine came when Kelepi sent his brother, Teo, on a mission to the Carib tribes across the Leeward Sea. Many of the elders had previously made note of an uncommon ambitiousness about young Kelepi which was manifesting itself now in his desire to have the Caribs join with the Taino even though their respective traditional lands were far apart.

Teo arrived among the Caribs who acknowledged that they and the Taino were kin and shared much in common - their cults, their language and, to a degree, their blood (although their lines had split many long generations ago). They even accepted that there might be wisdom in holding common council under the leadership of the Jatibonicu Chieftain for this would surely allow the neighbouring islands to avoid warring with each other unnecessarily. Yet, for all that they accepted in theory, the Caribs refused to commit to anything in practice. Teo ended his time among the Caribs with nothing to show for all his efforts.

## **Central America:**

### **Toltec Empire of Tula Tollan**

Topiltzin, Birth of the Fifth Sun, Emperor of Tula

Tollan under the Sun God Tezcatlipoca, Priest of the Jaguar and the Eagle.

Capital: Tula Religion: Meso-American

The Emperor departed the sacred capital, Tula, and set off across the mountains for Totonac with less than a thousand Jaguar knights, a string of porters and a nobleman by the name of Teotihua but all was well for Topiltzin went on a mission of peace not war. The local Totonac princes heard the words of the Emperor politely, accepted the generous gifts he had brought, looked nervously at the obsidian blades of the Imperial bodyguards and, at length, agreed to a dynastic marriage which locked their relatively minor region into the great and holy Empire of Tula Tollan.

While the Emperor was so engaged, his brother, Quetzalcoatl, renowned already for his exploits as a warrior, took command of about 8,000 warriors and marched them out of Tula, along the shores of Lake Texcoco and down to the southern end of the Valley of Mexico, to the province of Iztaccihuatl. Surprisingly, Topiltzin himself, fresh from his activities in Totonac, crossed the mountains into Iztaccihuatl with his young bride and entourage (except for Teotihua who had gone on to Popoluca) and at once busied himself with administering his realm. He even found time to order that the foundations of a temple complex be laid in Tlapocoya - although the thing was not yet completed, the priests chose a propitious spot and the engineers began drawing up plans while many

unfortunates were sacrificed to the great god of the Toltecs - dark Tezcatlipoca. Their hearts were torn out to sanctify the beginning of the project and their blood offered up to appease the god.

While all this was going on, some people in Tula had taken great offence that Topiltzin had spurned the capital and preferred to rule from distant Iztaccihuatl, a poor and practically irrelevant outpost of the empire. Worse still, he chose to build his new great pyramid temple in another of the Valley provinces instead of in the sacred city itself - did this mean that the Emperor was turning his back on beautiful and holy Tula? This idea circulated and gained currency with the more religious folk and even some of the priests became worried that the cult city might be relegated to secondary importance if Topiltzin chose not to rule from there. These feelings intensified when rumours began to filter up to Tula that a grand new capital city was to be built by the shores of Lake Texcoco (something that pleased the inhabitants of the Valley as much as it offended the pious people of Otomi).

By the autumn of 1105, dissatisfaction in Tula had reached its peak - increasingly, the city's religious scholars had been preaching to their students that Topiltzin was acting contrary to the interests of Tula and of the Empire of which Tula was the heart. A few of these students, fired up by religious rhetoric, staged an impromptu demonstration. At first, they wanted to march to the Emperor's ministers and lay their outrage at the feet of these officials but this proved impossible for all the most important officials had gone away to the shores of Lake Texcoco to serve Topiltzin. Enraged, the young men realised that the city was almost completely without a military presence and, so, they marched on the city's largest pyramid temple, seized it (with the tacit approval of the priests) and proclaimed that they would never relinquish control until Topiltzin has appeased the gods by guaranteeing that he would return to the capital. As the days and weeks went by, more of the capital's temples were brought under the zealots' control and their ranks swelled until they numbered almost 2000 men - admittedly, they were untrained and poorly armed but they were committed and growing in confidence.

### **The Itza Mayan Empire**

Ah-Kan-Xul, Lord of the Night, Halach Uinic of the Itza Maya

Capital: Chichen Itza Religion: Meso-American

Ah-Kan-Xul was most concerned about the encroachment of the jungle on the farmland of his subjects. It was the curse of the Mayans that no sooner was a piece of land cleared than the jungle began to reclaim it. Things around Chichen Itza itself were not so bad but, further south, around Calakmul, the jungle was particularly thick. So it was that the Halach Uinic ordered the formation of parties of workers who put themselves to the laborious task of slashing down the forest and burning it to make more room for farming, villages and people. With this work begun, increased numbers of bureaucrats and officials were appointed to ensure that Chichen Itza received its proper entitlement of treasure, food and manpower from the subject cities and provinces. This was the only real excitement to

happen on the Yucatec peninsula (which was no bad thing for excitement usually means trouble). A couple of sons were born to Ah-Kan-Xul which, in turn, led his uncle and appointed successor, Ahau-Kakmo, to get rather insecure about his own position. Poor Ahau-Kakmo had never taken a wife but had several concubines. He found comfort in the arms of these charming young ladies while complaining that the Lord of the Night never gave him anything interesting to do (he didn't even get to conduct any really good rituals). It was hard being the heir - the only good thing that happened to him was the birth of a daughter by his favourite concubine in 1103 (though, of course, the birth of Ah-Kan-Xul's son in the same season meant that Ahau-Kakmo's good news was overshadowed).

In 1101, Ak-Kan-Xul had sent one of his more prominent nobles, Ah-Pacal-Balam on a diplomatic mission to Popoluca. Frankly, the Halach Uinic had no real interest in securing the place but he simply wanted to be rid of the man for a little while - Ah-Pacal-Balam was handsome, popular, clever, brave, equally skilled both in war and diplomacy... In short, he was the epitome of everything that a King could hate in a subject.

So it was that Ah-Pacal-Balam set out for the rich region of Popoluca at the head of a personal guard of 400 grim-faced Itza Maya warriors and 400 lightly-armed skirmishers plus a train of porters carrying the many gifts which the Lord of the Night was sending to the princes and lords of Popoluca. Unfortunately, Pacal arrived in the Popoluca at almost exactly the same time as the Toltec envoy, Teotihua. Neither was particularly happy at the other's presence but they both did their best to hide it (not always successfully) as they competed to win the local nobles over. Worst of all, from the perspective of the locals, neither ambassador looked likely to depart - they both remained for several years, they both visited the same nobles and villages over and over, they both employed similar arguments warning of the need to defend Popoluca against encroaching neighbours. Pacal, who brought presents when he came to visit, was always well-received by the local princes but he didn't speak their language very well and it was always something of a struggle to carry on a conversation with him (oddly enough, he had very interesting things to say and was full of amusing anecdotes but it took real exertion for the Popolucans to understand what he was actually saying). Teotihua, on the other hand, was less instantly likeable but at least when you spoke to him you didn't have to resort to sign language.

In the end, the rulers of Popoluca decided to align with the Mayans who, whatever their faults, had shown great largesse. Too, there was a fear that the Toltec empire was unstable, that it was exerting itself too heavily and that Popoluca might suffer from joining such a state. So it was that that Popoluca became formally allied to the Lord of Chichen Itza.

### **The Zapotec Kingdom of Mitla**

Xolotl, the Great Seer, Blood King of Oaxaca  
Capital: Mitla Religion: Meso-American

Things were fairly quiet in the land of the Zapotecs. The Blood King Xolotl looked after matters both spiritual and

temporal with a steady hand and the only blot on the horizon was the sudden interest the Toltecs were taking in the southern end of the Valley of Mexico. Many wondered if it presaged war. Would the men of Tula march against Blessed Mitla? Xolotl hoped not but, seeing that it was better to be safe than sorry, he ordered that a few fortified posts be constructed around the Valley at strategic points and spent many hours letting his own blood in the hope that the gods might grant him a vision of what was to come but nothing clear was revealed and the realm sat in deep uncertainty for a long time. To make matters worse, reports drifted into Mitla of increased brigandage in the high mountains to the north of the Oaxaca Valley - bands of highwaymen appeared to be waylaying innocent travellers and only a few had seen these villains and lived to tell the tale. Indeed, Xolotl was contemplating calling up the army and leading them out to clear the high peaks of these filthy bandits when, quite unexpectedly, an emissary arrived from the Toltec Emperor - it was none other than the heir, Quetzelcoatl.

The arrival of the beaming young man was met with much enthusiasm for he came as a messenger of peace at a time when many Zapotecs feared invasion and war. Quetzelcoatl spent the greater part of the year in residence at the great cultic centre of Mitla and he managed to make a very good impression (no doubt due to the enthusiasm the Zapotecs felt for friendlier relations with their powerful northern neighbours); indeed, when Quetzelcoatl expressed, in an offhand manner, that he would not be averse to taking a bride from among the Zapotecs, a people whose name was as ancient and as glorious as any in the world, Xolotl could scarcely conceal his glee - his own daughter had turned 15 that very year and would surely make a fitting bride for the great warrior! So it was that the Toltec heir found a bride among the Zapotecs (the bride was not, in fact, very happy about the match as Quetzel, though as brave a warrior as ever walked the earth and wiser in his counsel than most, was a charmless man who would bore the poor girl for hours on end with stories of his fantastic exploits in battle).

When, by and by, Quetzel raised the question of perhaps forming a closer relationship between the two neighbouring kingdoms, Xolotl smiled politely and explained that he would be delighted to agree to some manner of treaty but he could, unfortunately, never consent to compromising the independence of ancient Mitla. So sorry. Quetzel showed no outward sign of disappointment but, before the year was out, he departed for home with his new bride. He headed off into the mountains with his small retinue and promptly disappeared.

### **The Tarascan Empire of Purepecha**

Tangaxoan, the Lord of the Men of the Wind, Warrior  
King of Tzin Tzun Tzan  
Capital: Tzin Tzun Tzan Religion: Meso-American

Slept.

### **South America:**

#### **The Huari Empire**

Anquimarca, the Ciquic, Supreme King and Overlord of the Wari

Capital: Huari

Religion: Southern Amerind

The denizens of Huari awoke, one day, to find that teams of slaves, labourers and even soldiers had set to work tearing down the ancient walls of their city. Not unnaturally, upon seeing the destruction of what they perceived as their only bulwark against their myriad enemies, they called for the Supreme King to end this madness and at once begin repairing the damage that had already been done. But Anquimarca was not to be moved. The city had been growing steadily for a long while now and it was already overcrowded - new room had to be made for the city dwellers and so it was. Over time, new dwelling were built beyond the traditional limits of the city. New market places and the shops of cunning artisans sprang up in this new area and everyone agreed that the place was far less crowded than it had been when the walls still stood (though most would have preferred to retain their walls and suffer a little discomfort in return for increased security). As it was, the Ciquic didn't think anyone had the right to complain for he ordered that more hill forts be built in strategic spots throughout the realm. Anyway, it wasn't as if the Huari had ever had any need to man the walls. Bloody whiners.

Thoroughly fed up, Anquimarca left Huari behind and strode off to the rich region of Inca with many thousands of warriors and his finest general - Atoc. (*GM note - I refuse to use the term "Incans" when referring to the inhabitants of the Lote region of Inca. So there*). The locals were mildly afraid to see this horde arrive although, in fairness, Atoc maintained a discipline as rigid as iron and not a single Huari warrior misbehaved while visiting Inca. The Ciquic's purpose soon became apparent - to secure the region for his own empire though, praise be to all the gods, he did not want to conquer the people of Inca. Instead, he offered gifts of the greatest and most generous kind (lots of silver llamas, oddly enough) which the local nobles accepted with smiles; too, he discussed the many advantages that might be offered by peaceful union with Huari - roads, trade, fierce Huari warriors to defend the region... The local nobles thought about what this would mean in practice - tribute, conscription, Huari warriors to oppress the region... The Supreme King and Overlord of Huari express his wish to take a local woman as wife - what more could he do an earnest of his goodwill? Still, this pleased the locals less than one might have expected for they wondered whether, in a generation or two, some Huari warlord might come haring into their independent land shrieking about having a claim to the place because of his lineage. On the other hand, the optimists argued that linking the bloodlines through marriage would render war less likely. By and by, the Ciquic was wed to a fine local princess and a recognition was given that Inca was now connected to the Huari Empire by bonds of blood and kinship. Anquimarca wasn't happy with this outcome but there was nothing to be done so he wandered back home again and no doubt kicked his guinea pig to relieve the stress of Royal Authority.

In Cuzco, Anta-Accla, the younger brother and heir of the Ciquic, met with a sharp rebuff from the city overlords; they would not argue, debate or discuss - there would simply be no contact between the city and the Huari Empire. The prince, not

being one to hang around where he isn't wanted, wandered off to Nazca where the local tribes already paid a fine tribute to Huari. Accla and his personal sage and chief adviser, Apo, managed to make the Nazcans see the endless advantages increased cooperation with the Empire would bring. To smooth things along, a marriage was arranged and the chieftains agreed to provide warriors for use by the Ciquic.

In Huari itself, after the furore about the city walls had died down, rich benefactions were doled out by the palace to scholars, poets and priests in an effort to revitalise the intellectual life of the city. Sure enough, these subsidised teachers soon began disseminating knowledge to small classes on the steps of the palace or one of the temples.

### The Aymara Hegemony of Tiwanaku

                    Coyllas, Yatiri of the Gateway of the Sun God, First Among the Great Chiefs

Capital: Tiahuanaco

Religion: Southern Amerind

Tiwanaku was a fragmented place. In an attempt to cement the bonds between the Aymaran clans, the Yatiri wed a woman from one of the more prominent local tribes. In the course of four years, she bore him four children, only one of which was a son, before succumbing to a fever and dying suddenly. Coyllas and his court observed all the proper rites and made the appropriate sacrifices, both animal and human, in honour of her departed soul and of the gods who had created man and looked after him all the days of his life. Soon after, portents came - great lights were seen in the night sky over Tiwanaku. The population panicked. It could only be a sign of divine displeasure but why were they unhappy? What more could be done to propitiate them? Perhaps, argued some sages and wise hierophants, it was not an indication of displeasure... Perhaps it was a warning from the Sun God that evil times were coming...

Whatever its meaning, some of the Yatiri's brave warriors deserted fearing that the lights presaged civil war in which case they ought to return to their individual clans and tribes to defend their own people. Over all the empire, a thick cloud of uncertainty settled. The heir apparent, Curi-Paucar, in an attempt to allay fears (and, if truth be told, to stave off the civil strife which he believed would inevitably follow the portents) took a wife from one of the larger but more distant Aymaran clans (indeed, her kinsmen had often been at the forefront of opposition to the rule of the Yatiri and, by the union of their bloodlines). It seemed to work, for the great clans, though anxious about the direction things would take, made no overtly hostile moves and peace continued throughout the land. After a little while, with no obvious danger on the horizon, the people settled down and life began to get back to normal.

One of the effects of this period of disquiet was to cause an increase in the urban population. The people flooded to the towns and cities seeking security from the close proximity of so many of their kinsmen and, naturally, the cities grew exponentially in a very short time. In Tiahuanaco itself, temple courtyards and any other open spaces were utilised by the newly arrived population; since such a situation could not go on for

long, the new arrivals actually cannibalised the city's wall and carried off its brilliantly-worked stone for use as building materials. The Yatiri saw this but did not act. These people needed homes after all and trying to stop them by force would simply cause more unrest and probably bloodshed - the very things that Coyllas was trying to avoid. As life quietened, the new denizens of Tiahuanaco remained in the (now expanded) city instead of returning to their old rural homes and villages.

While such troubles had beset the empire, the great minister Cusi went north to the people of Pucara. The Pucarans were not Aymaran. They spoke the Huari language, Quechua, and had no blood connexions with the clans of Tiwanaku. However, they recognised the supremacy of Tiwanakan culture and the many links which their two societies shared - they worshipped the same gods in the same way, their clothes, their pottery, their art, their stonework, their statuary... All were obviously sprung from a common root and the Pucarans were not so arrogant that they denied their debt to the southerners. By and by, a formal agreement was reached under which the local Quechua-speakers would supply a contingent to serve the Yatiri of Tiwanaku. All agreed that this was a very fair way of recognising the importance and ascendancy of Huari without infringing excessively on Pucaran liberty. Soon after, as news of the troubles in the south filtered across the mountains, the Pucarans began to rethink their stance for they had no wish to find themselves dragged into an Aymaran civil war but, in the end, they did not renege on their agreement.

### The Marajo People

\_\_\_\_\_Iawi, the Sun Chief

\_\_\_\_\_Capital: none

Religion: Southern Amerind

\_\_\_\_\_Iawi was the Sun Chief, foremost among all the chieftains of all the many Marajoara villages. Despite his relative youth, he alone commanded the respect of all the tribes and clans who made their home in the region of Terembembe. Yet that was not enough for Iawi. He looked up the Amazon to less densely-populated Pacaja and earnestly wished that the tribes there, for the most part very distant kin to his own people, would join the councils of the Marajoara for, if these regions could become united, there would be more land and, hence, more food for the burgeoning Marajo population. And so it was that Iawi sent his uncle, Moie, off on a mission to Pacaja.

Moie, accompanied by a coterie of wise advisors, reached the Pacajan villages and sought out the elders and chieftains and told them of the Sun Chief's wish that their regions and peoples should be united. He brought gifts - the finest Marajoara pottery, made with such consummate skill that even the most brilliant Pacajan potters could not duplicate it - and he spoke of the wisdom that lay in uniting the tribes by mingling their blood. The local chieftains were most impressed with Moie's words and gift and, without much ado, they agreed to join with the Marajo people in their tribal councils. To symbolise the union of the tribes, a pretty young girl was chosen, the beloved daughter of a Pacajan elder, and sent off to Terembembe to become the wife of the Sun Chief Iawi.

While Moie was about his diplomatic business, Iawi stayed at home and demonstrated the goodness of his intentions by ordering that all the proud warriors, all the men who fought with the bow and the blowpipe and all those who crewed the war canoes, should put aside their weapons and, instead, concentrate on clearing more land and settling more villages. Though few were truly happy at this, they demurred to the will of the Sun Chief and set about the tasks he had allotted them.

In due course, Iawi's new bride arrived. She proved herself a good wife and, within a year, she bore a daughter but, not long after, she fell ill, sickened further and died.

### **Mercenaries, Condottieri, Swords-for-Hire, Dogs-of-War and assorted vagabonds...**

Mercenary Captains *will* become available as the game progresses.

<b>Western Europe:</b> (c-3, i-4, w-3, s-3)	14i, 6c, 5s, 5w, 5t
<b>Eastern Europe:</b>	12i, 8xc, 4c, 2s, 2xw (c-2, i-4, w-2, s-1)
<b>Middle East:</b>	14i, 12xc, 4c, 4w, 2t (c-3, i-3, w-2, s-4)
<b>N. America:</b>	5xi, 5i, 2xw, 2w (i-1, w-2)
<b>Central America:</b>	10i, 8xi (i-2)
<b>Central Asia:</b>	5i, 14xc, 5c (c-5, i-2)
<b>India:</b>	10i, 5c, 10xc, 5w, 5t (c-3, i-3, w-1)
<b>West Africa:</b>	10i, 5xi (i-2)
<b>Far East:</b>	15i, 15xc, 5c, 5xw (c-3, i-2, w-2)
<b>Japan:</b>	12i, 5xc, 5c, 5xw, 2t (c-2, i-2, w-1)