

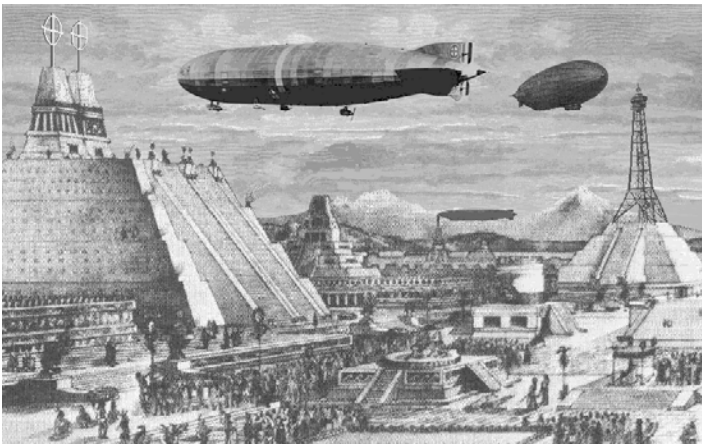
# Lords of the Earth

## Campaign One

### AN AGE OF AIR AND STEAM

## Turn 212

Anno Domini 1753 – 1754



TURN 213 ORDERS DUE BY Friday, August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2002

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

All Notes, Clarifications and Announcements have been moved into their own Notes document. There is also a new Modern Era rules supplement.

**You must read them both! Do so now!**

[http://www.throneworld.com/lords/lot01/l1\\_notes.html](http://www.throneworld.com/lords/lot01/l1_notes.html)  
[http://www.throneworld.com/lords/lot01/lot01\\_rs\\_3\\_1\\_1.html](http://www.throneworld.com/lords/lot01/lot01_rs_3_1_1.html)

### NORTH ASIA

Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
Condotierr	5i, 2a [1gp each]
Captains	Saigo Tsugumichi (M968) [5gp] Bantag Yen (MB77) [10gp]
To hire, please contact...	Pacific Mercenary and Trust Corporation
Quality Ratings	i15 w15 s18 c12 a12 z3

### BEYOND A CROOKED DOOR

“Hsst!”

The Watcher stirred, sliding across weathered, eons-old stone. “What is this?”

The others woke slowly, rustling and chittering. All turned baleful attention upon the Archway. A sense of vast emptiness and incalculable distance yawned beyond the gate. “Something has happened...”

The Watcher unfolded itself, minds rising from eon-kept sleep. “Something unexpected has woken,” <it> said. “The gate is beginning to close.”

Anger curdled the air in the chamber without walls.

### TOKUGAWA JAPAN (Shinto, Tokushima on Shikoku)

*Kii Yoshimune, Shogun of All Nippon, Daimyo of Manila, King of the Philippines, The Sea-Spear, Monster-Slayer.*

### DIPLOMACY Nagasaki in Kagoshima(ea), Yamaguchi(f),

Busy industry continued to be the watchword in the Blessed Isles – the devastated city of Himeji began to bloom into life again, while both Edo and Kyoto expanded. In the provinces of Aichi and Shikoku, a number of new agricultural techniques were adopted by the village farmers, greatly increasing harvest yields. Much further to the north, Port Kuzon was established in Amur, to keep a watch on the wilderness of the Ice and the demon-haunted ruins of Nagora.

The Japanese presence in the Dzungur Coast continued to expand, though now the disparate parties of Manchu priests filtering up through the forests from the south were beginning to make a real nuisance of themselves. More than one altercation erupted between the learned and erudite Buddhists and the keenly theosophical Shinto monks.

Similarly, in Edo, lord Ito – despite the frenzied attempts of his soldiers to save him – pitched drunkenly off the roof of a Willow World house in Panagemi district and into a canal, where he rapidly drowned, clad as he was in full samurai armor. The local authorities took pains to hush up the tragic accident.

### PACIFIC MERCENARY & TRUST (Shinto, Kryztn on Luzon)

*Juchen Agoi, President and Executive officer*

**DIPLOMACY** Krungthep in Nakhon(ma), Mundripara in Siam(ma), Saigon in Phan Rang(ma), Angkor Wat in Khemer(ma), Monorom in Surin(ma), Hafez in Dai Viet(ma), Na-iki in Nullarbor(bo)

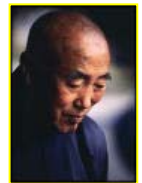
A lucrative arrangement was struck between the Trust Company and the Thai government – one followed by a massive expansion of Company interests in that country. Large sums were disbursed to the Aztec and Ming governments, for PM&T was treading a fragile balance between the various Pacific powers. A massive effort was launched to investigate the allegations recently made by the Javan government about a prevalence of “cultic shipping” under PM&T flags.

“We have found *no* evidence,” Juchen announced, while visiting cotton plantations in India, “of any Company shipping engaged in such nefarious and underhanded activities. Only a fool or a liar would say otherwise!”

### THE PURE REALM (Buddhist, Fusan in Silla)

*Great Master Wan Ho, Abbot of the Wing Kung Temple of the Greater Vehicle of the Message of the Bodhisattva*

**DIPLOMACY** Annam(˘ch), Cochin (˘ch), Wuhan in Hupei(ca), Angkor Wat in Khemer(˘ch), Lampang(lost), Laos(˘ch), Nakhon/Krungthep (˘ch), Phanrang(˘ch), Siam/Mundripara(˘ch), Surin/Mison(˘ch), Moulmein in Thaton(˘ch)



While Wan Ho was away in the south, meddling in Ming politics, the restive monks closeted in Silla at the ‘conference for change’ grew unruly and called for massive, far-reaching reforms – a plan of action which brought them into immediate

conflict with the temple hierarchies. Worse, enormous storms were raging upon the Burning Sea and all the Chinese coast... the Great Master and the fleet were reported missing six weeks after leaving Wuhan for the north.

This caused great distraction among the priests of the more elevated orders, and some squabbling began over who would succeed Wan Ho as the Great Master. As a result, efforts by Gho Han in Kwangsi, Chu Bi in Annam and Ah Mon in Kwangtung all came to naught. Unfortunately, this caused the collapse of all administration and regular monastic reporting south of the central Ming provinces.

The transfer of various monies, however, was speedily effected. Many clerks were dispatched to assist the Thai regime.

In 1754, however, the Great Master arrived unexpectedly at Silla with a battered, gnawed fleet and a wild, unbelievable tale of monsters swarming out of the sea to besiege his ships, an island shrouded in endless mist and seven Japanese women (and their gaggle of servants) in archaic-looking armor who saved him from death at the hands of those “who dwell below.”

It was certain his men had faced a terrible trial – no one could look upon their wan, bleached faces and not believe...

**THE MANCHU MONGOL EMPIRE** (Buddhist, Harbin in Shangtu)  
*The Dread Lord Manchu Zao Ma, King of Kings, the God-Personified, The Eternally Victorious and Divine Emperor of the Middle Kingdom, the Celestial Emperor, Smiter of the Barbarians, The Bulwark of Civilization, The Son of Heaven, Most Favored of Bodisvatta, The Supreme Master of the Universe Before Whose Feet the Craven Ming Grovel, The Son of Heaven, the Divine Light of Wisdom, Gurkhan of Khitai, Lord of the Tribes, Beloved of his People, The Manchu*

**DIPLOMACY** Sikhote(˘nt), Mantap(˘a), Ulan-Ude in Henyitin(kill the Manchu!)

Old Zao, while not chasing young Princess Mi’an around the palace and getting her pregnant, grudgingly paid off various debts incurred by the previous ruler. To avoid confusion due to the number of changes in the royal fundament, he also adopted the title “The Manchu”.

In the wild and woolly north, Minister Jian Zhen arrived in Henyitin in the company of a powerful army and an endless column of settlers, tradesmen and southern carpetbaggers. As quickly became apparent, not only was the Manchu interested in a well-armed expedition into the Ice, but in scouring Henyitin province clean of “Cthulhu-lovin’ Natives™” which, of course, were in great supply there. When the locals discovered this meant mass confiscations of their lands and properties, executions, disappearances of young nubile daughters and general pilfering and looting, they revolted.

General Wai, on hand with 14,000 Manchu regulars, reacted swiftly, columns of riflemen and cavalry spreading out across the province to suppression the rebellion. Zhen and Wai were a little surprised, however, by the rioting which broke out in Ulan-Ude. Mobs of citizens – rightly fearing they would lose their homes, jobs and pensions to the southrons – had to be suppressed by cannon fire in the twisty streets, and some harsh set-to action by the Manchu Imperial Guards.

All this, however, was as nothing to the ruthless efficiency of the Manchu, who smashed the rebels flat, appropriated their

properties and saw a docile and Emperor-fearing lot of settlers in their place.

**THE KINGDOM OF PRESTER JOHN** (Maclan in Tuhnwhang)  
*Megan Corrigan, Khagan of Karakocho, The White Goddess, Wolf-Sister of the Altai*  
**DIPLOMACY** Kucha(^f)



The daily life of the denizens of Maclan was mildly disturbed by the Queen’s Engineers busily building postal throughways from Tuhnwhang west to Hami in Turfan and east to Anxi in Yumen. Beyond the clouds of dust, the ringing of hammers and the shouts of the overseers, little of note occurred.

**THE DIVINE KINGDOM OF JUDAH** (Pienching in Honan)  
*Jiang-zhi Ben-Yair, The Hand of God, Champion of the Hosts of Christ, Celestial Emperor, buey tlaotani*  
**DIPLOMACY** No effect

Construction work continued on the rather swampy and generally fetidly hot Belitung island, far in the south, in the Javan seas. The walls around port Phuket, and supporting the looming, crag-like fortress, continued expand. More cannon were installed. One might think the Judeans were expecting a fray... at home, thousands of laborers bent their backs under a dim, pale sun to dredge the Grand Canal clear down to the boiling sea. Losses were heavy among the workers, for queer and unnatural monstrosities prowled the wasteland and they had a thirst for human flesh and blood.

Thumbing their nose at the scattered and powerless nomads of the Gobi, the Judeans invested heavily in new farms along the Kin frontier. Not so far east, in El’Khudz, missionary work among the predominately Buddhist population inflamed a violent outburst of rioting, church-burning and general insurrection. The notorious General Han intervened, marching up from Beijing, and suppressed the revolt. Many Pure Realm and Manchu priests were hung by the neck until dead. Over all, however, the inroads made by the Jesuits and Franciscans there eroded.

Even the arrival of Cardinal Castiglione (one of the few Italian priests who actually spoke both Chinese and Náhuatl) did not immediately reverse the slow disintegration of Papal authority in Judean lands, but his boundless energy, dedication and piety did promise to rectify matters in the fullness of time.

Despite these rumblings, the whole of the realm remained at peace upon the ascension of the boy Jiang-zhi first to the role of Prince, and then in 1754 to the title of Celestial Emperor. Yui-Yen the Blind, the last of the Promised Twins, died in his sleep, abed in the palaces of Pienching, a bared blade held in one hand, a revolver in the other. His grandson was rather nonplussed – wouldn’t the old man live forever? Still, the boy was crowed and acclaimed and paraded before the people. The numerous generals in the court watched with avid interest – they had not dared to cross the Blind King, but now... this boy... perhaps there would be opportunities under his inexperienced reign?

## MING CHINESE EMPIRE (Wuhan in Hupei)

*Ming-ta Nimma, Empress of China, Hammer of the Barbarians, The Redeemer, Divine Daughter of Heaven*

### DIPLOMACY

The Divine One, seeking to establish control of the reins of government, began dealing with the matter of succession. Nimma was reluctant to take a husband herself as this road would seem to invite trouble – men being the foolish creatures they are. These matters would have been so much easier had sister Yanma survived as well... In any case, Yan Mao is a recognized son of her foolish brother – bastard though he may be. Still, the Empress thought he should be tested, and so the boy was sent to Wudan Mountain. A letter accompanied him asking the Masters there to take him in and give him the training he will need – for one day he may be Emperor.

Two armies were dispatched to the south, where the recalcitrant and obstreperous province of Gouangxi continued to deny the Empress' lawful will. General Kuo and the Duke of Lingsi converged upon the lawless land with 22,000 men and (despite a fierce resistance by the local chiefs) smashed the defenders flat. The city of Tianling was captured after a lengthy siege and order prevailed under heaven.

After a year had passed Nimma sent a messenger to the Nine Masters to discover if the boy had shown any promise. Master Yupa (one of those who had accompanied the Three Blossoms through the Burning Sea) found the Master in charge of the younger boys with a sad face.

"Is he the son of his father, or of Great Ming?" Yupa asked.

"The blood of Hongzhi is thick in this one."

Yan Mao was ne'er heard of again. In the ravines below Wudan, where the thickets are very dense and filled with spines, another skull whitened among jumbled bones.

Dissatisfied, Nimma took a husband from the nobility of Szechwan – one who was not too smart or too ambitious, and from a powerful family who could appreciate the value of having a grandson who will be Emperor. His name is recorded by history, but of little interest here...

The Divine One also had some matters of foreign policy to deal with:

N – Who is this Frieda, Duchess of Poland, that she should say such things of Ming China?

Flunky – We believe she is the ruler of that land, Empress.

N – And she dares to malign our character so? I recall little of this Poland. Is it not a pathetically small state crushed betwixt Denmark and Sweden – existing solely at the sufferance of each?

Flunky – Yes, Empress.

N – Does it not seem, then, that it is this Poland which exists inexplicably?

Flunky – Without doubt, Empress.

N – Very well. You shall dispatch a letter to this Frieda where you shall make clear our displeasure that she should malign us so foully. You also shall issue an Imperial Writ and deliver it to the governors of each of our coastal and island provinces. Let it be known that a state of hostilities does exist between Ming China and the Duchy of Poland. Any vessel entering a Ming port and flying the flag of Poland shall be impounded, the cargos seized as Imperial property, and the crews sent home by the most expeditious manner. This Writ shall be in force until such time as we receive a proper apology from the Polish court for such outrageous conduct.

Flunky – It shall be done, Empress!

She was also concerned with the matter of the blasted lands in the east. The Empress had herself crossed these barren wastes and seen the fell creatures dwelling therein. She feared great evil could emerge from the place at any time. Thus, a many pronged campaign was launched to attack this cancer. A Ministry of Land Reclamation was established to pursue all prudent policies to contain the threat posed by these lands and speed their integration back into the empire. General Wu Kanitbe, who has guarded this frontier for some years, was declared the first Minister. Wu, in turn, started several new programs:

- ◆ A bounty shall be paid for any creatures, alive or dead, that were not previously known to inhabit the blasted lands before the disaster – a double bounty paid for creatures that are obviously unnatural or for degenerate humans. Rewards also will be paid for accurate mapping of disaster areas – especially where the maps indicate possible camp/settlement sites.
- ◆ The rangers patrolling the borders will have their numbers augmented with trained surveyors, engineers and scientists from the University and shall be given the task of developing accurate maps of the blasted lands. Early stages of this mapping shall concentrate on the mountainous regions immediately along the Jiangxi and Ganzhou borders with an emphasis on establishing the location of sites within Kiangsi and Fukien which have fresh water sources and can serve as forward military bases or settlement sites. To better accomplish this goal, the expeditions will be equipped with the best maps available for the regions prior to the disaster – especially maps showing natural spring-fed waterways.
- ◆ Separate research teams based out of Nan Chang and Luang shall be tasked with understanding why crops and other vegetation grow so reluctantly in the blasted regions and will develop alternative agriculture methods that will either cleanse the land or will result in crops that will flourish in the harsh conditions.
- ◆ By decree of the Empress, all the lands within the confines of the provinces of Taiping, Chekiang, Kiangsi, and Fukien are deemed to be property of the crown. All prior claims to any portion of these lands are null and void. Any person may claim a portion of the blasted lands as his or her homestead by occupying said land, surveying and marking its bounds, registering the claim with the Ministry and, having inhabited the claimed portion for a period of not less than five years and upon documenting to the Ministry of Land Reclamation that the claim has been inhabited and the land converted to useful production, shall be deemed to be the owner of record of this land and shall be transferred title of ownership from the Empress. The Ministry shall maintain records of claims and established ownership and shall make this information openly available to subjects of the Empire. This program is explicitly open to participation by any subject of the Empire and the Ministry shall not by action or inaction permit the intent of this policy to be corrupted by any person.

## SOUTH ASIA

Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
Condottieri	30c 30i 10a 5s [1gp each]
Captains	Gemish Huorn (M956) [5gp]
To hire, please contact...	None
Quality Ratings	i15 w17 s20 c11 a12 z5

**THE THAI EMPIRE** (Angkor Wat in Khemer)

*Ayutthaya Blajakay "Red Hand", Emperor of the Thai, Lord of Khemer*

**DIPLOMACY** None!

Though the Emperor was away in the east, beating the living daylight out of all the Moslems he could find, his ministers at home were busy trying to reform and revise the intricate network of laws, social mores and traditional customs that bound master to slave, kshatriya to Brahmin and so on. The man on the street viewed all of this with grave suspicion, for all know that *change* brought *chaos*, and chaos was by definition *bad*. A variety of plantations were opened in Mison.

Scads of Pure Realm monks arrived in Angkor to assist the government of the Red Hand in an audit. Unfortunately, no sooner than they had arrived, than they fell out among themselves bickering over who should become the new Great Master. So little work was done.

Even more Pure Realm monks (is there *no end* to them???) continued to plague the citizens of Palas, Samatata and Assam. All three regions continued to slowly slide towards Buddhism, despite the disorganized and dispirited efforts of the local Moslem clergy to resist. Only in Gaur did the locals take matters into their own hands, slaughtering any Buddhists they could lay their hands on.

Negotiations with the Danish government resolved the "Mon Question" with the province becoming part of the Thai state and the white-eyed devils gaining a perpetual lease to the city of Weiscastel.

On the Indian front, Thai armies swarmed like locusts in Samatata – the Emperor and lord Hansajaya launched an attack into Palas even as General Taqajaya pounced on Gaur (ostensibly to rescue local Buddhists from Moslem vengeance). Their road to victory, however, would not be easy...

Even as the Red-Hand was marshalling his troops in northern Samatata, a clutch of his own bodyguards rushed him in the pre-dawn light, blades drawn in murderous intent. The Emperor had risen to power on the strength of foreign meddling and now (as he turned to bite the hand which had raised him up) the knife twisted, striking back upon him. Blajakay was swift to his own defense, hewing down two of the assassins, and then more of his own (loyal) guards rushed into save him. The Emperor crumpled to the ground, gasping in pain -- a kukri-knife blow had slashed his left hand to ruin. Now he truly was the "Red Hand".

Commotion rippled through the camp, fed by wild rumors. Other groups of assassins – all of them men of Khemer descent, having no love of the new Thai overlords – struck down Hansajaya and Taqajaya – leaving only the lesser lights (Moldojaya and Tak-sim) to command the invasion. The Emperor, realizing his own weakness, countermanded the

Wu's forces – mostly light cavalry based at fortified encampments – found their work dangerous, boring and deadly by turns. There *were* things in the wasteland, and they were not afraid of men with guns. A particular brand of camaraderie soon flourished among the "Fang-men" who patrolled the frontier, and their exploits were celebrated in song and story.

The continuing trouble in the far south between the restive and quarrelsome Ming garrison and the Javans on Hainan was also brought to the Empress' attention. Her response was a pair of letters...

Sir governor Yu-we of Lingnan province,

It pains me to see so many dispatches from your district complaining of the depredations of Javan soldiers and sailors. Though the late hostilities were most fierce and heartfelt, Ming and Java are again at peace and we wish it to remain so. Permit me to suggest to you that if the Javan men are becoming rowdy and causing trouble, the fault is yours for failing to find a sufficiency of entertainment for them. Might I suggest that you encourage the formation of some brothels and gambling dens that might part the Javans from their pay, entertain them, and keep them from accosting those who are not desirous of their attentions? I feel certain that your next report will reveal a dramatic reduction in tensions and a sudden resurgence of local business. ~ *Your benevolent Empress, Nimma*

The Moslem bey of Singapore – upon learning of a Ming embassy roistering in the brothels of the city – ordered the interlopers arrested and, unfortunately, Won Hung Lo was killed in the ensuing fray.

To: Ming-ta Nimma, Daughter of Heaven, Redeemer, Hammer, and other assorted Divine instruments.

1458 Forbidden City Way,  
Wuhan, Hupei

Madam,

It grievously wounded me today to learn that a state of hostility exists between our two fine nations, and that I was forced to learn of it only by articles published in the common press. I cannot comprehend how relations could have deteriorated to such a point, and wish to convey to you with utmost earnestness that it is not my government's desire for this path to continue.

However, we are not prepared to take responsibility for words or verbs that have entered colloquial usage amongst commoners. I can assure you at no time have I or any of my officials instructed the Royal Sopot Academy of Language to enter the verb "ming" into the Abridged or Unabridged Polish Dictionary published by said institution each year, though it is my understanding that several informal papers have been published about the usage and recent application of this word.

Furthermore, I must remind you that my father, Duke Stanislas Leczinski, great statesman and founder of this country, was released from Swedish captivity at the behest of a Ming Chinese diplomatic initiative, and was forever after a devoted student of Oriental Studies. He even joined a Orientalist Enthusiast Club, "Ming China Rules!", in which like minded individuals would share and circulate articles about the culture and history of Ming China. Alas, it would seem he and one or two others were the only members, and that he only ever received a single letter from a lonely Ming bureaucrat stationed somewhere near Xinjiang regarding the cultivation and care of sorghum, as well as the customary and annual bill for club dues. It was only thus that he reluctantly allowed his membership to lapse.

Majesty, I appeal to you as a fellow woman not to follow in the ways and methods of men-folk and to restore the previously sterling relations enjoyed by our two nations, during which time the glow caused even invasions to be called off.

Yours respectfully,

*Frieda Leczinski*

*Duchess, Grand Duchy of Poland*

orders. "Next year," he growled, trying to stanch the wound with a napkin. "Next year..."

He returned to Angkor within a few months, realizing he would need to root out the rest of the spies... he was followed by literally hundreds of letters from Moldo and Tak, who were intriguing against each other in Samatata, bickering and plotting and trying to convince the Emperor the other was a traitor.

**HOSOGAWA BORNEO** (Kozoronden in Sabah)  
*Hosogawa Suenaga, Daimyo of Kozoronden*  
**DIPLOMACY** Barat(^pt)

On misty Borneo, the Japanese continued to toil away, carving mountains and hills into shapes of their pleasing. More airships trundled forth from the workshops and factories at Kozoronden, while the city itself continued to sprawl away from the port. Down south, where of late the samurai were waging a difficult and arduous jungle war against the natives (a hardy mish-mash of Indonesians and displaced Mongols), Admiral Nagumo attempted a landing in Barat province to cover for a flanking attack by Lord Kuupene over the mountains.

The seaborne attack was a messy failure, with Nagumo wounded by an arrow and the first wave of troops being slaughtered in the surf. Kuupene, however, made a fast march through the jungle and came upon that Barati by surprise, saving the campaign. The chiefs of the south bowed down and swore to pay a tribute to Suenaga.

**JAVA** (Sunda in Pajajaran)  
*Pedregon, Great Kahuna of Java, Emperor of the Maori, the Sea Spear*

**DIPLOMACY** None

Disturbed by continuing news that certain European merchant concerns were nothing less than a conduit for Icy devilry into the southern oceans, Pedregon issued a series of writs authorizing his fleet commanders to wage a vigorous and unrestrained campaign to stamp out the cultic traffic in the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf and Austral waters. This done, he betook himself off to the Monster Island Pageant, which promised to be more than usually spectacular this year.

He missed the delivery, therefore, of this letter:

Great Kahuna, I have taken steps to insure that the unfortunate events in Hainan and Lingtung do not get out of hand. I hope that you will do me the great favor of asking your governor in Hainan to meet with my governor in Lingtung. I think you will find that the governor is bursting with new ideas for encouraging a more peaceful and profitable situation there.

The friendship between Java and Ming is old and deep. It pains me that my fathers did not do all that they might have to assure you of our eternal fondness. I do not wish such neglect to happen again. Know that Java is among our most trusted allies and that my dream is one of peace and prosperity for both great nations. ~ *Nimma, Empress of China*

Javan fleets – swift, sleek and powerful – coursed throughout the waters around India, Singapore and the Austral coast, seizing any Albanian ships they could find, sending the captains to pray with Oro the White and confiscating everything else. The result was a vicious blow to the Albanian trade network in the east...

Upon returning from the Pageant, Pedregon encountered a huge mass of men and women (most of them armed with the traditional fishing spear and bolo knife) in noble regalia. Puzzled, he approached the crowd, though his guardsmen were very, very nervous.

"Greetings, fellows!" He called, and there was a murmur of recognition. Two of the greater chiefs pushed through to meet him. "What brings you all here, the gathered nobility of the thousand islands?"

"Promises were made, kahuna, by your predecessors..."

The chiefs and lords had come demanding the restoration of the council of *kawanatanga* which had once governed their affairs. Pedregon was somewhat taken aback by this, for the re-institution of the parliament would necessarily circumscribe his powers and that of monarchs to follow... yet those promised had been made by Nita and others.

"What the kahuna of old promised," he declared, voice ringing out over the massive crowd, "I will deliver."

**THE SUPREME PRIMACY OF ORO** (Fukuzawa in Irith)  
*Horoku ne Muuta, High Priest of the Shark*

**DIPLOMACY** Niucity on Bali(ch), Singhasari in Kediri(ch), Sunda in Pajajaran(ch), Dolak in Kokenau(ch)

Aside from plaguing various nearby governments with requests for special dispensations, favorable taxation status and other favors, the Shark Priests were quiet and industrious.

**THE BORANG BAKUFU** (Sakuma in Borang)  
*Izuryama Jemmu, Daimyo of Borang, Lord of the North, Emperor of Austral*

**DIPLOMACY** Moora(nt), Eyallah(nt)

Foreign grain poured into Austral ports, allowing the government to breathe a little easier... reports of widespread famine in the provinces were growing more prevalent and harder to ignore. Jemmu did attempt to avert further famine with a massive series of irrigation projects in Nokama province. In the far west, Lord Shiguro (accompanied by a small fleet, a rowdy army, a lot of surveyors and clerks) convinced the scattered tribesmen along the coast to acknowledge Jemmu as their overlord.

## SOMEWHERE IN THE RUINS

The ram swung one last time, and the portal fell inward with a crash. Before Lord C\_ could restrain them, the Count and his esquire rushed forward, only to vanish with a scream as the floor gave way beneath them.

Lord C\_ then brushed past the cringing servitors to contemplate the abyss. Was that a torch, dwindling in the distance? He listened, but even the echos had faded. He shook his head. Was he the last? What a sorry end to their quest.

He turned to face his lackeys. "Bring a plank, to bridge the gap." he ordered. "Then return to the surface! Enough lives have been lost! I will have no more on my conscience!"

When all was ready, he advanced alone into the chamber. He moved cautiously, wary for traps, but the last malice of the ancient architects seemed to be spent. The floor seemed clear, in the wavering light of his lantern, with no sign of tripwires or pits such as the one that had claimed his last companions. The ceiling was smooth and unmarked by any sign of deadfall.

The walls were free of any slots, vents, or apertures through which darts, gas, or fire might be introduced to his dismay. Were it not for what Lord C\_ knew of its dreadful history, the chamber might have seemed quite innocent.

At last he reached the pedestal. Its form was indistinct, and its purpose ambiguous -- it could have been anything from a desk to an altar. But there was no mystery at all about the object it held.

“The Box!” Lord C\_ whispered in a stunned voice. “My God! After all this time, I never believed...”

Then death took him.

**NANHAI WANG’GUO** (Rabaul on Bismarck)  
*Sugawara Te Anu, Daimyo of the Southern Seas*

**DIPLOMACY** None

The Nanhai minded their own business. Arab merchants arrived, selling aromatic oils, Indian cotton and Persian guns.

**THE MAORI IMPERIUM** (Joetsura on Te Ika A Maui)  
*Graustarkana, Regent for...*

*Takotokino, Lord of the Fleet, Emperor of the Maori, Blessed of Oro, The Big Kahuna*

**DIPLOMACY** No effect

Amid a revival of civic life – and actual signs of a working economy! – the Maori managed to cobble together two shantytowns in the ancient ruins of old Imperium ports in Akaroa (Waipukurau) and Te Wai Ponamu (Timaru). This proved to be the Great Tooth’s last act... he died in 1754, leaving only an infant heir (Tototokino, “little tooth”) as his heir. A cousin, Graustarkana, seized the steering paddle and cowed everyone else into obedience.

Captain Hatipi, suffering in cold northern waters, caught a cold and died, which was a sad end for a son of the Southern Seas, but only one more mark of the blight which affected all those who once served the Ice.

## CENTRAL ASIA AND INDIA

Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
Condotierr	5c, 5i [1gp each]
Captains	Rajah of Vijashuram (M836) [5gp]
To hire, please contact...	None
Quality Ratings	i16 w20 s17 c11 a13

Hussite Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
The Hussite Legion	5hea [2.0 gp each], based at Fornost.
Captains	Robert Clive (M757) [5gp]
To hire, please contact...	Albanian East India Company
Quality Ratings	c12 i15 a14 w17 s20

**SHI’A IMAMAT** (Yathrib in Kosala)

*Rhemini, Ayatollah of the Shi’a, Voice of Allah*

**DIPLOMACY** None

Not a darned thing. The Ayatollah stayed home and hid in the basement. Eventually, the Lion came knocking on his door...

**YASARID INDIA** (Yathrib in Kosala)

*Eon of Axum, Shah of India, Prince of Yathrib*

**DIPLOMACY** Ahvaz in Palas(^a)

Pinned between increasingly hostile powers, princess Tihana wrote off her useless elder brother (who was getting into his own brand of trouble, again, anyway) and managed to finagle new contracts for Eon of Axum’s mercenaries. She also made the exiled prince an offer he did not care to refuse ... marriage to Tihana and a share of the steadily shrinking Yasarid domain. But who knew which way fate might turn in the clash of armies?

With Eon at her side, and the tiny Yasarid army reinforced with the usual hardscrabble band of Afghans lancers, Persian gunners and expatriate Khemer riflemen, Tihana struck southward into Vengi, determined to liberate her people from the scum-sucking, poncy, pox-riddled Leaguers.

**THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE** (Amon Hen in Karnata)

*Robert of Kakatiya, King of the South*

**DIPLOMACY** No effect

A company of hard-bitten League *sowars* crowded into a corridor deep beneath the citadel of Amon Hen. Each man was armed to the teeth and their captain, a thuggish Dane, threw the iron cell-door aside with a sneer. Within, standing tall and proud in his ragged garments, was Abdullah of the Yasarids.

“Time to die,” the Dane growled, advancing with a bared saber. His men pushed into the chamber with rifles raised.

Abdullah tittered, eyes wild and a clenched, claw-like hand opened, revealing a shining obsidian skull. The Dane stopped abruptly, and the Persian began to chant in a wailing, inhuman voice. Before the first word could leapt, hell-borne, from his lips... the roar of a dozen rifles slammed the air and the prince shattered, torn apart by a rain of lead. Twitching, still trying to invoke the darkest powers, Abdullah slumped to the floor, legs running red. The League sowars tore his corpse to bits and burned the remains.

The main League armies remained in Vengi – wary of another attack by the Yasarids, while Baron Robert returned to Kakatiya to visit his family – and Stephen of Chera continued to besiege the port of Mozul in Pandya by land and sea (with the able assistance of a Carthaginian squadron dispatched from Calicut).

King Anton and duke Tancred had no sooner bade goodbye to Robert’s Kakatiyans than the Yasarid army poured across the frontier, all fired up and ready to whup some Hussite behind. Outnumbered by more than two to one, the League commanders withdrew south as fast as possible. Unfortunately, prince-regent Eon had thrown a wide net... and the Hussite army of 4,000 men was forced to give battle at **Nandigama**, where King Anton quailed in the face of 13,000 very angry Moslems.



Outnumbered, outgunned and railing against the “treachery” of Duke Robert, the Hussites went down fighting, trying to hold the far bank of the Puwar river against the Moslem storm... the League army was destroyed. Anton and Tancred fled into the mountains, but both fell prey to Hindu villagers who seized them from their hiding place and beat them to death with stones.

Tihana now prepared to move south, to sweep the coast of the Carnatic and restore her father’s kingdom. Fortunately for the Hussites, word now reached her from the north of a new invasion...

The defenders of Mozul in Pandya, starved, shelled to insensibility and now without hope of relief, surrendered to Stephen of Chera. He was gracious to the survivors – having watched the effects of the Carthaginian guns on the city with steadily growing horror.

At the end of '54 another Carthaginian squadron arrived at Calicut, this one carrying four airships and three regiments of cavalry and riflemen to reinforce the garrison of the port.

**EMIRATE OF THE CHANDELLAS** (Bundelkand in Chandela)

*Kuhman Singh, prince of Bundelkhand, Lion of the North*

**DIPLOMACY** None

Treaty arrangements went ahead with the Arnori – Singh dispatched a heavy tribute to keep the Hussites from his door, and issued a variety of edicts commanding the Moslem populations to Jaunpur and Maghada to migrate south of the Ganges, where “new lands would be made available for settlement.”

Unfortunately, while Singh and his army stormed into Nadavaria –intending to wrest a new empire from the corpse of the Yasarid state – none of his captains moved north to assure the movement of so many people... as a result, the citizens of Jaunpur and Maghada stayed put and became rather bellicose. “Leave our homes! For those Hussite lapdogs? Never!”

Regardless, Singh and his troops marched victoriously through Nadavaria, capturing the city of Aliyasha with ease and thence into Kalinga. Here the Lion of the North faced his first real test... Eon and Tihana had hurried back from Vengi to deal with this “base treachery!”

Now the whim of fate had turned, and prince-regent Eon and his 11,000 Yasarids were at grips with 18,000 Chandellans. The collision at **Baleshwar** was vicious – the Yasarids were filled with an all-consuming fury – and the duel of wits and



skill between Eon and Kuhman Singh was a thing of beauty. Yet still Singh held the advantage in mobility, in men, in guns and his *was* the superior mind... the Yasarid army was soundly defeated and the survivors scattered, plagued by the lances and sabers of Singh’s Afghan light horse.

In the ensuing rout, the Yasarid army was scattered, Tihana was killed and Eon captured and dragged before Singh in chains. Out of respect for the Axumite’s prowess, the Lion spared his life and sent him off to rot in a cell in the newly captured port of Khalil. The Lion then turned his attention inland, to the Yasarid capital of Yathrib.

While Singh marched inland and seized an undefended Yathrib (along with the cowering remains of the Yasarid government and the Shi’a Imam to boot), his son Kumar and lord Ahnam swept outwards to secure the provinces of Vengi and Chela. Despite this seemingly fatal blow, the Yasarid state did not collapse.

In fact, prince Mahmud (the eldest of Tihana’s children) was proclaimed shah in Ahvaz, where he was the guest of the *bey*. The Yasarids would fight on! With... with something. Sadly for their hopes, Mahmud was murdered within a month. Dark cloaked men entered his bedchamber and strangled him, while a helpless concubine looked on in horror.

Later, she related the assassins had said “debts to the Nine must be paid, princeling, with your soul...” This left the captive Eon of Axum the putative ruler of the remaining Yasarid domains – for about two months, before *he* was whisked out of Chandellan captivity by *another* group of cloaked, mysterious men and he did not resurface.

**THE REALM OF ARNOR** (Schwarzkastel in Edrosia)  
*Peregrin von Hessen, Rajah of India, Duke of Delhi, Grand-Duke of Aballach, Prince of the Black Tower*

**DIPLOMACY** Kalanjara in Vatsa(^f)

Stretching the Ducal resources to the limit, Peregrin robbed every farmstead, home and hovel in the northwest to gather a huge mob of loyal Hussite citizens... who were marched down the Ganges to for the express purpose of colonizing some provinces the Duke expected to be vacated by the Chandellans. To help finance this massive effort, a great deal of grain, cotton, flax, hemp and every kind of smoked meat was sold the Albanians. The Company, in turn, shipping the Duke a great deal of gold... and nearly lost it all, as the seas had become very, very dangerous.



Excerpt: **Edrosia Star Tribune:**

Mr. James P. Lan of Augustina, Flanders, Danish Empire has been found guilty of the murder of his wife, Sarah. A member of the Schwarzcastel police stated that he will be sentenced to be hanged according to Arnori Law for this heinous crime.

Excerpt: **Multan News:**

Senator Zippy, Starnub District, Baklovakia has recently proclaimed to the world the discovery of 5 new Indian “pastry” recipes. The senator has been on a mission for the Baklovakian Government to the Kingdom of Arnor and was very pleased to have found a new Pastry Chef in Multan. “He will be returning to Baklovakia immediately with his newly hired companion.”

Hussite shipping into Arnor was plagued by Javan and Persian privateers pillaging Albanian merchantmen and seizing many rich prizes... a storm seemed to gather, as fate turned against Hussite India...

One of Peregrin's most trusted lieutenants – Abraham Von Helshing – was dispatched, in mufti, into the mountains of Afghanistan, looking for something that might only exist in the fevered mind of the Duke. In his journals, however, the ex-priest did record some striking images. While visiting the deserted streets of Ghazni, where once the vast tomb of Mahmud had stood he wrote:

"In the ruins of that forgotten imperial city, from whence the proselytes of Allah surged forth in black armor to harry the lowlands with faith and fire, now given over to perdition and the faith of the Hindus high among those raw and massive knuckled peaks that scrape the blue gut of the sky like the bloated white arthritic joints of some giant slaughtered in biblical times."

So, down in the lowlands, Maximillian Schiller (with the Duke in tow) gathered his forces at Gwalior and then marched on Jaunpur. Upon entering the Chandellan province, however, he found that the Moslem natives were still there in force, and his advance parties were attacked by angry natives.

"Treachery," the general sighed, having expected no less. He looked to Duke Peregrin. "Sir?

"Kill them all!"

As a result, the Arnori army pitched into Jaunpur with a vengeance, slaughtering every Moslem they could find, hanging whole villages, burning mosques by the dozen and generally attempting to methodically and coolly exterminate an entire class of society... despite frenzied attacks by the natives, the Hussite artillery and airships slaughtered those few men left able to fight and then the infantry regiments fixed bayonets and began wading in blood.

Within three months, an involuntary tide of refugees were choking the roads south and east into Chandellan territory and an equal crowd of Hussite settlers was spilling in from the north-east. Casualties were rather heavy for the Arnori, including Prince David – killed by a native woman with a cleaver who caught him unawares at the latrines. Still, after about six months of fighting, the province was subdued. Settlement had begun in earnest when the Duke received stunning news from home.

The Persians had invaded.

**THE SHAHDOM OF IRAN** (Al-Harkam in Carmania)

*Al'Qadir, Shah of Iran, Overlord of India, Light of the Aryans, "The Stalwart"*

**DIPLOMACY** None

After lengthy negotiations on the disputed frontier between Iran and the remains of the Safavid state – assisted by representatives from Sweden and the Islamic Union – Al'Qadir and the Great Vizier managed to reach an accommodation. While portions of the south would remain in Iranian hands, they would abandon much of the central plateau and allow the Safavids to reclaim something of their previous domain.

As part of the settlement, prince Bukharm moved the Iranian court (and all its attendant business, vendors, hangers-on, pretty boys and girls, etc.) to the bustling port of Al-

Harkam in Carmania, where the clerks and scribes and ministers would be closer to the lands Al'Qadir hoped to rule.

The Iranian fleet was immediately unleashed to ravage shipping in the Gulf of Oman – but only Arnori, Albanian and League shipping was attacked. Somewhat to the surprise of the Iranians, their depredations were soon joined by a squadron of Javan trimarans flying jaunty skull-flags. As there were no Hussite men-of-war or frigates on patrol in the area, their losses in merchantmen were heavy.

Having decided that coming to the "aid" of his fellow Moslems in India was preferable to fighting a protracted civil war in Iran against the Safavids and their Unionist and Swedish allies, Al'Qadir launched his armies into the valley of the Indus in a two-pronged attack. First, Subir al-Jawzi led nine thousand lancers up through the wilderness of Baluch to pounce on the lowland towns of Sukkur. At much the same time, Giv Gudarz (al'Qadir's general of armies) marched across the harsh Carmanian plains and through the desolation on the border of Edrosia. They expected to encounter heavy Hussite resistance, for the martial spirit of the Arnor was well known... and the vast ramparts of Schwarzkastel legendary throughout Asia.

The Iranian armies swept to the walls of Schwarzkastel in November of 1753. Much to their surprise, they encountered little or no resistance. The Ducal armies were still mired in suppressing the resistance of the Jaunpur to the Hussite migration. Gudarz stared at the sprawling, smoke-shrouded suburbs of Schwarzkastel and turned to his emperor.

"My lord? Isn't this city supposed to be girdled by some of the most stupendous fortifications devised by man? The rival of distant Malta, or the Long Shong Gate in golden Judea?"

Al'Qadir nodded, as puzzled as the general. It was quite clear the city – thriving as it was – had no walls, no garrison, no means of stopping the Iranians from seizing the capital of Arnor and everything within... lock, stock and barrel.

What garrison had been in the city fled – without walls or a leader – they would have perished against the disciplined Iranian troops – across the ferry to Surashtra beyond Kutch Island. Further north, al-Jawzi's cavalry army had conquered Sahis and Sukkur, including the city of Lahore (also without so much as an angry goat in defense), isolated Multan and were preparing to advance into the Punjab.

Finally, with nearly a year of campaigning past, the Duke and his armies bustled up the road from Jaunpur in enormous haste. Al-Jawzi abandoned Sahis and his abortive raid into the Punjab, scattering south like a cloud. Peregrin and his Arnori regulars pursued cautiously – they'd had enough of tricky surprises from the Chandellans!

A hundred kilometers south of Lahore, the might of Hussite India (including the recently constituted Hussite Legion) came within a hair of colliding with Giv Gudarz, the shah and the entire Iranian army on a dusty plain near the town of Bohjapur. The 21,000 Hussites made a wary advance into near-contact with 25,000 Iranians, then backedpedaled upon realizing they were outnumbered. Schiller, commanding the Arnori force, used his two light zeppelins to best effect, keeping a distant eye on the Iranians as he withdrew.

Now the Iranians pressed the advance, plowing up the highway towards Lahore and Schiller and the Duke had to decide exactly what the devil they were going to do... the



Afghans had returned to the mountains, the treacherous Chandellans were at their backside and the entire apparatus of government, as well as their only lifeline to Hussite Europe and aid was now in the hands of the Iranian dogs.

“We must fight,” an ashen-faced Peregrin announced to his generals, “and we must win. Without Schwarzkastel... the Duchy is lost and every Hussite woman and child in India will perish, shrieking, on a Moslem lance.”

“Not so...” Schiller rose, favoring his lamed leg, a glint in his eye. “We must *retake* the capital, then force them to dig us out of a fortified position...” The lean old German turned to a cunningly drawn map spread across the camp-table. “...but we must move swiftly.”

A day later, under cover of darkness, the Ducal army abandoned its baggage train and servants, then sprinted south into the desert of Ajmer, essaying to force-march through the wilderness in a wide-ranging curve around the Iranians.

Six hundred miles later, with the two zeppelins circling warily above, the Ducal army staggered out of the desert and into the fertile plains of Sind. With a ragged cheer, the infantry broke ranks and rushed to the banks of the first canal they found, empty canteens in hand...

A massive, basso roar answered their feeble cries of joy. The orchard on the far bank was suddenly alive with motion – an entire Iranian infantry regiment leveled their rifles – and far to the north and side, the wings of Gudarz’ army deployed en masse. Half-delirious from heat and dehydration, Schiller gawped in horror as a long rolling *boom-boom-boom* rippled across the fields. Clouds of white smoke puffed above the cotton trees. Flights of rockets soared up, hissing and sparking, angry claws reaching for the zeppelins circling in the pure blue sky.



“The falcon has keen vision,” Al-Jawzi chuckled, raising a spyglass to his good eye, “but the mouse can see him from a great distance... and who can see a mouse in the thicket?”

The first day was brutal. The Arnori tried to claw their way out of the trap and Gudarz hammered them mercilessly. His men were rested, he had more artillery, more light cavalry... and still the Hussites inflicted a heavy toll on his troops. Schiller failed to break away, but did manage to fall back to a low set of hills three miles from the canal. Cursing, Duke Peregrin was forced aboard the surviving zeppelin and

sped away to the south. The battered remnants of the Hussite army labored through the night to dig in on the hilltops.

The second and third days, Gudarz husbanded his men and had his artillery shell the living daylight out of the Arnori positions. The fourth day, as the Hussite troopers were drinking their own urine, the Iranian *pushtighbahn* stormed up the low, rolling slopes under a barrage of rockets and explosive shell and made bloody work among the revetments and shallow trenches. Again, the Iranians bled, but the exhausted Hussites were slaughtered to the last.

From a distance, Al’Qadir watched with narrowed eyes. The battle was one, but such things meant nothing in the crucible of India. He looked south, to the fading daylight sky, wondering where the last airship had gone. The shah had little time to ponder such things, for – while marching with his army back south to Schwarzcastel – he was nearly murdered by *thugae* who attacked him in his tent along the road. Though sorely wounded, the shah managed to fight them off.

By the end of 1754 the Iranians had managed to conquer and garrison the provinces of Edrosia, Sind, Sukkur, Punjab, Und, Sahis, Tarain and Uttar Pradesh. The cities of Peshawar, Multana and New Dehli continued to hold out, held by garrisons of old men, Danish matrons and children.

**SHAHDOM OF AFGHANISTAN** (Kabul in Afghanistan)

*Ahmad Durani, Shah of the Afghans, Lord of Kabul*



**DIPLOMACY** No effect

While the lowlanders spent themselves in a particularly violent orgy of destruction, Ahmad Durani and his bodyguards made a circuitous journey through Ghazni and Baluch, watching with interest from the high peaks as various Iranian armies tramped past and Arnori agents got involved in scuffles with the locals and died horribly.

General Bahulan returned (safely) from the southlands just in time to avoid the Iranian invasion, his men laden with as much loot as they could carry. Now the Afghans sat on the heights of the Khyber and watched the fun with interest.

**KINGDOM OF THE KUSHANS** (Astakana in Kush)

*Bujayapendra, Blessed of Vishnu, prince of Astakana*



**DIPLOMACY** Khotan(^a)

The Kushans drilled ceaselessly and their border guards watched the Afghans with an eagle eye. Everyone else was ignored.

**THE NOBLE HOUSE OF TEWFIK** (Al’Harkam in Carmania)

*Tewfik Saul, Purveyor of iron-reinforced sun-hats*

**DIPLOMACY** Kuwait City(^mf), Fars(ma), Tortosa in Valencia(^mf)



The business of the House remained business, even as Persian and Iranian armies trampled the countryside, tore up the vineyards and generally spoil everyone’s humor. Despite the oppressive privateering activity in the Gulf of Oman by the Iranians and Javans, Tewfiki ships continued to ply those waters in relative safety,

and now their reach was growing long... Saul was pleased with the prospects for profit.

He was even more pleased to return home safely and finally marry his betrothed – Ofra of Oman – who was now a sprightly fifteen. Even a daughter as firstborn did not spoil his good humor. Considerable sums were dispatched to the Islamic Union and the Persian governments. “Bah! Taxes!”

Captain Busir staggered out of an opium den in Rangoon, a little brown girl on either arm, tripped on a cobblestone and fell face down in the gutter. After the girls stole his wallet and boots he drowned, too sodden with liquor to get up. Not the best way for a good Moslem to go to meet Allah, oh no.

Lars Svenson, another House agent operating in Javan waters, met a similar end, though he was shot down by two Balinese gamblers he’d crossed.

#### **THE SAFAVID PERSIAN EMPIRE** (Semnan in Khurasan)

*Abbas, the Great Vizier, regent for...*

*Safi Babram, Khan of Khans, Shahanshah of Persia, Prince of Bukhara, Caliph of the East*

**DIPLOMACY** None

Faced with the prospect of a devastating war over the central plateau and the rich provinces in the south, Vizier Abbas relented and agreed to meet with an embassy from the Iranian court. With Swedish, ARF and Islamic Union representatives looking on, the two factions managed to seal a suitable arrangement. Some of the south would remain in Iranian hands, but the northern Empire would be free to retake what had once been theirs... everyone seemed quite pleased. Everything was made much ... easier... with a powerful infusion of Catholic gold, much of it in Norsk thalers.

Young king Bahram, with Abbas’ hand on his shoulder, then issued a general amnesty for all those ‘rebels’ in the southlands. His newly-raised armies then took to the field to ‘restore order’.

One of those armies was commanded by the newly minted lord Khayr al-Din, who hurried off north to the embattled city of Ufra in the wastes of Gurgan. There he found a busy port thronged with ARF and Swedish airships and the men of the Khirgiz Expeditionary Force. Those grizzled veterans had recently finished smacking about the Gurganites, allowing Khayr to garrison the province. This done, the young general loaded a force of three thousand Safavid regulars aboard the ARF airships and they set off to the south.

Passing over the hostile mountains of Tabaristan, Khayr and his men made a fierce show as they swept (still carted about on the northerner’s zeppelins) through the Iranian provinces of Ahvaz, Kuwait, Hahmar, Abadan and Fars. In each place, they sent messengers ahead and dropped leaflets (provided by the Rostov Printers Association) relating the treaty of Kerman which had resolved the recent ‘unpleasantness’ between the Safavid and Iranian thrones.

Al-Maqdisi’s army was also in motion along the ‘great road’ and Safavid control was restored in Shir-Kuh, Zagros and Media. While this pleased the Vizier greatly, Abbas was wroth to learn that Persia itself had repudiated the Iranians and declared its own little kingdom, while the highland province of Ferghana simply refused to pay taxes anymore.

#### **THE ISLAMIC UNION** (Ar-Raqqah in Mosul)

*Ali Adin, Sultan of Ar-Raqqah, Prince of Mosul*

**DIPLOMACY** Aleppo(a), Jordan/Amman(a), Petra(t) / Aqaba(c)

Though the convulsion to the east threatened to draw the Union into a war it could barely afford, the Prince kept his attention close at home: a bustling port town was built on the ancient site of Pereia Seleucia at the mouth of the Orontes river. A steady infusion of Afriqan gold kept the Union afloat. In honor of the city leveled by an Ice Lord attack at the beginning of the Sunlander War, the new town was named Antioch and the port was swiftly filled with Swedish and Danish merchantmen. To service this trade, a road was built inland to Homs in Palmyra province.

A little further west, reports came late in ’54 of the arrival of a large Coptic fleet which landed some kind of an army in the port of Tarsus.

#### **A travel Note of Interest**

The air route to India for all Albanian East India Company airships will no longer overfly the Islamic Union and the recently created nation of Iran. Air service to India will be continued and even expanded, but the route will now by-pass the Arabian Peninsula.

Seeking a wife to cement his relations with the Tuareg tribes his father had led out of the desert, Ali Adin and his modest army traveled east into Diyala where his kinsmen had settled in search of a bride. Sadly, the noble Al-Zabidi – sent ahead to arrange terms and procure a suitable virgin – lit into the Diyalan mullahs for refusing to accept the Karidjite faith which had so recently inflamed the western provinces. The argument turned violent, blood was spilt, Zabidi was cut down by the enraged tribesmen and when Ali Adin and his men approached the camps, they were attacked from ambush.

Fighting his way free of the trap, the startled Sultan was furious to learn several thousand of his spearmen had been slain in the battle. Summoning airships from Baghdad to support his campaign, the angry sixteen-year-old plowed back into Diyala with vengeance on his mind. Then... then the Diyalan towns burned, and the Tuaregs were driven with whips of flame and shrieking bombs. Still, the tribesmen fought fiercely, though they had little chance against the modern Union army.

Still, all these troubles kept Ali Adin from marching to the aid of the Persians as he had promised. Diyala, however, was conquered and the mullahs and imams embraced (often with a saber at their neck) the Flame of Islam.

Back in the west, while the emir of Aleppo eagerly embraced the opportunity to join the Union, his brothers to the south in Jordan and Petra were more reticent – at least until the matter of finding a wife for Ali Adin was raised... then the embassy had better luck.

#### **THE HERMIT KINGDOM OF KHIRGIZ** (Sarai in Saksiny)

*Malank the Cruel, King of the Khirgizites, Slave of the Wind Lord*

**DIPLOMACY** None

The hermits scabbled for food and gold in the desolation, though the constant attacks of the Swedes and their ARF lackeys pressed the kingdom ever closer to annihilation.

To: Malank the Cruel, Esq.  
4523 Whenthestarsareright Lane  
Sarai [Dead District], Saksiny  
Hermit Kingdom of Khirghiz

Sir,

First I must be candid with you when I say that until this day I would never have dreamt of writing to you, we being of such different, and perhaps irreconcilable, backgrounds.

But Mr. Cruel, I could not let it go unnoticed without some sort of gesture of note for the men of the "Khirghiz Expeditionary Force" dispatched to Ufra in Gushan Satrap, who apparently stand shoulder to shoulder with the soldiers of the Imperial Swedish Army and the security forces of the Aeronautical Research and Fabrication Co., (known popularly as Arf-Arf), the very same men who are pressing your Kingdom ever closer towards annihilation.

I thought the selflessness of the policies of your government deserved at least some sort of recognition.

Frieda Leczinski  
Duchess, Grand Duchy of Poland

## EUROPE

Catholic Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
Condotierr	1xea,1hea [2gp each]
Captains	Baron Von Hausen (M783) [ missing! ]
To hire, please contact	Norskrad
Quality Ratings	c12 i16 a13 w18 s18 z6

Hussite Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
The Hussite Legion	5ec, 5i, 5c, 5hea, 1z [1.5 gp each], based at Constantinople.
Captains	Sit Thomas Musgrave (M977)
To hire, please contact...	Albanian East India Company
Quality Ratings	c12 i15 a14 w17 s20

Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Dylan Thomas

## A ROOM, AROUND A LARGE OAK TABLE....

The officer brushed the dust of steppe that had accumulated from the mornings journey off the gray of his uniform and fidgeted for a moment. This was not going as expected, which was surprising, but then members of his department were trained to expect the unexpected. And he would not have been given this assignment if something was not up. "Direktor, I must protest, we are stretched to the limits in terms of manpower. What you ask, it's just not realistic at the moment. Money is another matter..."

The Direktor held up his hand. "Money is irrelevant to the task at hand, *Loo-ten-ant*. We need to clear lands even further East than what was initially anticipated proposed. The Company's associates are quite....specific in this request. And this time, it might actually lead to shooting. You Swedes do know how to shoot, don't you?" With this the old man placed both hands into balled fists and leaned over the heavy oak table.

"Of course!" the officer replied. Something was indeed up and it was taxing the Lieutenant's patience. That and this damnable room had no circulation in it. It was almost as if something clammy was behind him.

The elder man sat down. "Yes. Yes, indeed you do, don't you. Which is why I am puzzled that you seem to shy from

this request. Have we not followed through on the Empire's requests time and time again, without question?"

"You are our most reliable ally, a trait which we place great import on." said the officer.

"Have we not shared our technologies? Our breakthroughs in science? Where would your great air fleets be, without us? I'll tell you where they'd be...on the drawing board, that's where."

"Direktor, please, it is not my intention to imply that we do not appreciate and value our relationship, but what you ask....the men just cannot be spared at the moment. You made a request, we met it, but now you ask more unexpectedly. It just cannot be met at the moment."

"Hmmm...perhaps...perhaps. That or the laughable theories of the Warsaw witch have found ears at Court. That would be...unfortunate." The Direktor seemed to be talking more to himself.

"The Poles?! Sir, surely you jest. They are the epitome of...of...well, *unreliability*. I can assure you nothing they charge is taken seriously." The officer leaned back into his chair, and looked out the window. Two children were standing outside, looking at something off to the side. It was... it couldn't be.... he had told them to stay put! Oh, those two! They would be the end of him.

"I am glad to hear that, *Loo-ten-ant*. We might have actually had to file a...*formal protest* if that had any hint of reality, and that would involve much paperwork. There are so many forms to be filled out in such situations. And paperwork takes time, and time is something we are desperately running out of. Are you sure that is your final decision on troops for the East?"

"I'm afraid it must be. At this moment, Direktor. In a year perhaps...."

The Direktor again puts his hand up to usher silence and gets up out of his chair. "We don't have a year. It must be now. I am very sorry to hear that is your decision, *Loo-ten-ant*, for it will be your head that rolls for this."

The elder man made the statement with such melancholy conviction that the Lieutenant could almost imagine a vice tightening around his neck.

## AERONAUTICAL RESEARCH & FABRICATION

(Rostov in Levedia)

Jessica Orozco, *Captain of the West*

Solyom Pasternak, *Captain of the East*

DIPLOMACY Konya in Psidia(ma), Cerkes in Abasigia(^mf), Stevastopol in Crimea(ma)



Far, far in the east, Company laborers were hard at work rebuilding the ruined Ice-city of Drakenroost as the new, modern, Sun-turned city of Keninhei. Closer to the home office, English business investments in Urkel turned into sprawling plantation-style farms to provide the cold and distant cities of Britain with Russian wheat, rye, millet and sorghum.

To: Jessica Orozco CEO & Western Captain,  
CC: Solomon Pasternak CEO & Eastern Captain  
Aeronautical Research & Fabrication  
4398 eçãñòíúé Avenue  
Rostov, Levedia District

Dear Madam and Sir,

Allow me to be the first to congratulate you and Captain Arpada on the success of your Company's pacification campaign against the eastern Khirghiz tribes.

I read the dispatches from Urkel and Saksiny that were reprinted in major European newspapers, and marveled at the level of competence displayed by your armed forces in executing this campaign, which was seemingly run with such expertise and skill that it was concluded without battle, engagement, skirmish, or indeed, casualties. With your kind permission, the Royal Krakow Military Academy shall utilize this campaign in the next edition of its textbooks as an example of excellence.

As well, allow me to congratulate your Company on the reacquisition of Drakenroost. We have no doubts that this will boost the morale of your Companymen, who will overcome any obstacle presented by its distance from major cities, trade routes or any discernible earthly center to restore it to its original condition.

Most sincere regards,  
*Frieda Leczinski*  
*Duchess of Poland*

While the streets of Rostov continued to throng with workers in the foundries and craft-shops and the gray-clad shapes of the *Ostravaka*, the youth of the city gathered in various and diverse kaffehalles, inns and libraries – caught up in a fervent debate about a new universe of natural law which science had revealed. First among their questions was the lament “where is God in this machine?”

Disturbingly, the churches and cathedrals of the city – so newly built – remained sparsely attended. This despite the presence – so close to the east – of fiend-worshipping Ice tribesmen. In fact, despite a solid effort by the Papacy, so few converts were won among the peoples of the lower Volga provinces at least one priest renounced the faith and became an inn-keeper.

Indeed, the airships of the Company were constantly plying the air beyond the Volga, spying for Khirgizite refugees and agents, ferrying Swedish diplomats here and there, dropping supplies to wide-ranging kossaki patrols.

A large portion of the Company aeroarmada, however, had been dispatched to the south, to Persia. Though the accomodation between the Great Vizier and the Iranians precluded any open warfare, the Company airships did get a few musket-balls through the rigging as they flew here and there in the south.

Though some of the provinces along the Volga were nominally under Company administration, there were many lawless men and worse, aboard in those lands. Lasse Hallestrom – a Swedish scholar and reserve artillery officer – was badly wounded in a fracas near Tsaristyn in Urkel. Apparently a large force of Ice-men had attempted to ambush him and the company of Queen's Rifles riding with him. The savages were driven off, but Hallestrom was carried back to Kalach on a litter.

#### PRINCIPATE OF KIEV (Kiev<sup>2</sup>)

*Anna Kournos, Queen-Regent for...*

*Boris, Prince of Kiev, Master of the Holy Rivers*

#### DIPLOMACY Alfold('un)

Despite the war-mongering of the Poles, the Queen-Regent minded her own business and saw Kiev province resettled and citizens once more on the streets of Kiev-city. A power struggle began to strain the government however, between Anna and

her son Boris, who (now that he was sixteen) wished to rule in his own stead. Queen Anna did not think that was a good idea. In fact, she was finding Boris' younger (and better educated) brother Ivan to have a steadier head on his shoulders, a keener wit and a far sunnier disposition.

The military prison in Banat was attacked by Hussite commandoes attempting to free the imprisoned Duke Wilhem of Poland and Mikhail Dobryio, the King of Wallachia. Unfortunately, those two dignitaries fouled up the other-wise flawlessly executed attack by trying to drag along a “cask of infinite beer” they had found, and claiming that two Carthaginian agents named Al'Muldari and Sculazi were helping them secretly. In the ensuing gun-battle with the Kievan guards, Wilhelm was killed and Dobryio wounded and recaptured.

An effort to convince Baron Rhakovski of Alfold to pay more taxes ended with mutual insults, a slapped glove and Count Vasilyko bleeding his life out on a dueling ground. The province of Alfold repudiated the Kievan regime immediately thereafter.

To: Her Excellency, Anna Kournos  
Regent for Prince Boris, Principality of Kiev

My Dear Excellency,

It is with profound shock and sadness that I write you. It has recently come to my attention that a member of my household has by their own accord placed themselves in the service of the Dobryio family, formerly of Capri, formerly of Wallachia, and that they have engaged in what can only be described as a nefarious enterprise, an enterprise whose apparent sole purpose was to infringe on the sovereignty of your good Kievan Principality.

Rest assured that, ancient historical ties between Wallachia and Poland aside, it is the official position of my government that Prince Boris and, by extension of the office of Regency, yourself, are the sole and legal sovereigns of the province of Alfold, or indeed any other province which may have in the near or distant past been ruled by members of the Dobryio family.

Words cannot express the feelings of shame and anger this individual has generated, a man who has caused such difficulty for my country by willingly, indeed enthusiastically, engaging in unlawful acts of rowdiness. I hesitate to use the term "international desperado" only in the knowledge that it would only please said individual greatly, and that it conveys a level of competence that has not, to date, been displayed.

Excellency, at this moment I wish to convey to you that despite the fact a warrant for the arrest of Wilhelm of Lausatia was issued by the Royal Polish Constabulary dated March 14th, 1752, on a charge of high treason, my government will not seek to extradite the accused now in your custody, for we have supreme confidence that the Kievan High Courts will be able to pass a suitable and appropriate sentence.

Most sincere regards,  
*Frieda Leczinski*  
*Duchess of Poland*

#### PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF

**BAKLOVAKIA** (Komarno in Slovakia)

*Wysowski, First Citizen, Protector of the Workers and Peasants*

#### DIPLOMACY None

A great deal of crashing,

banging, hammering and cursing

could be heard from the woods behind Mrs. Toporosky's shed.

Anyone foolish enough to venture in among the alders and spruce was turned back by a particularly vicious lot of Cossacks and large, vladka-breath-smelling dogs.



An excerpt from the autobiography of Georgi Antipodea, Theorist

(fragment missing) ...Ah. Well yes, but perhaps I should explain. In my childhood I lived in a village in the foothills of the Carpathians. Life was simple, happy, and most of all egalitarian. Families would gather on Saturday evenings to eat pastries (but simple, rustic pastries), drink vodka, compare oxen, and decide by lots what each families responsibilities to the community would be.

For many years, this pleasant way of life continued uninterrupted. Then one month a Swedish trading delegation arrived on their way... somewhere (I really don't know if we ever found out), and decided to wait out a stint of particularly poor weather at our inn (the *Ruminant Poodle*).

I still remember seeing the Swedes, resplendent in their foreign gear, debarking from their coaches. How we stared in awe, for the Swedes brought pastries!! Foreign pastries the like of which we had never seen before.

That evening the people of the village crowded into the Ruminant Poodle to hear tales from the many places the Swedes had been, or so we thought. The Swedes were, for the most part, an officious and arrogant lot - rarely deigning to acknowledge the people, let alone answer questions beyond a sneer and a churlish comment about personal hygiene.

The final insult came late in the evening. Only a few villagers remained at this point, the rest having returned home in sullen disgust at the "hoity toity foreigners - not fit to clean the stables, if you ask me!" I was one of those who remained, and witness to the unfortunate events which followed. The Swedes had exhausted their own supply of foods and pastries and were finally going over the plate carefully prepared by Vasili the Butcher (who had drawn Pastry Baking duties that week). A pastry was chosen, and one of the Swedes began to nibble at it.

It was widely accepted among the villagers that Vasili was, perhaps, not the best pastry chef available to us. In hindsight, perhaps Oleg the Baker might have been a more appropriate person to cater that particular evening, but he had drawn blacksmith duty that week. However, Vasili had persevered on this day to make the best pastries he could. The insults he received were hardly appropriate to the occasion.

Vasiliy was always a mild mannered gent, though, and listened to the rebuke with good grace, although he was surely seething at the rudeness of the guests. In time, the 'Poodle emptied, and all returned home, save Rurik the Stablehand, who was inkeeper that week.

Many in the village heard screaming that night, but as it was all in some foreign language, we weren't able to decipher the frantic pleas, and were therefore reluctant to intervene, lest we interrupt where we were not welcome. The next morning, however, all of the Swedish party, save the coach drivers, had vanished.

The coaches departed swiftly on at first light, and none spoke of the disappearances again. Nor did anyone comment on the mysterious humps dug fresh in the floor of the village stables. Vasili never baked again either. Even when it was his turn by lot.

To this day, though, when a family in my village draws stablehand duty, a snigger goes around the people. That family has been "sent to the Swedes."

The doings in the Toporosky back forty were quickly forgotten, however, when the Senate blearily announced a planned Komarno to Krakow *railroad*. Indeed, a veritable gang of Spanish engineering students were already hard at work, knocking down fences and clearing cow-paths to mark the proposed route of the 'iron road' to the north. Unfortunately there was almost immediately a riot when two of the Spaniards (who drink *wine*, for the love of the Risen Christ!) attempted to tape measure their way through Madame Blavatsky's School for Otherworldly Girls.

The ensuing brawl / pillowfight / pie-pitching contest spread throughout six blocks of Komarno and nearly burned down the Senate building before a visting Italian opera singer - seeing the rampaging crowd and believing they were rushing to meet her and demand autographs - launched into her world renowned rendition of the "Jewel Song" from *Faust*.

That cleared things up in a right smart fashion.

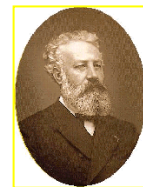
Other news of note included a 50-cent sale at Gersons and the mysterious death of Baron Piqard in Moravia, where he reputedly fell under the wheels of a wagon and was crushed to

death by beer kegs. The whereabouts of Colonel Sluj were equally unknown, for he had taken off to the south with a well-armed band of rapsallions.

**ALBANIAN EAST INDIA COMPANY** (Thessaloniki in Macedon)

*Nikolas Argir, Senior Partner in the AEIC*

**DIPLOMACY** St. Gustavus in Ghebel-Garib(ma), Heraklion on Crete(^bo)



With a heavy heart, Argir mounted a podium beneath the massive shape of the Holy Cross monument on windy Mount Naxophilion. Below him, in a swale between the arms of the mountain, hundreds of fresh graves had been cut in the rocky soil, the graves of the Company dead:

"My fellows members of Albania House, Gander Fitzgerald was a good friend, he did a great job running our brokerage firm. He was hard worker for our cause. Gander was working that night at Home Office, he had just sent a note stating he couldn't make a dinner our families' were going to share. He was probably one of the first of our company to perish in the attack, one of close to seven hundred members of the AEIC who were foully butchered by some unknown agency. Rest assured,.... please, my fellows that we will have memory of this event and the attack on AEIC Department 9. Let us not forget the assassination of Alexis Kuklone outside of Paris. We will bring these criminals to justice. We owe it to these fallen, nay it is obligatory of us that we stay the course and make of the Albanian Company the finest memorial that these, our cherished compatriots could ever have. Our hearts have been torn, we have bled, but friends we will as a Company shoulder on. I ask each and everyone of you to redouble your efforts, no matter what you do for the House. We will be proof to these cowards, that their sick, sad actions will not stand, Albania House shall prosper."

In the words of John Zizka, a famous Hussite General,

*"Never fear the enemies  
Do not mind their great numbers,  
Keep the Lord in your hearts,  
Fight for Him and with Him.  
And do not ever retreat before your enemies!"*

*Nicolas Argir, CEO*

A week later, the following message was dispatched to all Company captains, agents and factors:

**A message to AEIC employees:**

All AEIC ship captains, ships, and crews are prohibited from the transport of contraband goods. This will include the following: slaves, religious items of non-sanctioned religions (read as non-Sunlander religions, ie, ICE types), Lullite Cult items, books banned in Java, odd statuettes, prohibited for export gamelans, monster hides, etc. etc, etc, as the King of Thailand is fond of saying. All cargoes regardless of point of origin are to be searched and validated by the AEIC Office of Commerce. All captains that allow smuggling to occur on AEIC vessels will be fined. A board of inquiry has been called to investigate the captains, manifests, history, and character of the following AEIC flagged vessels: "*Star of Bihar*", "*Andaman Sea*", and "*Fukasawa*". Captains: Roger McTalbert, Brice Steuben, and Nahloujie Gujeratty respectively have had their careers with AEIC terminated and they have each been fined. The named vessels have had their entire cargoes seized by the Company and have been rerouted to alternative trade routes. Smuggling will not, cannot be tolerated in our business.

*Nicolas Argir, CEO*

Within the month, in Eastern waters, Company ships from Persia to Austral were seized by wide-ranging Javanese fleets - nothing more than pirates, in truth! - their crews impressed and the officers gutted with sharktooth knives

before being cast into a bloody, roiling sea thick with glassy-gray bodies.

From Jorge Delgado, Maklarevalde of the Norskrtrad  
To Nikolas Argir, Senior Partner of the AEIC

Dear Sir, A shipment destined for the AEIC sent from London was recently erroneously received by us. Unfortunately due to certain recent operational difficulties the mistake was not noticed until the boxes had been standing in the summer sun on the quayside at St. Georges for several days. We have transhipped the boxes to you at Thessaloniki as standard freight. As the fault lies with the original shipper we can accept no responsibility for the delay in delivery or any spoilage. We trust these arrangements will meet with your approval.

The attached invoice reads:

For the attention of Nikolas Argir Esquire.

From Dr. Fu Manchu, Cheapside, London.

One Half Dozen Chinese unhatched Lung, protect from heat, fragile, treat as eggs. Value: Three Hundred Guineas

All of this just made Nikolas' mood worse. He scowled through the ceremonies celebrating the transfer of the newly built airship "Great Flight" to the Hussite Legion. He was grumpy through the Culinary Olympics (attended only by Hussite delegations, sadly). Only a short meeting with the newly chosen Elector of the Red Kross raised his mood, for a moment.

Mister Benjamin Franklin, agent of the Company, departed Alexandria – where the new Library had been of such great interest – and made his way to olive-forested Crete where he wished to observe the telescopes in use by the Danish Imperial Observatory ("Il Dioptré") on Idhri Oros. There he made the acquaintance of the Aztec prince Kehuehuel, who had been a guest of the scientists on the mountaintop.

After spending some time gazing through the optical lens at the glories of Saturn and Jupiter, Franklin expressed his great pleasure at the opportunity to the Observatory Director.

"But sir," he wondered, staring back up at the night sky, "what of these rumors rife in the bazaar of forests and canals being seen upon Ares itself?"

"No truth to such things," Herr Doktor Muller replied, "Mars is a dead, desolate world... nothing more than blowing dust and sand."

"A pity," Franklin remarked, lost in thought. "A pity."

The young man then left the hospitality of Crete to try his hand once more in convincing the Bithnians to ally themselves with the Company. This time he barely survived the destruction of his airship, and was fished out of the Hellespont by fishermen from Constantinople. The Moslem prince of Bithnia remained adamant – "I will not serve a (spit) Hussite!"

The mailroom staff in Thessalonika were rather surprised to receive the following letter:

To Nicholas Argir,  
Senior partner of the AEIC.

Sir,

It has recently come to my attention that you have slandered my reputation in certain foreign newspapers.

I would have you know that I am a serving cavalry officer in the army of the Tsar of All the Russias. Whilst I have a fondness for tall tales, especially traveler's tales, and am a keen hunter and sportsman, your accusations regarding my ownership of a flying ship are a slur upon my good name and character. Are you mad, sir?

I therefore demand satisfaction, and await arrangements to be concluded by any gentleman you may wish to name as your second. As

you are a merchant, sir, rather than an officer, first blood will be sufficient to assuage my honor.

*Karl Friedrich Hieronymus, Freiheirr (baron) von Münchhausen*

Being a man of honor himself, Nicholas responded properly, which then led to...

#### DAWN, NAXOS, THE ARENA, 1754

It was hot under the pure blue sky of the Aegean. On the tiers around the theatre, numerous gentlemen and ladies had gathered, to witness the duel between Mr. Nicholas Argir and Karl Friedrich Hieronymus, Freiheirr von Münchhausen. The lowest ten rows were unoccupied, to prevent any injury amongst the audience. As the two gentlemen waited in silence, their Seconds conferred, and a duel with pistols was agreed.

Mr. Argir was dressed in a formal frock coat and stovepipe hat. Mr. Benjamin Franklin was standing as his Second, having just returned from a diplomatic visit to Bithnia.

In contrast the Baron was wearing the full dress uniform of a Captain of the Hussars of the Swedish Empire of Russia, resplendent with decorations. In the fierce sunlight, his costume radiated colour, and he seemed quite unconcerned by events. He was a handsome man of early middle age, slim and wiry of frame.

The two gentlemen were called to the centre of the wide stage forming the base of the auditorium.

"Now sir," asked the Baron. "Will you withdraw your slander? I offer you a last opportunity for retraction."

The Albanian shook his head. In silence, each selected a primed pistol from the lacquered black case, and then stood back to back.

After a pause, the somber count was made. Each of the duelists paced out the ten steps. "Gentlemen, on my order, turn and discharge your weapons," ordered the umpire, a retired Colonel of the Danish royal artillery.

"Gentlemen, now!"

Both swiveled about. Nicholas Argir lifted his pistol, aimed and fired. The shot echoed about the theatre. Flakes of stone flew up from the stone seats just behind the Baron.

Karl Friedrich Hieronymus raised an eyebrow. "A good shot sir. Now: Stand firm. As an officer it behooves me to let you have the first shot."

He extended his pistol, and sighted along his arm. An icy trickle of sweat ran down the back of his target.

The seconds seemed to lengthen into minutes.

Abruptly the Baron's pistol spoke, and a second shot rang out.

Nicholas Argir blinked. His hat had flown from his head. With wonder he realized he was still alive and whole. All around the theatre, the audience clapped.

"You missed me, sir?" Argir could hardly believe it.

"No sir," said the Baron. "My shot met its mark precisely. Examine your hat, sir. Whilst you cast aspersions upon my honour, it was not worth your life or injury."

The hat was carried back by the Albanian's Second. He studied the hole drilled through it. One inch lower, and it would have grazed his hair.

The Baron accepted the applause of the crowd with a wave of his hat. Across the arena, Nicholas Argir looked ready to

faint, and several of his aides rushed to his assistance. Placing his pistol in the case held by his second, von Münchhausen strode across to his foe and shook his hand with a crushing grip, and patted him on the back.

"Well done, sir. Well done. Now we can put this sorry episode behind us."

Several ladies had descended to the sand, and clustered about the combatants. The Baron smiled at them, and twisted his moustache, accepting their adulation. "Ladies, ladies, please be so gracious as to lend us a little air. My friend here looks a little faint." His eyes twinkled as he spoke, and even Mr. Argir could respect the obvious charm and dash of the Swedish officer.

"Oh, sir, you were so brave," gushed the daughter of an Albanian magnate, offering a coquettish smile as she fanned herself. As the sun was rising over Naxos, the temperature was approaching the heat of noon.

"Before such a gathering of beautiful ladies, a gentlemen could do no less," replied the Baron. With a bow to the Senior Partner of the AEIC, he began to move away, surrounded by his admirers. "To a soldier such as myself, the daily risk of death must be ever met with gallantry and elan. Now then, this reminds me a little of an experience on the marches of the Ice, far to the east."

"Please tell!" declared a Danish matron, quite forgetting she was talking with a Swedish officer.

"Well, to cut the matter short, I was on detached duty, leading a small patrol. A sudden snowstorm swept up and all too soon, my small party were lost and then scattered by the ferocity of the lashing ice and hail. Suddenly an awful shape loomed up, and my horse reared. Even so, I kept my seat, only to suffer a crushing blow from a massive club." The Baron paused. "I must warn you that the tale is a matter of some horror."

His enthralled audience all insisted he continue. Not far away, Nicolas Argir acquired an awful headache.

"I awoke, suspended by my feet, in an ice cave," declared von Münchhausen, rewarded by gasps and squeals.

"Not far away was my captor: A hideous creature of the Ice, a two-headed ogre. From listening to their conversation, which I will not relate, so awful was the grammar, I determined that the creature was debating with itself how to prepare me for its dinner. I furthermore deduced that one head was a worshipper of the demon Wind-Walker, whilst the other espoused the faith of the Unspeakable. After listening for a time, I spoke out, siding with the right-hand head that I should be boiled, though I decried his lack of suitable spices. 'I am an officer, and a gentleman' I told him. 'It would be entirely against etiquette for the culinary niceties to be ignored.' The other head took exception to this, wroth that his dinner should cast scorn on his preparations.

"Whilst they were thus engaged in argument, with one head banging against the other, I slipped my hand into my jacket, pulled out my revolver, and shot upwards into the ice that was holding me suspended by my boots. It gave way immediately, and I rolled to the pile of my possessions, taking up my sabre, and with one stroke doubly beheaded the creature."

"Oh sir, is it true?" simpered an Italian countess.

"Of course! Upon my honour," replied the Baron smiling. "My journey back to my regiment was not without incident, however, for I soon encountered a tribe of Amazons. They had captured my men and my horse, and were ready to sacrifice the soldiers to Artemis, on a gore stained altar, much as Herodotus relates. Fortunately, their beautiful Warrior Queen became so enamored of me, that I was able to convince her of the errors of her ways. In time, she and her tribe converted to our Mother Church, and became nuns, but that is entirely another story."

**THE SWEDISH EMPIRE OF RUSSIA** (Riga in Latvia)  
*Solomon, King of Sweden, Tsar of the All the Russias*

*Dame Ilyena Lydia Mironoff, Crown Regent and Altkansler*



**DIPLOMACY** Kur(^fa), Halland(^nt)

Responding to a request for aid, as per ancient and trustworthy treaties, the Tsar dispatched not only gold to the embattled Safavid regime in Persia, but also ships and men to aid the Vizier in his effort to "restore Godly order" in eastern lands. Large sums were also transhipped from other Catholic powers further west.

Efforts to ensure the people were allowed to live free of <their> influence continued; ranging from efforts at reconciliation between the Swedish Catholic church and the Russian Orthodox clergy, down to missionary activity in Georgia and Paphlagonia. The Church was welcomed into Latvia where a massive lumbering operation and many farms were established with Papal capital. A massive effort was also launched in the Russian frontier provinces to break up a variety of criminal gangs, gambling dens, outlaw bands and so forth. Altkansler Mironoff defended her "public order" initiatives with the assertion that "our enemies thrive in lawlessness and anarchy."

Backbenchers in the Senate grumbled all of this "Godly" talk was just an excuse to persecute a proxy war with the Hussites on the far side of the world, *where Sweden had no business!* At least as far as they were concerned.

Ships continued to steam up from the south, carrying returning refugees into Riga, where the old government offices in the central district were being cleaned out, repaired and refurbished. Mark Andrej Kutusov, who had long commanded the Grodno Military District, died in the winter of '53 at the age of sixty-two. No cultic involvement was suspected.

An Aztec fleet sailed down the Dvina and Dnepr to reach Pereaslavl, where the port town of Tehcultonoh was raised. Though the Foreign Ministry had approved a land-swap with the Aztecs, the actuality of the event roused furious protests in the Senate and demonstrations on the streets of Grodno and Riga. "Aztecs go home!" Chanted the demonstrators.

Tsar Solomon, when not twisting arms in the Senate, accepted the fealty of the chiefs of Kur. A similar effort to woo the hard-scrabble denizens of Kirivitch was met with a cloud of spears and arrows. Similarly, diplomatic overtures to the Cilician emirs were rebuffed and when prince David Torsson attempted to cross the Taurus into Pamphyla to negotiate with the Christian barons ruling that wilderness he was beset by brigands in the high passes and murdered.

The tip of the Swedish saber, as it were, proved to be Marsk Maksutov's Army of the East, which made a long and harrowing march south along the Caspian shore (supplied by river-boats out of the ARF ports along the Volga) through Vasi, Georgia and so on to eventually reach Rayy in Dasht'e'kavir at the end of 1754. By then the situation in Persia had stabilized to a great extent and the road-weary Swedes and Russians could rest. The Marsk was more than a little put out, seeing that her army had worn itself out to no good end, other than to trade sniper bullets with the Shirvanites. "Stupid bureaucrats," she muttered to General Teukolsky before taking another swig of vodka from her hipflask. "We'd be better off crushing the swinish Poles..."

#### UNDER THE SUN OF THE WINDSWEPT STEPPES....

"Aggi! I'm so boooooored" The boy looked down at his young sister and sighed. She could be just so demanding sometimes, but she had a point, the livery had worn out it's initial appeal in the curiosity department. And father didn't look like he was going to be returning anytime soon from his meeting. Agnar jumped down from the driver's seat of his family's carriage. "Let's play a game," he said to her, "How about Swedes and Danes?"

"I don't like guns" came the plaintive mew as a reply. "Besides, you always make me play the Danes..."

"Hide and seek, then?"

At this she looked down and shuffled her feet in contemplation. "...ok, but I get to hide first. And no peeking!"

"And no peeking, I promise". Agnar put his arm up over his eyes and leaned against the weathered logs of the depot's wall and started counting to the traditional Hallestrom family count of fifty. He heard his sister's feet against the gravel as she scampered off, first in one direction, then likely not approving of the hiding chances there, in the other. He was getting to be a bit too old for these types of games, but it certainly beat listening to the inevitable filial whining that would accompany continued idleness. And it would it provide an excuse to explore the trading post, though they were meant to stay by the carriage.

"Fifty...here I come Inkeri!" He turned and looked in the direction he had heard his sister run too. Many possibilities, but knowing his sister, she would choose a place where she could dirty the hated dress Father had made her wear today. Indeed, she might try to ruin it, and near the far protective wall of the post, he could see some Companymen applying what appeared to be tar to the side of a building. He smiled knowingly. *That* would be an excellent place to start. He started off, all the while looking left and right into the shadows the steppe sun created in the nooks and crannies. It was too difficult to perceive much from a distance, he would have to look closer if she was not near the tarring men. He moved between the buildings, sometimes daring to look in the windows. Mostly there were men pouring over books, sometimes operating machinery, or moving large bags of goods. None of them paid him much attention. Agnar turned a corner and stopped in his tracks. He put his hand over his mouth to stop himself from laughing, for his sister was there standing in the *middle* of an enclosure formed by some buildings.

"Inki, what are you doing? You had plenty of time to hide." But his sister did not answer, she did not even turn her head. She was standing very very still, which was very strange. Agnar walked up to her and put his hand on her shoulder. "Inki, what's the matter?" Only then did she look up at her older brother, taking his hand as she did so.

"Aggi, in that building over there, the one where the men are talking. There's...there's a *thing*," she whispered.

"A thing? What thing? I don't see anything, just those men," he said looking into the window his sister had indicated, and indeed he could not see anything except an old Companyman and a man in the gray uniform of the Royal Artillery he knew so well sitting at a large, ornate wooden table. And yes, that was his father talking animatedly, though he could not make out what he was saying. This must be where Father was having his meeting.

"No no Aggi, you can't look straight at the room. You can't see it that way. You can only see it from the *side* of your eyes."

"Side of your eyes? What are you talking about? Have you gone soft in the head again, Inkeri?"

"Aggi, just do what I do and be very still." With that, the girl turned to an angle that was almost but not quite 90 degrees from the building's window, and bent her head slightly downwards. Curious now, Agnar followed his sister's strange example and adopted the same angle and posture. "That's funny, there is something there," he thought to himself. He held still and fought the nearly overwhelming instinct to turn his eyes to look directly into the room. And from the corner of his eyes he began to perceive a shape. A... strange shape standing just behind his father. It was.... man-sized, and.... gray. Gray like crumpled old newspaper left out in the rain.

And just then, it lifted some sort of appendage up and around his father's neck...

**THE GRAND DUCHY OF POLAND** (Warsaw in Poland)

*Frieda Leczinski, Duchess of Poland*

**DIPLOMACY** None

Construction continued on the Warsaw to Berlin to Stralsund railway. Indeed, with help from the Albanian East India Company and the ever-increasing skill of the Ducal Engineer's Corps, the iron road was completed to Berlin. A considerable number of Ducal troops were now protecting the line, for there were rumors of "wreckers" loose in the countryside. The first train, however, chugged into the Berlin Ost station to cheering, flag-waving crowds in the winter of '54 without incident.



To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the Duchess Frieda Leczinski, of whose eyesight it could fairly be said is not what it once was, I would like to officially notify the general reading public that the letter "To Malank the Cruel", published in the Warsaw Sun-Times, Paris Match, Riga Star, Sarai Sunderer, Rostov Aeronautical Review, and other assorted European and Central Asian newsletters, was in fact based on an erroneous interpretation of certain news reports originating out of northern Persia. Specifically in regards to stories about the "Khirghiz Expeditionary Force".

The Duchess hereby withdraws any implied assertion made in this editorial, and sincerely regrets any inconvenience to the parties concerned. Etc, etc.

Yours,



Abraham Reichman  
Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Grand Duchy of Poland

Reflecting the ever-growing strain between Hussite and Catholic Europe, the recently established 'Academy of the Archangels and St. John the Divine' in Sopot was invaded by a huge force of Polish troops and Taborite monks, who threw the teachers in prison, sent the children home to their parents with a stiff note and confiscated all the books, apparatus and furniture.

To that heresiarch, that brazen strumpet, that whore enthroned, clad in purple and drunk on the blood of the saints, Frieda Leczinski, falsely named Duchess of Poland:

Greetings!

I hope that this letter finds you well and in a contrite mood. In the name of Christ the Saviour I command you to release all prisoners taken in the recent illegal raid on the Academy of the Archangels and St. John the Divine, regardless of religious belief.

The attack on the Academy constitutes an attack on all Catholics (and other Christians) in Poland, including those who supported the vision of your grandsires - all the more since it came without warning, without even a written ultimatum that we leave Poland. Indeed, the attack itself was illegal - you and your army have broken the law of Poland, fought for by the Polish people!

Should you not yield, the Order has no other choice than to bring the matter to trial before the courts of Poland, of the League of Nations, and of public opinion.

May Christ have mercy on you!  
Yours in Christ,  
Reverend Father Gustavus Greyhame

All this despite a vigorous and pacifistic protest by local veterans, townsmen, Orthodox priests and other 'free-thinkers' who erected a series of barriers around the school, festooned with laudatory icons of the Ducal family, the saints and the revered dukes Augustus and Stanislaw.

To: Reverend Father Gustavus Greyhame  
Society of Jesus House,  
London, England.

Sir,

While true that the aforementioned Sopot Academy had the majority of correct permits filed with municipal authorities, it is with regret that we must inform you that your staff neglected to file Form 14a-3, which is required for schoolgirls of your faith to have skirt hems that end **above** the knee.

I am sure you can see how important this is to have cleared away.

As well, the Academy had only room for 5 shiploads of nuns, so to prevent a potential public health crisis amongst your good sisters that could potentially spill over into the general populace, the school was closed as a precaution. Unfortunately, due to the Jesuit Society's negligence in proper form filage, any expropriation compensation has been forfeited under Polish law.

We regret any inconvenience.

As for the court of Public Opinion, we take this moment so that we might ask, humbly, if you could clarify your Society's, as well as your close ally's, position on recent rumours emanating from Urkel and Saksiny. Amongst many other items in the public purview.

Respectfully,  
Frieda Leczinski  
Duchess, Grand Duchy of Poland

Much to the disgust of the authorities, nothing of a fiendish nature was found. The University of Warsaw was very

pleased to receive such a generous donation of materials from the Knights of the Order, however.



Figure 1. Our Lady Mary of Czestochowa

This repression soon spread to the south as well, where a coterie of Pauline priests hailing from Katowice, outside Krakow, attempted to take the blessed icon of Our Lady Mary of Czestochowa on a tour of the Catholic churches remaining in south and central Poland. They were stopped on the road on the Silesian border and turned back by soldiers loyal to the local baron. Grumbling was heard among the local farmers, who believed the 'Black Madonna' would bring them luck and a good harvest.

The popular feeling that Poland might, indeed, be cursed was soon given vigorous impetus when the dark of a Warsaw night was broken by a massive conflagration in the Vrybach Coal Works on the southern side of the city. A rippling, sustained *boom-boom-boom* that shattered windows, startled people from their beds and ignited a raging, city-wide fire, heralded nearly sixty acres of complete destruction. There were no survivors within the area of the blast, though the city watch was rumored to be seeking the whereabouts of two "Africans" who had been loitering in the neighborhood.

THE KNIGHTS OF TABOR (Mount Tabor in Bohemia)

Otto von Metz, Voice of Huss, Grand Master of the Order of the Knights of Mount Tabor



DIPLOMACY Poland(^ca), Ilé De France(^ab), Dijon in Burgundy(^mn), Vermandois(^ab), Flanders(^ch), Krakow in Bochnia(^ab), Little Poland(^ch)

The steady expansion of the Knights throughout the Hussite world was reflected in the 'city of God' on Mount Tabor, which grew a size level. Many of the holy fathers also turned their attentions to improving the rutted, muddy roads between Paris and Metz into something approximating a proper highway.

THESSALONIKI, WITHIN THE EMPIRE

A number of packing crates caused consternation when they arrived at the East India Company warehouse. The paperwork was obviously not in order, and the home office knew nothing of the shipment. As that worthy was away, engaged in a duel, his assistants took it upon themselves to check the contents. Within, packed in silk and straw they found a quantity of painted Chinese porcelain eggs, mostly labeled 'Made in Hong Kong'. Whilst obviously valuable, and

surely the property of one of the exclusive shops in the Danish capital, there was nothing further to be done with them. The one oddity was the presence of what looked like a large turtle egg at the bottom of the box, empty and apparently a leftover from a previous cargo held in the crate. Also, at the bottom of the crate was a small hole, probably where a rat aboard ship had chewed its way inside.

The crate was returned to the warehouse and nothing further was thought of it.

A few days later, officials at the harbour were pleased to note that the rat population in the port was in decline. They congratulated themselves on the effectiveness of the poisons laid down to deal with the rodents. A week later, the watchmen reported that a number of vagrants, who often slept in or near the harbour had vanished from their usual lurking places.

Things only came to a head when an entire party of Baklovakian pastry students, destined to sail the next day on a Club 1730 cruise to Crete all failed to board their steamship.

Despite extensive searches, the constabulary could find no sign of the missing students. All their belongings were still at their lodgings, and on interviewing the lady owning the establishment, they were told that the students often rolled back late at night and much the worse for drink. A number of the more lurid tabloid newspapers declared that this was proof of a gang of white-slavers operating within the city, undoubtedly organized by the awful Yasarids of India, renowned for their unhealthy interest in Hussite womanhood.

One evening a shoe was washed up on the beach south of the harbor, a characteristic Baklovakian wooden clog, with a rotted, gnawed foot still inside. This threw the authorities into a panic.

Fortunately, Karl Friedrich Hieronymus, Freiheirr von Münchhausen had just arrived in the city, in the company of Mr. Benjamin Franklin after the conclusion of the famous duel on Naxos. The Baron was en route to his regiment in the Khirgiz territories, and immediately realized the implications of the ghastly find. Accompanied by Mr. Franklin he visited the Chief of Police and offered his services. Sadly, the police were convinced that a tribe of Ice cannibals were in residence, somewhere in the sewers under the metropolis. Baron von Münchhausen fingered his moustache. "They are wrong, Mr. Franklin, terribly wrong. Meet me tonight on the wharf nearest the grisly find."

As evening fell, Franklin found the Baron waiting in the shadows, clad in a dark cloak and bearing a long thin greased leather bag. Carefully he unloaded a massive wide bore musket. "An elephant gun, Mr. Franklin, suitable for creatures such as that we face. Wait here for me."

The Baron descended a ladder to the mouth of a drain. He examined the rim with his lantern and with a last farewell to his companion clabbered within.

Franklin waited. Abruptly the sound of bellowing and shouting emanated from the tunnel. The roars increased in severity. Barely saving himself, Benjamin threw himself to one side as a cloud of burning methane erupted from the drain. Suddenly a thunderous shot rang out. Something groaned, and then there was silence.

The Baron crawled out, cloak and hat badly singed. "Hah! An immature dragon, of the fire breathing kind, Mr. Franklin. Now then, did I ever tell you of how I fought off three ice drakes when on patrol near the ruins of Moscow?"

**UNITED KINGDOMS OF GREAT BRITAIN** (Kingston in Northumbria)

*Oliver V Cromwell, King of England, Scotland and Wales*

**DIPLOMACY** None

The increasing industrialization of the English southlands led to the expansion of both London and Great Yarmouth as people flocked to work in the ship- and airship yards. Despite the continuing growth of the capital, the King was careful to maintain the ring of formidable defenses around Kingston. The world was far too dangerous a place to leave the crown of Britain undefended.

A mail cutter from the north brought odd news from Elmerland on the Faeroes – apparently a Carthaginian(!) embassy had arrived in those remote isles seeking an alliance with the city fathers (the Catholic city fathers) of the town. Unfortunately, those windswept isles were in no way friendly to the southern heretics and the ambassador, Sophon, was sent to a gruesome and watery end...

The grain merchants continued to grow fat, squeezing every last tuppence out of the dreary, ever-gray Isles with high-priced Russian, Spanish and Iroquois grain.

The city fathers of Great Yarmouth in Anglia were thrown into complete panic by the quiet arrival of a whole host of Taborite preachers in their quiet port and the surrounding countryside. The prospect of pitched London-style religious riots unsettled everyone. Indeed, within a few months of the priest's arrival a simmering disgust upon the part of the people suddenly flared into an outbreak of rabid anti-clericalism. "Down with the vampires!" Screamed thousands, rampaging through the streets of Yarmouth, London and a hundred little Anglian towns.

Priests of both Hussite and Catholic factions were dragged from their churches and beaten, parish halls were set alight and those who professed open belief were shunned and sometimes kicked as they hurried through suddenly hostile streets. All of the missionary efforts by all sides were set to naught in such an unsettled air.

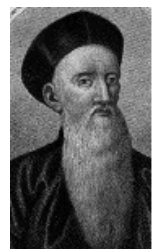
While this amused the King (who had little patience with either the Pope or the Master of the Knights), the general public disgust with organized religion (even with God, in some parts) found a ready receptacle in the person of the Prince of Wales, James Edward Stuart, who – after losing his son two years ago – now lost his beloved wife Mary of Modena to tuberculosis. His disgust with the Lord of Heaven now grew without limit.

**THE SOCIETY OF JESUS** (London in Sussex)

*Gustavus Grayhame, Vicar-General of the Society of Jesus*

**DIPLOMACY** None

The Vicar General was not pleased to learn the Taborites and their Polish lackeys had destroyed the academy his followers were building in Sopot, but at least the six shiploads of



freshly-minted nun-teachers he had dispatched were warned off by Swedish naval patrols in the Baltic.

**THE FRANKISH COMMONWEALTH** (Paris in Ille De France)

*Louis du Maine, Archon of the Commonwealth*

**DIPLOMACY** No effect

Amid general celebration, the Archon presided over a dual ceremony in Paris – one to mark the completion of the Commonwealth’s implementation of the Lisbon Accords, and one to announce the opening of a new highway between Tours and Brest.

“Now a carriage ride to the coast will only take six days instead of sixteen!” Jacques waved to the cheering crowds, holding a Commonwealth flag over his head. “And soon... urk!”

The Archon turned an unsightly gray, the flag fluttered from his hand and he fell limply into the arms of the bodyguards who had rushed to his side. Sadly, the old man’s heart had given out abruptly. Only a week later, his friend of many years, Pierre Jeunot, also died.

“Young” Louis now took the chair of the Archon, returning in haste from Tangiers, where he had served as the colonial governor for many years. The citizens of Paris and Dijon looked upon him with suspicion – he was very tanned by the desert sun.

Calais expanded and work began on a highway connecting Paris to the Imperial Highway at Metz. A diplomatic mission to the Hollandish Dutch was politely rebuffed. The citizens of that tiny principality had no interest in aligning themselves with one of the Great Powers.

**THE POLYTECHNIC LEAGUE** (Athens in Attica)

*Harold Hasselhoff, Chief Technologist*

**DIPLOMACY** Athens in Attica(ho)

With the blessing of the Empire, an enterprising group of Hussite scholars, craftsmen, technicians and chemists gathered in the ruins of old Athens (so long ago destroyed by the perfidious Swedes) and began rebuilding the city and the port of Piraeus. They hoped to form nothing less than a collegial town, devoted to the sciences and the study of natural law.

Of course, it was clear from the demeanor of the founders that no *Catholics* need apply, and in the back rooms of gentlemen’s clubs, inns and kaffehaus across the Mediterranean, everyone whispered slyly that the Empire (and the little mentioned Hussite League) had taken such a drastic step to counter the growing partnership between the Swedes and the Aeronautical Research and Fabrication corporation.

In any case, the Polytechnics promised a new generation of airships – faster than the ARF *Raptor*-class, with greater range and more powerful weapons – within four years.

**THE PAST: IMPERIAL VENICE, THE SKYWATCH TOWER NEAR THE ARSENAL, LATE SPRING 1744**

“How long?” Claudia felt her heart seize up, her breath grow short.

“A day, perhaps.” Cassini turned to his assistant, Calvaire. The Frenchman shook his head sadly. “One is already shining



red – we think friction heats such objects as they enter the ocean of air around our world.”

“Damn!” Claudia looked back to the sky. “You old fools should have informed me days ago!” She bolted back down the stairs. “Get my son aboard an airship, *right now!*”

Gathering her emotions, she stopped hard and turned. “No. I’ll take the airship instead. Send Ameur south, by land.”

“You–“ she said, pointing to her grizzled guardsman – “take your best horse and ride hard for the Apennines.” She kissed the young Prince good-bye and continued her flight down the stairs. “For Denmark’s sake we must be separated.”

Essemann shrugged. He’d been given tougher assignments before.

In the stables, the guardsman checked the hooves and flanks of the horses with steady efficiency. Ameur, who was but four, was wailing steadily. He did not like this stranger with the sharp bristly beard, nor the way he smelt of horseflesh and stale tobacco. The boy’s regard mattered little to Essemann. He bound the Prince neatly with the rest of the necessities, the child’s cries muffled by a gag.

Essemann’s final preparation was to select a brand. In little time he had the iron glowing brightly as the baleful star looming in the southern sky. He then bared Ameur’s scapula, and said with some small amount of kindness: “This is going to hurt, lad. But you’re a possession of the Danish Empire now.”

Sixteen hours later the sky over Venice convulsed with a pressure wave thrown aside by the plunging asteroid shrieking down upon the city and the Veronan countryside. Zeppelins in flight – and there were many fleeing the doomed city – were slammed to earth, shredded beyond recognition. An enormous scream of distorted air roared out. The Adriatic flattened, then heaved, smashing ships like kindling. Nearly every building, church, warehouse and factory in Verona province was smashed to the ground by the supersonic blast.

Claudia, her scientists and her family – attempting to flee across the barrier of the Alps by zeppelin – were killed when the stormfront rolled across their aerial convoy and tore them all to bits. Not one airship survived, even the *Grand Baklovakian* which had been carrying the Imperial family to safety.

Essemann, in contrast, had made good time south into the Apennines. He was in Parma, in the process of commandeering his third horse. The boy had hardly struggled, and slept stuporously until well after they’d forded the river Po. It therefore all the more a shock for him to realize his young charge had vanished as he saddled the horse.

Essemann grunted with fury, beady eyes searching out the doorways and streets leading away from the inn. Around him, the wind began to roar.

**THE DANISH EMPIRE** (Thessalonika in Macedon)

*Gregor “Black Georg” Dushan, Prince of Serbia, King of the Greeks, Emperor of the Danes, Protector of Italy, Mjolnir-na-Midgaard, Rex Germanicus, Pendragon of the Isles*

**DIPLOMACY** Hainaut(ea), Thuringia(^a-Hannover), Alsace(^a-Hannover), Swabia(^c), Franconia(^t)



The Emperor tarried a little longer in Copenhagen to dedicate the groundbreaking for a new railroad line from the island city down to Lubeck. The city fathers remained very wary, however, of any “Imperial entanglements.” This sentiment was exacerbated – and in fact fanned into an open flame – by the Duke of Hannover who took it upon himself to alternately enrage and delight the other German princes by bustling about and forming a ‘greater’ Duchy in central Germany in the Emperor’s name, but trying to bind the other Electors and margraves to himself directly.

“I’ll speak for us in this Parliament they’re gathering in the south.” Willifred beamed broadly. “One voice for Germany!”

It seemed the Imperial Engineers were busy everywhere, as work continued apace on the Thessaloniki to Ochridia railway, as well as working feverishly on the steamship yards in Lorraine.<sup>1</sup> The wayward Aztec prince was sent on his way from Crete, where he had been a guest of the Il Diopre staff.

The Afriqans working in the ruins of Genoa continued to make progress on building that city.

Gregor returned – after a lengthy progress across most of Europe – to Thessaloniki in time to speak at the official opening of the First Congress of the newly constituted Danish Parliament. Though privately the Prince did not believe the quarrelling mass of lords, ministers and delegates could handle actually running the Empire, he welcomed the experiment. Under his benevolent guidance, of course.

Nose bloodied, the Fleet continued to prowl about embattled Marseilles. A fiercely tight blockade was put in place and the city cut off by land. The Imperial Generals were determined to spend not one more Danish soldier’s life in taking the cursed place... As it happened the weight of the siege was taken up by a motley lot of Swiss, Champaignois and Provençal levies. This resulted in no landward blockade for essentially all of 1753 before the Danish admiral commanding the blockade threatened to string the lot of quarreling barons, dukes and princes up. Marseilles, however, had *still* not surrendered by the end of ’54.

“Come back, holey-cheese-peoples,” the city watch screamed at the Swiss, “and we will taunt you a seeecond tiiime!”

General Showalter, commanding a mixed force of veterans and specialists, set up camp in the wooded hills of Croatia to begin a series of ‘scientific missions’ into the wasteland of Slovenia / Verona. Over the next year and a half, the “Monster Hunters” ranged far and wide across the devastation of the Blow. They found many horrors, not all of them inhuman, and took heavy casualties. The quartermasters later judged the Hunters had expended nearly sixteen thousand rounds of ammunition.

A similar effort was mounted from the west, where Schlechter and his veterans of the fighting at Marseille marched into Savoy and as far east as Lombardy before turning back into Liguria due to problems with obtaining sufficient clean water for the men.

Father Mohaim (a Taborite knight) took a squadron west from the siege of Marseilles to visit Gibraltar and speak with

the masters of the Black Hand. After some discussion, the kaballists agreed to allow the Danish Navy to maintain a watering station just outside of the town.

**NÖRSKTRAD** (St. George-the-Defender in Morroco)  
*Jorge Delgado, Mäklareväldede of the Nordic Trading Company*

**DIPLOMACY** Caligari on Sardinia(ci), New Orleans in Chitimacha(f), Nantes in Poitou(bo)

Jorge Delgado surveyed the faces before him, drawn from all ranks and stations within the Company. He nervously chewed on his pipe and then looked down one last time at his notes. “Ladies, gentlemen, thank you for attending. What I have to say is not solely for the Council or for the Affarsmennen, but I trust you to carry my words to your colleagues and employees.”

He shifted uncomfortably. “The Maklarevalde... the late Maklarevalde, would have known what to say. I am no speechmaker, but I pray you to listen, despite whatever uncertain course I chart.

“We have suffered a disaster. All have lost fellows, friends, family in the calamity at Lisbon. We have all heard stories of outstanding heroism, but too many are no longer among us, though their deeds were worthy of praise. But I have heard of Dan Poulsson, engineer, who held closed a valve whilst immersed in live steam, so that others could escape the workshop when the earthquake fractured the lines. Of Theresa Mendoza, junior nurse at the Company hospital, who evacuated her ward and went back in to save others even as the building collapsed. And of Ramon Swenson, manager of clerks, who organized a bucket chain and found ladders to save those trapped on an upper floor, and himself lost his life in the conflagration. Too many others; too many dead.

“To some it will seem that the quays and harbors, yards, warehouses, offices and homes were swept away by the Hand of God. But I say this to you: God in His mercy aided us in our time of need, for many were saved, and those that perished, now they rest in His peace. For it was no Act of God that destroyed and devastated fair Lisbon. No. It was but one more foul blow struck by the foes of life, of light, of all humanity.

“And I say to you that it does not define a man in how he acts in victory, or in defeat, though these may offer some measure, but rather, how he faces adversity, strives and does not yield.

“The Company is damaged but still endures. We cannot replace the dead but we can rebuild.

“Long ago, I sailed the eastern seas, and I met a maker of swords in a port of Japan. I visited his forge and saw his craft, how the metal was heated, folded, tempered, to be sharp on the edge, but supple in the core. Strength fashioned with consummate skill. And I say to you, that we have been hammered upon the anvil, tempered by the fire, and quenched in the flood. But still we stand unbowed. There is no more fitting memorial for our dead and our injured, than what we fashion in steel and build in brick. But our greatest wealth lies in our strength of sinew and our steadfastness of soul.

“The Norskrtrad is a Catholic Company, but also *catholic* in the wider meaning of the word. This day the offices of the



<sup>1</sup> Concerns by the locals that the Rhine is too shallow for these newfangled steam-driven behemoths were ignored by the managers in charge.

Company will close. All our staff are free to mark the day as they wish. Arrangements have been made with the clergy in St. Georges for special services.”

Jorge paused for a moment. “Though the Swedish government has graciously permitted the Company to operate from Morocco, we do not forget our ties to Spain. The Norsktrad will send what aid we can to Lisbon. And here, the Company will finance and support orphanages, hospitals, schools and colleges. The programs of the deceased Maklarevalde will be continued. The Company thanks you – I thank you – for your efforts in the difficult days to come. And now, let us hold a minute’s silence.”

Following this conclave of the Board, Delgado named William Rohan as his *Bitrande* (heir.) Soon afterwards, the home office dispatched copies of the Jesuit tome “De Rerum Novarum” to all the senior managers worldwide. This, in turn, was followed by a general order for all ships’ masters and office managers to file daily reports regarding the weather (maximum and minimum temperature, rainfall, wind speed and direction) and ocean currents and sea temperature. All said reports were to be forwarded to the Home Office on a monthly basis if possible. A special section of clerks was set to analyze the data, to determine any trends and deviations from the norm.

“One eye on the sky,” Delgado was wont to say, “and one upon the sea, whether you wake or sleep.”

Causing a minor scandal among the Norskwarden, the Baron von Hausen (an intermittent employee of the Company) was kidnapped out of his hotel room in Tharsis, Estremadura, by masked men and not seen again. His disappearance, however, did not disrupt the Company’s great undertaking this turn...

General Xho surveyed his officers with a bitter eye. “Lads, we’ve had years of policing yards and offices, and growing fat and lazy, but that all changes now. Orders have come down from the Maklarevalde himself. We are shipping out. En route we’ll rendezvous with Von Hausen and his companies, and there’s a handful of Norskwarden coming with us.

“From this moment on, all our battalions are on active service. I want all the men ready to weigh anchor tomorrow morning. As per the Articles, every man is to fill in his Will and Testament; Company clerks will be on hand to write for those as can’t themselves. There will be a thorough inspection this afternoon, and all men will be issued with full kit. Once we are aboard, I want a regime of exercise and preparation. We’ll work off the flab on the way. Questions?”

“Sir, where are we going?”

“That will be announced once we are aboard. Further instructions will be posted as soon as necessary. Dismissed.”

#### Reward!

Reward offered for aid in the apprehension of the felons responsible for the kidnapping of the Baron Von Hausen, freelancer in the employ of the Company. Please apply to the nearest Norsktrad office with any information relating to this heinous crime. All information treated in the utmost confidence.

*Jorge Delgado, Mäklarevalde of the Nordic Trading Company*

THE REPUBLIC OF SPAIN (Lisbon in Portugal)

*Largo Cabellero, Commandant of the Imperial Guard*

DIPLOMACY Salamanca(nt)

Swallowing his pride and bowing his head to the inevitable power both of God and His Church on Earth, Largo allowed the Papacy to flood his wrecked government with clerks, monks, priests, cardinals and every kind of holy man – all in a desperate attempt to recover from the destruction of Lisbon. Luckily, he made some progress on recruiting knowledgeable Spaniards, Portuguese and Occitans to serve as magistrates, ministers and counting-men.

The Spanish economy managed to cling to life, as the annihilation of so many hungry mouths in the capital meant there was grain, wine, olives and salted beef to export to England and other northern parts. The money so gained managed to keep the Republic budget afloat. So dire were the straits of the rural population of Portugal that the arrival (in a small, well-armed fleet) of a large number of the Sisters of the Rose was barely marked upon, particularly as they immediately set about rebuilding local hospitals and orphanages.

Oh, miserable mortals! Oh wretched earth!  
Oh, dreadful assembly of all mankind!  
Eternal sermon of useless sufferings!  
Deluded philosophers who cry, "All is well,"  
Hasten, contemplate these frightful ruins,  
This wreck, these shreds, these wretched ashes of the dead;  
These women and children heaped on one another,  
These scattered members under broken marble;  
One-hundred thousand unfortunates devoured by the earth  
Who, bleeding, lacerated, and still alive,  
Buried under their roofs without aid in their anguish,  
End their sad days!  
In answer to the half-formed cries of their dying voices,  
At the frightful sight of their smoking ashes,  
Will you say: "This is result of eternal laws  
Directing the acts of a free and good God!"  
Will you say, in seeing this mass of victims:  
"God is revenged, their death is the price for their crimes?"  
What crime, what error did these children,  
Crushed and bloody on their mothers' breasts, commit?  
Did Lisbon, which is no more, have more vices  
Than Kingston and Riga immersed in their pleasures?  
Lisbon is destroyed, and they dance in Paris!

*Voltaire ~ The Lisbon Disaster*

The Largoista government also made a rather clumsy attempt to convince some credulous locals that the late Empress Teresa should be canonized as a saint – but in Lisbon at least, far too many people were still alive who remembered her as something wholly unlike any saint who ever lived... the cult of the Guarding Virgin, on the other hand, gained strength. This was helped immensely by the Pope initiating proceedings to canonize the late Empress Oniko of Denmark (whose apparition had reputedly appeared in the city just before the earthquake, warning those within to flee).

There was a tremendous commotion in a small village several days north of Lisbon in early '53 – a ruckus loud enough to draw the attention of Prince Juan and his guardsmen (who happened to be picking their way through the debris which had been thrown up on the beaches by the tsunami). Arriving at Belem, the prince was stunned to see the head of an enormous metal statue rising from the surf. A statue of a man... now rusted and green, adorned with seaweed and kelp. Further investigation revealed the statue was hollow and had – at one time, before the ravages of the sea destroyed the mechanism,

been filled with gears, levers, wheels and other obscure contraptions. Padre Kihome, accompanying the priest, ventured (in a horrified, palsied voice) that the whole apparatus had once walked along the sea floor...

Though this was very interesting, the prince soon returned to Lisbon to attend his wedding, to the lady Anna Marie Cortez (from a cadet line of the old family). His father, looking particularly overstuffed in a jacket so braided with gold you could barely make out the fabric, made this toast:

“Today while we mourn the dearly departed, and begin the long rebuilding process we are blessed with a reason to celebrate. We celebrate that we are still alive, and even in this dark time people still find love. Is that not a miracle in and of itself? In the past twenty-five years we have seen mountains tossed down upon us by evil beings, we have seen the rise and fall of a Satanic Sultan, we have suffered the murder of not only our Empress Teresa, but her child Walter only weeks before he would have been crowned Emperor. Our bankers were duped by some still unknown nation, the nobility rebelled against the people’s will, students backed by Hussite powers, who then joined with the nobles, and then the earthquake and tsunami. When in any time of our past has the world been so over run with evil? Yet we are alive, and we preserver, and we still find love.

“Paul tells us in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 13: Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

“How great of comfort that is to know that with all the gifts of the spirit we may be given, the greatest of these gifts is given to us all, for do we not all love? I lost my son in the Tsunami, and many other family members as well, but my grandson Juan now takes his wife. While nothing will erase the pain of having lost Jose, I know that when my work here is done I will see him again, with our Father as well. For now I rejoice in the wonders that we have here in the world. Please join us in celebrating the lives and the union of my grandson Juan and Anna Marie di Cortez. This union of love will also help close the book on the royalist rebellion, and will hopefully lead Spain to time of peace and prosperity.”

**THE BLACK HAND** (Gibraltar)  
*Rhys Deverill, Master of the Order*  
**DIPLOMACY** None

Having struck an arrangement with the Danes – and allowing the Empire to establish itself in the fishing village below the Rock and the city thereon – the Hand proceeded to eject the Papal monastics who had a thriving monastery on the other side of the mountain. The clerics were shown the road to Cortez and told “you’re lost, but that’s the way home.”

**THE DUCHY OF THE ISLES** (Valetia on Malta)  
*Neya al’Raschid, Empress of the Isles, Emir of Archimedeia, Duchess of Sicily and Sardinia*  
**DIPLOMACY** Skarfaste on Rhodes(f)

Out of the line of fire for the moment, the Islanders pattered about – increasing the cities of Skarfaste on Rhodes and Caligari on Sardinia a level. Parts of ‘new’ Skarfaste-town were of particular beauty as the government made sure to have sewers, cisterns and paved roads installed. The steady growth of the ‘planned’ city of Catanzaro in Calabria also proceeded apace, though the Italians were a little mystified by building techniques of the Afriqans.

Missionary work continued in the mountains of Epirus and on Cyprus, though the Catholic priests had trouble gaining any new adherents among the Orthodox laity. The natives were far too suspicious and xenophobic.

They were not alone in their distrust... Duchess Neya had recently learned of a group calling itself “le man noir” which had established itself on the critical island of Sicily. Having no desire to harbor a “cult” in the bosom of the Duchy, Neya swept down upon the Black Hand estate with ten thousand men. Everything was seized, examined, weighed, measured, considered, examined again and finally put back in disorder. Much to the disgust of the authorities, they found the order’s business to be entirely legitimate.

Sadly the Duchess should have been paying attention to the dunning letters arriving on a daily basis from the bankers of Valetia. The Duchy defaulted on a modest loan in the fall of ’54, which then caused the violent collapse of several banks and merchant concerns, throwing hundreds of unemployed clerks out on the street.

#### **CALABRIA, EARLY SPRING 1754**

The nuns of the Convent of Santa Clara had done so much over the years to help the steady flow of refugees from Italy. Many had come from as far as Sicily and Calabria. Most had found a semblance of peace, and a new home.

Saddest for the Mother Superior were the orphans. In the decade since Satan’s Blow she’d done her best to feed, clothe and educate them all. One young orphan, now fourteen, remained a continuing problem. He was moody and willful, given to rages and petulance. Often he would sit alone at the edge of the orphanage gardens, picking at a scab which never healed.

“Find my son. I know that he still lives” wrote the Emir.

The agent clutched the Emir’s letter between two cool, gloved hands and considered his options. He stood outside a convent, studying a group of children at play.

“Bah, the sentimental fool! How could anyone have survived such a calamity?” he thought. “That Berber housekeeper of his has persuaded him of this.”

“No matter,” thought the agent, smoothing his tanned and hairless scalp and resetting his small spectacles firmly upon his nose. “I doubt the Emir would recognize his own spawn if he saw him. Regardless, this one boy does bear a passing resemblance to the late Regent.”

He nodded his head, a decision reached.

“Lad, you’re a possession of the Lybian government now.”

**THE CHURCH OF ROME** (Vatican City in Rome, Latium)

*Clement XII, Pater Patrias, Pope of the Roman Church, The Vicar of Christ, The Successor To Peter, The Keeper of the Keys, The Servant of the Servants of God, Patriarch of Azteca, Soldier of Light*



**DIPLOMACY** Lisbon in Portugal(^ca), Hebron in Catawba(^ch)

“At least this is for a goodly cause,” grumbled the Pontiff as he scratched an “XII” at the base of a writ to send thousands of priests and monks to the aid of the shattered Spanish government. Large sums of gold would accompany them. “We’ve finally turned the Republic’s face back to God.”

That the Churches grip on Spain would be tighter than in centuries was of great satisfaction to Clement, for the world was a fragmented, impious place, filled with heresy and doubt. The collapse of his effort to rectify the faithful at the Morocco conference still galled.

Bishop Chung, who had been languishing in a work-camp in Croatia, was released by the Imperial authorities. The Danish governor pointed to the gloomy sky and urged the priest to “remember who the Enemy truly is.”

The reconstruction of Lisbon – now a massive combined effort of the Republic, the Norsk merchants and the Papacy – resulted in so many clergy (and attendant servants, workers, clerks and their families) moving to the Spanish capital that Lisbon expanded a level. Too, the work on clearing the river and the old docks was completed, allowing ships to land there once more.

## AFRIQA

Non-Catholic Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
Condotierri	30i, 15a, 10c, 6hc, 3xc [1gp each]
Captains	Bey Senghor (MB96) [10gp]
To hire, please contact...	None
Quality Ratings	i16 w16 s18 c11 a12

Catholic Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
Condotierri	23xea [1gp each]
Captains	None
To hire, please contact...	Norsktrad
Quality Ratings	I15 w18 s21 c11 a12

## THE BRUCHION DISTRICT OF ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT

In a darkened wine shop, conveniently near the bustling docks but far away from the smell allow breath, a man in a green kaffiyeh with a concealed face checks his pistols, and gives reassuring glances to two security agents standing a short distance away. Other agents and snipers are carefully scattered throughout the shop and bazaar outside.

A short distance away, a man with an armed escort, all robed in dark colors, descends the gangway of his warship, cunningly concealed as lightly armed merchantman. He quickly makes his way to the wine shop, his own guards noting the surveillance and other security measures.

As he enters the shop, the man in the kaffiyeh stands and bows shallowly, hands extended, palms up. “So you received my invitation. We have much to discuss...”

**THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS** (Alexandria in Egypt)

*Tabarqa the Elder, Dean the School of Alexandria, Governor-General of the Society*

**DIPLOMACY** Alexandria in Egypt (of), Naxos in Kyklades (oh), Warsaw in Poland (oo), Danzig (op), Bern in Switzerland (op), Naples in Campania (oe), Paris in Ilé de France (oo)

Spearheaded by the Carthaginian government, an intra-national organization was founded in Alexandria to see to disaster and famine relief throughout the Hussite world. While the North Africans provided the bulk of the initial staff and budget, the East India Company, Duchy of Poland, Knights of Tabor, Frankish Commonwealth and the Danish Empire all pitched in to help establish organizational structures in their own domains.

One of the more vocal leaders of the new organization was a young Frankishman named Henri-Jean Dunant, who had served in the Middle East against the Daemon Sultan. Horrified by the devastation he witnessed during the war he had championed the idea before the Carthaginian Parliament and other Hussite regimes.

### The international work of the Red Cross

The Red Cross is the world's largest quasi-independent humanitarian organization. When disaster strikes anywhere in the world, the Red Cross Rapid Response Teams can be found on the scene. Where ever you find our Prior Response Teams, you'll be comforted to know, something truly dreadful is the about to happen, and we'll be there, uncannily, every time. The Red Cross also works with local communities overseas to help them prepare for potential planned disasters and emergencies.

### The work of the Red Cross in China

Throughout China, the Red Cross assists the statutory authorities in dealing with needs of individuals affected by major Ming emergencies, such as civil war, kung-fu conflagrations, floods and the usual meteors, ensuring that victims, survivors and their families are provided for in the immediate aftermath of a "naturally" occurring Ming disaster.

In addition, the Red Cross provides a number of local community services, designed to meet the needs of vulnerable people facing personal crises, like the temporary loss of a head, or the short term need for a didjeridoo. In meeting these needs our volunteers can develop and practice skills which will become essential in the event of a major emergency.

### The Power of Humanity

As the world's largest independent humanitarian movement, the Red Cross has humanity as its first Fundamental Ingredient. The Power of Humanity theme is being celebrated by Red Cross to highlight the difference that humanity can make to all our lives and palates, wherever <we> may be.

**THE EMIRATE OF CARTHAGE** (Augustina in Tunisia)

*Hamilcar Barca, Emir of Augustina, Sultan of Tunisia*



**DIPLOMACY** Elmerland in the Faeroes(ugly)

The reign of peaceful prosperity continued in North Africa and the Emir took advantage of the lull in general world-wide disaster to order a count of every man, woman, child, goat, camel and sand-dune in his small (but growing wealthy once more) nation.

Appalled at the disasters both natural and man-made afflicting both Afriqa and Europe, and having long brooded over the lack of a single entity to help coordinate disaster and

famine relief, Hamilcar determined that the Hussite nations must act to alleviate such future calamities. To this end, in he envisioned an organization with a charter of disaster relief: the *International Red Kross*. Emissaries are sent to his Hussite allies, pleading for their support.

Squabbling between the city fathers of Augostina and the Honorable Afrika Company led to police raids on the Catholic merchants and the discovery of rampant bribery on the part of the southerners. The local judiciary was not pleased.

New farming techniques, including the use of steam-powered pumps, allowed the province of Tunisia to grow to 3 GPv. The provinces of Kabilya and Cheliff were also graced with a dizzying array of new SteamPowered™ devices, allowing the irrigation of new lands and the construction of a rail-bed from Nador to Oran. Not the first in Africa, no, but certainly the first in Carthage!

**CHRISTIAN EMIRATE OF LIBYA** (Sayyida Ifni in Idjil)

*Ameur bin Skikda, Governor of the Azores, Scion of Lybia, Protector of Denmark, Sharif of Mauretania*

**DIPLOMACY** Arguin tribes(a), Wadan tribes(a)



Seeking to strike a balance in his tiny realm between the Hussite and Catholic powers around him, Skikda began to pursue a policy of religious reconciliation, as well as contributing heavily to orphanages and nunneries maintained by both faiths. His public condemnation of the Lullite heresy was almost immediately followed by his death (apparently of natural causes) in a riding accident on the slopes of Sierra de Santa Barbara in the Azores.

While everyone scurried about, wailing about the Emir's death, the loyal Shivta arrived in haste, on a chartered Albanian merchantman, with a scared young man in tow. No sooner than the two travelers had arrived in Sayyida Ifni than word came racing up out of the south – carried by a rider on a near-dead horse – that the Berber tribes of the Wadan and the Arguin had roused themselves, grown fat on decades of good rains, and now swept north – covering the land, their spears a forest of shining stars, the dust cloud of their passage blanketing the sun.

The city was gripped by a terrible fear and panic roiled the air like spilled ink.

“Master Shivta?” Ameur turned to his unexpected guardian. The older man was pale, his spectacles misted with sweat, wondering if the bare six hundred soldiers in the city could withstand the countless numbers of the desertmen. “You tell me my blood is the blood of kings. That my mother was regent of the greatest, boldest Empire the world has seen. You say I am a prince of men?”

“Aye lad,” Shivta answered, looking at the boy, seeing a gleam in his eye, a straightness in his chin which he had not marked before. “You are all those things.”

“Then I will defend my city. Bring me a horse, a rifle, a blade... all the things a man needs to do his duty.”

Ameur rode out, accompanied only by Shivta and a handful of guardsmen. As the messenger had said, the southern horizon was a pall of dust and the earth trembled with the

sound of hooves. The prince chose a hill overlooking the trade-way from distant Nouadhibou and sat on a boulder, cross-legged, waiting.

A day passed and then the Arguin and the Wadan poured into the valley, manes flying, hooves flashing, a constant irresistible flood... three tall captains rode at the forefront of the host and then cantered up the road until the lone boy on the rock came into view. Then all three paused, dust swirling around the fetlocks of their mares, and one of them drew back the scarf across his noble nose.

“Is that old Shivta I see, cowering behind a stone in ambush?”

Before the old man could reply, Ameur waved him to silence. “Who are you – and who are these men – who come into the lands of Lybia without leave?”

“I am Jafir,” the long-nosed one replied with a laugh. “We will not pause long, shepherd, or disturb your flocks. We go to seek audience with my master the Emir, with the Emperor.”

“You have found him then,” Ameur replied, rising to stand against the pale blue sky. “My father is dead and I was lost - but now I am found and live again. My flocks are many – men and women alike – and you are among them, I think. Though lost, perhaps, as I was. You’ve the look of a goat who easily goes astray.”

Such was the surprise on Jafir’s face that both the shekys of the Wadan and the Arguin laughed aloud and ever after called him ‘Goat.’

**THE PRINCIPATE OF VASTMARK** (Chihuahua City in Takrur)

*William Casimir, Stadholder of Takrur, Prince of Vastmark*

**DIPLOMACY** None

The Stadholder stayed home and minded his own business.



**THE MALI AX EMPIRE** (Ax Mixtlan in Mixe)

*Nine-Jaguar, ne-Axamaloa na-Tochul, King of the Mixtecs, Lord of the Niger, Captain of the Firestorm Banner, True Emperor of the Aztecs, Emperor of Mali, DarkLord of Africa*

**DIPLOMACY** None

As did the Emperor of the Mixtecs (even with the trouble in the south).



**THE REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA** (Soba in Funj)

*Fredik Draume, President-For-Life of Ethiopia*

**DIPLOMACY** No effect

But not the President! Oh no. He had disasters to clean up... so many of them. With his people threatened by the specter of famine, Fredik attempted to stave off further collapse by paying the Albanians a princely sum for grain which had previously been delivered and launching a massive irrigation and farmlands reclamation effort in Nubia (which became cultivated).

Still, the latest harvest had been enough to fill the hungry mouths, so there was a bare margin to move ahead. Missionary work continued in Aden, with mild success.



An unexpected side effect of the flood of imams and mullahs into the highlands of Aden was the discovery – widely trumpeted by panicked clergy – of a band of *hasheshin* operating in the rural areas of the province. Though no one was murdered as a result (or at least, it didn't seem so) a virulent strain of rumors followed, accusing everyone and their nephew of being pawns of the 'old man of the mountain.'

After languishing in a dank cell in the citadel of Soba for many years, Saul Ashur finally took his own life, leaving Fredik as the uncontested master of the Republic (if such it could be called). With the boy's death, Fredik began opening promoting his son Josiah as his successor.

Lord George was dispatched north with a fleet crammed to the gunwales with troops, guns and horses.

**THE MAASAI KINGDOM** (Mbeya in Kimbu)

*Sogobu the Cripple, King of the Maasai, Emperor of Ethiopia*

**DIPLOMACY** Kikuyu(^un)

Industrious as ever, the Masai continued to build a powerful civilization... the provinces of Berbera and Lamu increased to 2 GPv. Mahala city grew a level and everywhere new farms and orchards and plantations were being cut from the jungle or sprouting from the grasslands. The army remained on watch in the north, expecting the Axumites to storm southward again, but none did. General Hopok, however, did die of heart failure. Marshal Decks took over command of the border watch.

Efforts by Lord Ecks to woo the tribesmen of Kikuyu took a dreadful turn for the worse and the suspicious and rather violent hill-men sent him to a grisly end in the jaws of lions. Disgusted with his feckless behavior, the chieftains vowed never to accept the Masai as guests again.

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRIQA** (Great Zimbabwe in Rozwi)

*Izinduna, Protector of the Senate and the Republic*

**DIPLOMACY** Hova Merina(^fa)

Determined not to let the industry of the Masai overshadow their own, the Afriqans toiled so vigorously it seemed the entire nation was shrouded by a pall of dust and smoke raised from the construction projects, land-clearing and industry sprouting up in and around every city and town.

The railway from Matabele to Hwange was completed and the crews working the Great Western Line pressed on into Lozi. The provinces of Bassa and Kariba were cultivated. The Senate celebrated the completion of the Lisbon Accords, on time and on budget, which was something of a rarity, given the cost overruns on the railroad.

After lengthy negotiations the Trade Office decided to remand some of the concessions previously made to the Afriqa Company, allowing open competition on the routes to Indonesia and the South Pacific. Missionary work continued at a rapid pace among the tribes along the Kongo River. Great headway was made by Afriqan priests in converting the Bandundu, the Kasai, the Kanaga and the Salonga.

The tense situation with the Mixtecs on the western coast continued to be troublesome. General G'mar (supported by Mbeki's fleet) marched along the barren shore, rousting Mixtec settlers out of their farmsteads and kraals. Despite assurances

by the Mixtec government, no efforts had been made to remove the populations of the settlements.

This resulted in the Republican army besieging the fortified settlement of Ax Mixcoatl for three months in '54 before the Mixtecs surrendered. After this the population of the town was forcibly relocated to the port of Onogui in Teke.

**THE HONORABLE AFRIQA COMPANY** (Iusalem in Karanga)

*Numeke Tikumbay, President, Master of the Southern House*

**DIPLOMACY** Vaal(^mf), Matopos (ma), Zimbabwe in Rozwi (^bo), Cuiaba in Paraiba (ma), Thiat in Terembembe (ma), Bremen in Gambia (^mf), Augostina in Tunisia (^ma), Rangoon in Pegu (^mf), Arungthane in Kedah (^mf), Abas in Fars (^bo), Karratha in Yaralone (bo)



Trading in the southern ocean continued to prove quite profitable as the Honorable Company traded French, Afriqan and Islamic wheat, cotton and salt-beef north and south. Efforts to begin widespread land clearing in the province of Xhosa were stymied by the lack of engineers and workers on hand. They did eventually show up, but too late to work on anything this turn.

Faced with something of a succession crisis, Tikumbay and the board chose Joseph de'Beers (whose family had emigrated into Afriqa several generations ago, and held extensive interests in lumber and iron throughout the Cape) as the Company No. Two. (No eyepatch was provided).

The Honorable Afriqa Company is proud to announce the opening of the HAC Grand Hotel. Catering to the discriminating hunter seeking an exceptional safari, explorer and adventure enthusiasts, or those interested in experiencing darkest Afriqa. With proper RSA forms, visas, and travel documents the heart of Afriqa awaits! The HAC Grand is proud to offer a variety of tours and destinations, one of which is a day trip to the Victoria Falls. Not only will you experience the Falls but also first class accommodations upon the RSA Rail line (finest in the world) which will whisk you to the fantastic Victoria Falls deep in the interior. For more information, or to book your trip, please contact your local HAC office.



**NORTH AMERIKA**

Non-Denominational Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
Condotierri	25c, 35i, 20a [1gp each]
Captains	Axayacatl the Wolf (M925) [5gp]
To hire, please contact...	Pacific Mercenary and Trust

Quality Ratings	i15 w17 s18 c12 a12
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Catholic Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
Condotierri	5hei, 9xea (AA guns), 10hea (rocket batteries), 10i, 23xea, 20t [2gp each]
Captains	General Xho (M936) [5gp]
To hire, please contact	Norsktrad
Quality Ratings	c12 i16 a13 w18 s18 z6

### THE RACE TO THE TOP OF THE WORLD

Standing in her offices in the Danish Quarter of New Orleans, *le reina* Natasha opened an envelope just arrived by packet ship from North Afrika. She studied the handwriting, that of the new Maklarevalde himself, and frowned. *Madame Tuchachevsky, An expeditionary force composed of Norskwarden and Catholic Mercenaries will arrive shortly after this letter. You are to sail to Azaton and take command...*

"Holy Mary Mother of God!" she exclaimed, and sat down to read the letter again.

Elsewhere in the Maklarevalde's letter, he tersely outlined the little information known about the threat beyond the Arctic Circle, stressing the danger this posed not merely to the Company but the entire world if there is more than hot meteor debris cooking in the remnants of dread Olathoe. The mission offered her a position of great trust, notwithstanding the differences she had with the actions of the Company in previous times. Delgado also warned her to be on her guard against the forces of the Ice, in whatever form they might present themselves.

*...the Norsktrad have never knowingly aided or served the Ice, though recent evidence from the «censored» suggests an infiltration at one time. We asked you to take every care of your troops and of yourself. There may be little time, and few future opportunities to stop the Ice. We wish you and your Companymen every prayer for success and survival, and regret the Company cannot muster a greater force.*

*The Ice tribes worship Ithaqua. This means that they may have access to powers that will render airships unusable in the proximity of the pyramid complex. The weather conditions may be severe with fierce gales and ice storms. This may render airships unusable due to the weight of ice forming on the hull and struts.*

*The fog bank reported around Olathoë suggests a region where warm (arctic!) air is meeting much colder air, or air is flowing over a much colder surface (or Olathoë is now a hot crater.)*

Natasha felt chilled herself, looking out the cut-glass window. Even at this distance she could make out the names of the latest Company airships to reach the gassing station and landing field across the river.

*Hrist, Goll, Hild and Skogul* read the tall silver letters.

"Pammat!" Il Reina shook her head sharply, clearing her thoughts. "Girl, where are you? Send for my furrier!"

### KINGDOM OF TZOMPANTLI (Tzompantlan in Tutchone)

*Tizoc, Baron of Hûkar-on-the-Plain-of-Bones*

DIPLOMACY None

With the boundary of the Ice stabilized, sufficient warmth crept back into the north to allow the Skull people to expand their capital of Tzompantlan a level. There was also a flurry of activity around old Hûkar in preparation for certain visitors

from the south. The Baron was disturbed, however, when news reached him that a Sister of the Rose prelate known to be preaching in the backwoods of Kayak was found murdered. He ordered the local governor to find the miscreants immediately.

After a long voyage, and with the deeps of winter boiling over the mountains above the chill port of Azoton, the Norsktrad fleet arrived on Tzompan shores. Il Reina Natasha took her command staff ashore and met with the Baron's men. Soon thereafter the entire appurtenance of an Expedition began pouring ashore: skis and snowshoes for the men, and sleighs for the carrying of packs and the transportation of guns and rockets are manufactured. Dogs were purchased from the local Tzompanctli merchants. Hundreds of huts were cut into the hillsides above the town to provide winter quarters.

Ice gear for the troops was fabricated. Heavy winter gear is made available, of at least two layers, with fleece between (no cotton), including a gray-white camouflaged over-jacket. Two pairs of high quality boots per man, large enough to allow the wearing of thick and double layered socks, with fittings to permit the addition of ice spikes. Ice picks (long enough to be used as a walking aid and to probe the ice), snow goggles (fitted with tinted glass), tents, sleeping bags, axes, thick gloves, ropes, compasses, lanterns, flares and whistles and all other necessary gear is provided. Kerosene heaters and charcoal. Emergency rations, including raisins, tea, coffee and Aztec chocolate. Water heaters to allow ice to be unfrozen and boiled. Mirrors for signaling. Cooking stoves and fuel.

Insulated sleeves are provided for the gun barrels. The Company engineers built mechanisms for keeping the artillery barrels unfrozen, so that they do not shatter when fired, as insulation alone will not be sufficient. Flints in shielded holders are provided, so that fire can be lit even in the arctic gales.

The airship engines were overhauled, antifreeze mechanisms added, and fully tested as the snowdrifts grew deeper and deeper outside the sheds.

All the while, the Skull-people waited for the *second* expedition to arrive from the south, this one sent from the mother-Empire itself.



Figure 2. The Norsk airship "Skogul" at the field near Hûkar

### THE NISEI REPUBLIC (Usonomiya in Yokuts)

*Kiyotaka Kuroda, Commander of the Armies of the Republic, Protector of the Emperor of All Japan, daitoryo of the Diet*

## DIPLOMACY None

Lord-General Tasho, commander of the III Corps, was beside himself with rage at the mewling clerks who were making such a mess of his efforts to get the army across the passes and into the plains where they were so badly needed. Though some of the airships assigned to his force were available in Usonomiya (having just rolled out of the airship yard there), others were stranded in crates in New Yedo, hundreds of miles to the north, while others were still being fitted out in Nanhuaco on the north side of the Great Bay.

All of this meant delays as Tasho waited for the fleet to carry the new, Norsk- and Albanian-built airframes back down to Yokuts. At least, by then, the Nanhuaco yards would have finished their work on the *Tsuru*-class scouts.

And on the edge of the plains, the city of Bohr (protected by several regiments of newly hired Aztec mercenaries) stirred to life again. Vast quantities of rice, millet, wheat and lumber were shipped off to the Aztecs. Two army Corps (II and IV) mobilized and prepared to strike east along the highway towards Dakota.

Two Norsktrad clipper ships (particularly notable both for the acres of canvas they boasted as well as the speed of their voyage up from the Aztec Canal) visited Tijuana on Baja for several months in '54 as their captain, Trygvasson, attempted to establish a presence in the desert port. Unfortunately he failed – stymied by the intricacies of Nisei custom and language.

Back in New Yedo, the Kiyotaka government called for new parliamentary elections and also proposed the creation of a post of President of the Republic, which would be an elected post with a term of eight years. This caused a great deal of dispute among the Diet members, who liked being able to finagle concessions out of the Prime Minister by threatening a vote of no confidence. “Tyranny!” They cried, and claimed this would cause nothing less than the restoration of the Shogunate under a flimsy disguise. In any case, Kiyotaka’s party managed to squeeze out a majority again and he returned as Prime Minister.

Mindful of recent discoveries in the far north, Sky-Admiral Moshi was dispatched from Usonomiya with four of the new *Tsuru*-class scouts to investigate the heart of the Ice itself. After refueling in Zhai on the Tlingit coast and refitting his ships for speed and altitude, Moshi set off into the northern wastes. He did not return, nor did his ships, and there was no one to bring the news of the ill-fated expedition back to Nisei lands...

Summer of '54 brought the arrival of the IVth Corps to Dakota by river-boat (having made the very long voyage from the west coast, through the Aztec Canal, and then up the Snake). Luckily for the travel-weary troops, the Ghost Dancer garrison of the province withdrew as they arrived and peacefully turned over the city of Igashi to Nisei administration.

Following this success, IV Corps advanced north-west through Okoboji into Teton, where they made contact with the forces moving east from Crow. By the end of the year, the Republic once more controlled the highway from the Rockies to Dakota.

**THE HIGH KINGDOM OF COLORADO** (Three Crosses in Navajo)  
*Fredrik Grosse, King of the Ute, High King of Colorado*

## DIPLOMACY New Colorado in Comanche(f)

The fleet took to sea again, this time to deliver General Shosin to the island of Ciguayo, where he was proclaimed the new governor and set to the task of guarding the sea lanes and generally watching over the Kingdom’s interests in the Carribean. Princess Yesobelle accompanied the fleet, showing keen interest in all things of a martial nature.

Despite attempts by the King’s agents to keep their presence quiet, quite a number of Shawnee officers turned up in Sancta Fiera, where they were apparently involved in training exercises with the Coloradan artillery corps. Missionary efforts in Comanche failed, as the Catholics there were in no mood to accept the ‘damnable heretic rite’ of the Lencolar Church. Work on a postal road from New Colorado down to the port of Corpus Christi, however, was quite successful and promised to soon be expanded into a real highway.

**THE GHOSTDANCERS** (Fushige in Missouri)

*Teoclote Azurama, Prince of Fushige, War-Captain of the Ghost People*

## DIPLOMACY None

Abiding by their treaty arrangements, the Ghostdancers withdrew as the Nisei regiments advanced through Dakota and the provinces along the plains highway. The War-Captain’s coffers were also kept filled with Aztec gold in exchange for thousands of bushels of corn and wheat sent south.

A strenuous investigation into the “Green Book riots” found no evidence of foreign involvement, only impressionable youngsters who let things get out of hand.

**ARAPAHO TEXAS** [Shawnee Protectorate](Ayoel in Atakapa)

*Kegemai Arrowweye, Chieftain of the Arapaho, Liegeman of the Stormdragon*

## DIPLOMACY None

News out of the southern islands indicated some kind of brawl in the new port town of Takari in Colon province, Cuba, between sailors of the Albanian East India Company and their ‘dog-rivals’ out of Russia. Apparently the Albanian captain was shot down in the marketplace by men in the pay of the Russians.

**THE SHAWNEE EMPIRE** (Cahokia in Michigamea)

*Valeria Stormdragon, Queen of the Shawnee, Empress of the Iroquois*

## DIPLOMACY

While the sky remained dim and the usual run of harvests were poor, the southern portions of the Empire were also afflicted by a drought in '53 and most of '54. Was there no end of the troubles the Lord would torture his faithful with? Work began on a looming star-style fort at Infni in Quapaw, whose guns commanded the river and the bridge crossing.

The sleepy frontier hamlet of Ubar in Kaskinapo woke one morning in early 1753 to the dreaded *thup-thup-thup* sound of



Empress  
Valeria of  
Shawnee and  
Arapaho

airship engines turning over. As the citizens cowered in fear, a troop of Shawnee infantry jogged out onto a newly cleared meadow, snatching at the landing lines of a vast, black shape drifting down out of a cold grey sky.

“Stand to the landing grapples!”

Captain Pasternak, commanding the ARF airship *Archaeopteryx*, leaned out the window of the command gondola and waved cheerily at the Shawnee officers staring up from below. Within minutes the rest of his air flotilla – more than twenty zeppelins – were jostling for landing positions on the crude airfield.



Figure 3. The Shawnee/ARF Expedition over Great Bear Lake

*These Shawnee are a dour lot*, the captain mused, hours later, a cup of hot koka steaming in his hands. The airfield was swarming with activity as the Shawnee guardsmen wrestled huge bales of cargo, strings of yapping dogs, barrels of kerosene and a long human chain of ammunition boxes into the cargo holds of his ships. *But they should come in useful in the pinch.*

Pasternak set the cup down, peering off into the black northern sky. *No aurora*, he realized with relief. *Maybe <they> are truly gone.*

His human heart wished fervently for it to be so, but a sick queasiness in his stomach bade otherwise. The combined expedition launched the next day, marking a course north and west for the distant Ice.

While the Empress was preoccupied with her children and dealing with the drought, lord Farspear turned Catawba and Hebron upside-down looking for ‘snake-cultists’. Many arrests were made, but the general ill-temper of the general seemed to indicate a lack of success.

**KINGDOM OF THE IROQUOIS** [Shawnee Protectorate] (New Canarsie in Mohawk)

*Canassatego, King of the Iroquois Nation, Regent for...*

*Lucas II Stormdragon, Lord of the East.*

**DIPLOMACY** None

Settlement continued in Mohawk, which now reached 3 GPv. The shipments of pinecones and boiled bark to England continued, along with bales of tobacco and hundreds of tons of fur. In an effort to reduce the demands upon his frail government, Canassatego granted the Chowanese greater autonomy. Missionary work among the heathen savages of the inland mountains began to show some progress, much to everyone’s surprise.

## APPROACHING THE BARRIER OF WINDS

Pasternak clambered forward along an icy gangway, hands – wrapped in sealskin and fleece – gripping tight to the guide rope. He forced open the hatch to the observation post and felt the rushing wind as a physical blow. The airman on watch squeezed aside to let the captain swing down into the cupola. Pasternak ignored the slit-eyed man, his own goggles blazing with the thin sun reflected from the snow-fields below.

“There!” The Inuto shouted, trying to force his voice above the shrieking wind. The captain nodded. The debris field was unmistakable. Two, perhaps three, airships were scattered across the side of the mountain. Metal and cloth winked in the pure white drifts. Pasternak was sure there had been crumpled bodies, once, though he doubted nothing remained but cracked and splintered bone now.

Having seen enough, the captain climbed back into the gangway and headed aft towards the bridge. Within minutes, the *Archaeopteryx* was circling and a ground-team of Shawnee knights was descending on ropes into the wreckage.

“Nisei (*spit!*) airships,” the Shawnee lieutenant reported, several hours later. His heavily-gloved hands held a broken ships’-plate. “A new kind, rigged for work in the Ice.”

“But not well enough,” mused Pasternak. “Their engines will have iced up and failed... the boreal winds are very treacherous.”

The Shawnee said nothing, watching the ARF captain’s grim face with barely concealed fear.

“We will go on,” Pasternak said, after a moment. “There was once a passage through the barrier...”

## THE ORDER OF THE FLOWERING SUN (Tenochtitlán)

*Chikiel, Master of the Order, Shield of the Sun against the Ten Thousand Enemies*

**DIPLOMACY** Zapotec (^oe), Otomi (^oh), New Jerusalem in Quiche (^oo), Nahuatl (^op)

While the Order continued to build it’s strength, hoping for the day when it could actually carry the Sun’s battle to the enemies which hide in darkness, prickly-pear-knight Tzompan fell off a roof in Otomi while celebrating with some newly inducted Order knights and dashed his head in.

## BEYOND THE BARRIER OF WINDS

A single shot rang out, echoing back and forth among tumbled heat-scarred monoliths. Pasternak jerked awake and, snatching up a pistol, strode out of his tent. One of the sentries on the guard-tower at the southern corner of the camp was waving wildly at the sky. Shading his eyes with a hand against the blazing disk of the sun, the ARF captain looked up.

A dot grew against the white sky, swelling into the enormous shape of an air-ship. Not a zeppelin, no... not even one of the sleek, whale-like shapes of the *Raptor*-class airframe, but something like a *ship*.

“What in Hades is that?” The Shawnee captain Squanto had come up silently and now made to raise his rifle to a bronzed shoulder. “A thing of the Ice?”

“Ha!” Pasternak laughed and dug in his shirt-pocket for his pipe. “No... that can only be the *Uraeus*. I had thought her destroyed, but the world is filled with unexpected wonders.”

The Shawnee captain glanced sideways at the ARF officer. Pasternak seemed deflated – or at least trapped in his own memories again.

“Do we fire upon her?”

The Russian shook his head. “Signal them down to land on the airfield. And call all the excavation crews back... though I suppose it’s too late to keep the extent of our operation here secret.”

The airship circled again and now Pasternak cursed aloud. The massive ship was flying an Aztec naval ensign alongside the plain green banner customarily associated with the mysterious Rangers.

Squanto caught sight of the red flag a moment later and his face screwed into a terrible grimace.

**VICEROYALTY OF ZACATECA** [Aztec Protectorate] (Gorea in Zacatec) *Ilhuicaimina, Viceroy of the North*  
**DIPLOMACY** None

Grain and other trade goods continued to pour into highland Zacatec at an inordinate rate. The citizens, meantime, turned out in record numbers to toil away not only on the massive series of grain silos rising in every valley and town, but (on the plain near Paxchecl) a series of odd geometric patterns and animal figures in lines of stone.

**ABOVE OLD OLATHOË, WHERE ONCE LOMAR HELD SWAY**

“Blessed mother of Tepeyac...” Lord Comargo, nominal commander of the Imperial Legion of the Smoking Sun, stared over the railing of the *Uraeus*, his jaw slack with awe. The airship was drifting down to land on a cleared field lined with the anchored shapes of European-style zeppelins.

At the Aztec’s side, one of the Ranger forest-lords nodded his head, keen gray eyes scanning for danger. “Yes, evil raised a great edifice here... and it was cast into oblivion.”

“Yes, yes it was.” Comargo began to sweat, raising his eyes to take in the countless miles of shattered, broken earth reaching away to the ceaselessly shifting storm that marked the horizon. Inside the Barrier, the world seemed to shrink, bounded by the standing cloud-front and it’s constant blaze of lightning. “As if the hand of God had reached down...”

The Ranger laughed – a sharp, hoarse bark – and turned a fierce eye upon the portly Nahuatl. “There are Gods and Gods, southerner. Do not mistake one for another.”

Comargo gulped and nodded.

Below, a party of armed men in winter coats appeared from the ruins and approached the airship.

The *Uraeus* settled into the rubble, landing struts deploying to crunch into blistered stone.



Figure 4. Artist’s Rendition of the Arrival of the Archaeopteryx

**THE AZTEC EMPIRE OF MEXICO** (Sion in Huave) *Trákonel “The Victorious”, Emperor of Mexico, Warrior of Christ, Protector of the Faith, Smiter of the Infidel, Conqueror of the Incans, Rex Britannicus*



**DIPLOMACY** Kekchi (^a), Boruca (‘nt)

The Emperor showed uncommon generosity; dispensing large gifts in gold, credit and goods to the Tzompanctli, the Zacateca and the Sisters of the Rose. Further financial arrangements swelled the coffers of the New Granadans, the Caquetio, the Bolivians, the Colorado and the Ghost Dancers in exchange for the shipments of preserved foodstuffs which then were hauled up into the mountains of Zacatec. On the other hand, the Pacific Mercenary and Trust paid quite an enormous amount of tribute to the Emperor, which helped even things out.

A deal was struck with the Swedish Ambassador, exchanging a ninety-nine year lease for a twenty-square mile section of the Russian province of Pereaslavl for equal access and control of the city of Kusan on the island of Taino. “A new era in Aztec-Swedish relations!” Proclaimed both governments. There was no comment from the Danish consul.

Some kind of sub-sea disturbance caused a great boiling in the sea off Lenca, millions of dead fish on the shoreline and – one Sunday afternoon – a thunder-clap sound which was followed by a tidal wave crashing into the harbor district of Pachamaxl, causing great loss of life.

The Imperial family announced, with great sadness, the death of Deshetl Miluna (the Emperor’s sister). The cause of death was not revealed, nor was the body displayed.

**THE SISTERS OF THE ROSE** (New Jerusalem in Quiche) *Kelly Davias, Holy Mother of the Lencolar Christian Order*

**DIPLOMACY** Tuxtla in Kekchi (ch), Tlacotalpan in Popoluca (^ab), Kebbe (^ab), Three Crosses in Navajo (ch)

Much like the Empire, the Sisters were busy disbursing money to the faithful kings of Tzompanctli and Colorado. Missionary work continued in the south, with Choco becoming Lencolar. Despite pressure from the Catholics, the Sisters also refused to condemn the Lullite “heresy”. “The pursuit of knowledge is man’s destiny,” they were wont to say. “To know the mind of God.”

A long-standing series of discussions between the Shinto temple priests and the Sisters at last bore fruit with both parties releasing a series of quiet letters to their parish clergy, urging

them to view the other as co-religionists and to work diligently towards a harmonious relationship.

## SOUTH AMERIKA

Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
Condotierrri	25i, 16c, 11a, 1ea, 1hei [1gp each]
Captains	Joseph d'Sackville (M977) [5gp]
To hire, please contact...	None
Quality Ratings	i15 w17 s18 c12 a12

**THE KINGDOM OF CAQUETIO** (New Hiquito in Caquetio)

*Pardane Viceno, "The Bold", King of Caquetio*

**DIPLOMACY** None

Carnivale lasted for two whole years and no one got a damned thing done. Ohhhh... my head...



**THE PRINCIPATE OF BOLIVIA** (Trischka in Karanga)

*Ramon Mascate, Prince of Bolivia, Duke of Trishka*

**DIPLOMACY** None

Tiring at last of this constant skirmishing across the French border – and the refusal of the Emperor to leave well enough alone – the Bolivians gathered their entire army together under the Prince himself (as well as his son Roderigo and the notable general De Vasquez) and marched across the mountains into Omaguaca...

**THE KNIGHTS OF SAINT JOHN** (New Granada in Acroa)

*Humphrey of Toron, Regent for...*

*Eluterio Gafard de Masa, Grand-Master of the Knights of Saint John*

**DIPLOMACY** None

Enraged and determined by turns, Humphrey borrowed every last guilder he could lay hands on, both from the remaining bankers in his own domain and from overseas (where the Afrikan Central Reserve was willing to part with a modest sum). The last of the fleet was scrapped, mercenaries hired and fresh regiments raised en masse. "We are going to end this," the regent growled and he was pleased to receive a letter from the Bolivians saying they too were going to launch an attack on the pestilent French.

Though a Templar army remained garrisoned in Shucuru, Cardnial-General d'Corazon refused to render any aid to Humphrey of Toron in his war against Great France. The Templars were more interested in making sure the Lencolar vermin did not further infest Catholic lands during the 'disturbances.'

Having mustered two fresh armies, the Knights launched attacks into Gueren and Arana...

**GREAT FRANCE** (Versailles in Calchaqui)

*Francois de'Saone, Emperor of France, Prince of Varres, Lord of the South, Smiter of the Heretic*

**DIPLOMACY**

For his part, Emperor Francis expected nothing less than continuing, mindless attacks by his enemies. Much like

Humphrey of Toron, his patience had run out. "Crush them," he ordered De Bussy, "and leave nothing standing."

As it happened, the ever-victorious General was barely escaping an attempt on his life in the east, and soon learned of a massive Knight of St. John army coming his way. At much the same time, the only-nominally associated province of Arana exploded in an anti-French revolt (sweeping up and killing two French leaders in the process).

De Bussy, whose army had been wintering in Tupi, paid this little attention, instead he drilled his troops, checked his patrols and waited for the Knights to plow into him. Which they did after hacking their way through an entirely disordered Arana province. By that time, a fresh army of French under Coligny had arrived from the west to reinforce De Bussy as well. As both generals desired nothing less than a decisive battle, a pitched fracas developed at the road junction of Novo Caen.

33,000 New French troops (the vast majority veterans of the four previous campaigns) stood to against the 24,000 Knights in a stand-up brawl. After a strong opening, the Knights reeled back, unable to break through the hail of fire laid down by the French guns. Too, De Bussy was making good use of his spotting balloons (while the Knights had also deployed their own *draken*, they did not have numbers).

A sharp French counter-attack in the wake of the last Knightly assault split open the wing of the Grenadan army and Garrido's forces disintegrated. The Knights fell back in disorder, screened by their light horse, and for once all of the Grenadan commanders managed to escape with their lives.

De Bussy now pressed north, scattering the remains of the Knights, and crushing the rebellious Aranans. By the time Montes Claros had been reduced to submission, Humphrey of Toron and Garrido were once more in New Grenada city, scrambling to prepare a defense.

The French swept into Acroa and Humphrey fled with his family and what cavalry remained to him northwards. Garrido remained behind, in command of the capital's formidable defenses. De Bussy immediately set Coligny to screen his envelopment of the capital and began a thunderous bombardment. The siege of **New Grenada** proved much deadlier to the French than the field battles had been. The Knights fought doggedly, striving to protect their capital, and many Frenchmen perished, fighting in the siege lines and upon the ramparts of the city. In the end, though De Bussy was wounded by a shell fragment, Garrido surrendered the remains of his men – only a few hundred – and the city of the Knights was forfeit to Great France.

Now the French general considered his orders and thought of all the dead men who had purchased this victory. Showing some small mercy, he then had the entire population of New Grenada driven out of the city into the fields and then the entire city was looted to the last tuppence and then set alight. Nothing was spared, not even the churches. The metropolis burned for six days, smudging the sky with an endless tower of smoke. "Those who assail Great France do so at their peril."

Now the French army of the East withdrew south (some little of '54 remaining) to Arana for winter quarters.

Meantime, on the coast, Knight-Commander Bernarda's army had once more essayed the defenses of **Gueren** with a

mixed force of Knights and mercenaries numbering 13,000 men. The French captain Hasird commanded only a worn-down garrison half that size. Still, he made a game try to stop the invasion (while also dispatching a courier boat to try and find the fleet, which was rampaging among Grenadan shipping, so his forces could be evacuated).

The French were driven back into the city and besieged. Hasird was wounded in the retreat, which left the defenders rather leaderless. Still, they managed to secure the city and now – faced with the rather imposing fortifications – Bernarda cursed vilely to realize he did not have sufficient forces to take the city. So he settled for a blockade and keeping his engineers gainfully employed in building an elaborate series of siege works around the landward side of the city.

Orders had also been issued to the fleet of Great France to engage in “unrestricted operations” against New Granadan shipping and coastal towns. As the Knights had scrapped the last of their fleet to build yet another army, there was nothing to stop Duke Tcholon from blockading the remaining Grenadan ports and seizing all the shipping he could find...

In the west, the Bolivians had plowed over the mountains into Omaguaca with every man and gun and horse they could muster. Mascate’s advance upon the capital of Great France was blocked by the Comte de Tulliers and Baron Atayama, who engaged the invaders at **Abusson**. As in the east, there was little maneuvering or skirmishing – both sets of generals wanted to decisive battle and lo, they received their wish... the French were shocked, however, to find themselves outnumbered (15,000 French to 28,000 Bolivians) and the Comte praised the Lord he stood on the defense, with some moldy old forts to anchor his defense upon.

The first series of battles were a violently bloody draw, and therein lay a grinding defeat for the French – the Bolivian numbers began to tell – and the Comte was forced to fall back out of the province and into south into Chana. Luckily for the French, the Bolivians then regrouped and stood pat in Omaguaca, poised to strike at Versailles or southeast towards Varres itself. Mascate was being cautious, and thereby cast aside the advantage.

## THE PRECINCTS OF THE SACRED

The last strains of the choir fell away, echoing among the groined vaults of the temple hall. A thousand voices fell silent, yet the air seemed to vibrate still with the glorious sound. On a simple altar, adorned only by a plain white cloth, lay a hand-written book bound in leather. An unremarkable object in and of itself, only paper and glue and cured ox-hide. The light of so many torches and candles failed to chase the shadows from the vault, yet around the book a steady warm glow gathered.

“Here are the words of God revealed,” intoned a young, somber voice and a figure stepped forward from the ring of priests. A hand – pale and white, nails carefully trimmed – reached out over the book. “Our father first set pen to paper, scribing the very voice of the Lord of Heaven. Now, for seventy generations we have held the covenant. Here is our faith, distilled, made one, pure and unadorned.”

“Amen!” Echoed the thousand faithful in the buried church. A second figure stepped forth, shorter than the first,

somehow even younger. A child’s hand reached out, laying over the first.

“Here are the visions which have come into me,” she said, voice quavering. “From the mouth of the Elohim to an unbroken page. Even as the prophets of old once set down the Law. So my Book will read, when at last the sun grows cold.”

“Amen!” Murmured the thousand faithful. The pool of warm light upon the altar seemed to grow stronger. A third figure appeared from the darkness, and her hand – lined with age – laid over the first two, making a triangle.

“He speaks,” rolled a powerful soprano, ringing clear in the endless vaults.

“And We hear!” Answered the congregation, in one voice.

“He Shows.”

“And we see!”

The older woman turned up her palm, revealing a half-healed scab two fingers wide at the center. “The first man stood in the wasteland and he raised his face to the sky.”

Both younger women turned their hands over as well, revealing the same mark. All three clasped hand to hand to hand, leaving the youngest’ palm facing the light glowing overhead.

“The first men begged the Lord for protection, and He heard, and He answered.” The older woman raised her face, still shrouded in a deep cowl, to the congregation.

“The Lord of Heaven is merciful!”

“Men fell from the Way and needed a guide. Who did He send?”

“He sent the Guide of Guides!”

“When we were lost in Illusion?”

“He led us to Truth!”

“What is our debt, for our very lives? For the lives of all who live?”

“Our debt is to believe, when there is no hope!”

“How is the covenant sealed?”

A hush fell over the vaulted halls. All three women turned their backs and faced one another over the book.

“The covenant is sealed in blood.” They intoned, voices meshing into one sonorous rolling sound. “Our blood. The blood of the Guide. The blood of the First Men.”

Their voices grew silent and no one moved. At last, creeping out of the darkness, a stocky figure came to the altar with a black cloth draped over his arms. A sense of tension began to build in the air. Far, far back in the hall, a single voice began to chant. One by one, other voices chimed in, yet no clear word emerged...

The man cast aside the cloth, revealing an ancient hammer.

“Our blood,” said the eldest, “is the blood of the Lord.”

A gnarled, twisted hand raised an ancient, rusted nail over the three cupped palms.

“We are the Covenant,” answered the youngest as the hooded man centered the nail over her palm, square upon the puckered scar.

“Let it be sealed!”

The hammer fell, driving the nail through all three palms and into the heart of the book. The women shuddered, hidden faces creased with pain, and crimson pooled around the nail.

“Ahhhhh....”

There was a sharp hot flash of light, and then sudden darkness swallowed them all.

## **BANK LIST**

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<b>Bank</b>		<b>GP</b>	<b>Rate</b>
Aztec Empire of Mexico	Tenochtitlan Teocali	2,050	40%
Chan Mongol Empire	Uncle Wu's	726	40%
The Islamic Union	Tell Barak Merchant Cred.	311	40%
Free Republic of Ethiopia	Funj Gold Reserves	763	40%
Principate of Kiev	Royal Bank of Khitai	142	35%
Coptic Kingdom of Maasai	M'Beya House of Credit	1,252	20%
The Nisei Republic	New Yedo Matsuma Bank	805	40%
The Republic of Spain	Aztlan Mercantile Credit	269	25%
The Republic of Spain	Banque du Galway	748	40%
Empire of Swedish-Russia	BUX	970	40%
The Kingdom of Java	Sunny Sunda Savings	907	40%

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