

# The Sahûl Chronicle

Turn 9

Published by the Printers Guild of Zadres  
THE EMPEROR IS DEAD. LONG LIVE THE EMPEROR.

1491-1495 SA

*"A sword is strengthened in the forging by hammer blows."*

*Tirach Zhur the Magnificent*

**W**HAT A TURN! No less than three Dynastic Failures, a continuing war, new wars, peace treaties, assassinations, some ice, and even a depression. You folks are nothing, if not entertaining.  
IMPORTANT RULES NOTE: Due to the collapse of the credit and banking system in the Byrrin River Valley, for this turn the formula for calculating International Trade is as follows:

Realms with at least one Region bordering the Byrrin River or Lake Sardath:  $GP_{IT} = (TV1 \times TV2) / 12$

All other Realms:  $GP_{IT} = (TV1 \times TV2) / 8$

Normal maximums apply. If you are not on the Byrrin River or Lake Sardath, but you are trading with partners who are, you must use the first formula *for those partners*. Realms on the Byrrin or the Lake use the first formula for all trading partners, even those who are themselves using the second formula.

Note also that the financial crisis may have reduced your income in other ways, as indicated on your stat sheets. Combine this with the minor ice issues of the Turn, and many of you will find that you are not as flush with cash as you might have been in Turns previous. Never fear; this, too, shall pass.

Since I keep having to answer this question: I generally don't mention failed DP in the Chronicle. If you performed diplomacy on a region, and there's no mention of it, odds are good it's because it failed.

NEXT TURN DUE: FRIDAY 27 MARCH 2009.

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## FREE COMPANIES & ERRANTRY &C.

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COMPANY OF THE BLACK CLAW—5sc 35hi 40mc  
Captain: Tirabinis Tirrit (LB89W) YG age 41  
Location: Tichiir, Iantier Province  
Min. Bid: 100gp/Turn

WHITE LOTUS COMPANY—10hi 25mi 8li 12mc  
Captain: Mistress Exata (L993I) IL age 54  
Location: Atch'tik, Artier Province  
Min. Bid: 130gp/Turn

DAREIN'S DESTROYERS—3hc 35mi 20li 19mc  
Captain: Darein Gorthes (LA84W) TR age 46  
Location: Einandhu, Sardior Province  
Min. Bid: 150gp/Turn  
20% off if we're fighting Ravens!

RED DRAGON COMPANY—10cv 15pk 30mi  
Captain: Tarrid the Fiercer (LA69S) UR age 55  
Location: Urdrahahn, looking for a boat.  
Min. Bid: 50gp/Turn

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## FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

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IMPERIAL BANK OF SAHÛL  
Location: .....Einandhu  
Available to borrow: .....0 GP

The Imperial Bank of Einandhu has been seized by Imperial military forces and is undergoing reorganization. All shares previously held by the Order of Heralds are now property of the Emperor. As the majority shareholder, Emperor Onin Zho suspended all transactions during the reorganization. All previously extended loans must be repaid in full with the customary interest.

*Loans:* Cappargarnia (600/t10), Duedhyn (600/t10)

BANK OF ITAXIK  
Location: .....Itaxik  
Available to borrow: .....815.5 GP  
*Loans:* Itaxik (480/t11)

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## Western Sahul

### THE KIT'IXI COAST

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#### COUNTY OF TOKATL (17 I/TA)

*Her Excellency, Tinikatua v, Mistress of the ToteK Hive, Countess of Tokatl.*

**Trade:** Averon, Chi'tixi, CM, Itaxik, Taneki, ThaceD

**DP:** None

Tokatl sacrificed great whopping piles of cash to the Hidden Lords. While other portions of the Empire were sinking into economic chaos, Tokatl by contrast enjoyed a boom in trade.

Investments were made in the navy, but only Tokatl's infantry improved. Tinikatua, meanwhile, has been inspired by this whole "reading" thing, and she sent all of her leadership corps back to school.

A new priory in Chapaht was built at the site of the rock of rolling, a place where Tarotists have come to turn a large rock, using a lever, onto one of its many sides and receive rewards ranging from a satisfying "clumph" sound to a hurt foot and achy back.

Another new priory in Utechay is known as "the Mines of Logic". The site celebrates a large series of interconnected cliffside caverns that seem to all eventually empty out into the sea at great heights. Fun for the whole hive!

#### DUCHY OF TANEKI (13 I/YG)

*Her Grace, Toktoka IV, the Mistress of Akelil, Duchess of Taneki, Baroness Ketatl.*

**Trade:** Averon, Chi'tixi, Itaxik, Pexiki, Sakkar, Tokatl, Yax'te

**DP:** None

Taneki went back to sleep. Apparently, they can only shake themselves awake for five years of every decade. Toktoka III died in 1495, only to be replaced by Toktoka IV.

#### THE CHURCH MILITANT (13 I/IL)

*Her Holiness Aketika IX, Iluvarian Matriarch of the West, Archemandrite of Tikata.*

**Trade:** Araxes, Averon, ThaceD, Tokatl

**DP:** None

Somehow the venerable Aketika VIII survived. She received a request from the Pontiff at Sis-trameides with interest.

#### ELECTORAL GRAND DUCHY OF AVERON (23 SI/IL)

*Her Gracious Majesty, Jera III, Lady of Clan Drax, Countess of Darida, Lord Admiral of the Green, Electoral Grand Duchess of Averon.*

*Tiketua III of Tishrak, Margrave of the North.*

**Trade:** Araxes, Atuburrk, Chi'tixi, CM, Taneki, ThaceD, Tokatl

**DP:** None

The wildly popular (and charming and wise and regal and resplendent) Grand Duchess Jera once again activated the ancient gate in Kongros. The empty air of the great archway crackled with glowing bands of blue lightning. Then, leaving a force of her own Cataphracti to guard the gate, the Grand Duchess prepared to wait.

Mere days later, a rock with a note tied to it tumbled out of the gate. The message was brought to the Grand Duchess, who read it with a smile and quickly penned a reply. The guards tied it to the same rock and tossed it into the glowing archway. It was only at that point, that things started going very wrong. Moments after the rock and message was sent through, a reply was received in the form of the charred Saurian skull. More soon followed, until thousands were heaped in front of the gate, all charred. Some of them were still smoking. The gate was shut down immediately.

Two years later, in 1493, Gnurd the Incoherent led an Averese army into Dorozhand to relieve the Averese expeditionary force in the ruins of Golthoth the Damned. Taking 30% casualties to the harsh desert, they arrived, exhausted and parched, only to be greeted by an grisly sight. The expeditionary force had been slaughtered and their bodies piled

by the entrance to the ancient city. The bones were charred, and the skulls had been neatly removed.

Despite the continued independence of Pantun, Averese engineers pushed forward with their ambitious project to create a roadway completely circumscribing Lake Muleen. Cavalry forces patrol the thin ribbon of stone that hugs the lake shore in Pantun. The locals seem to avoid it.

With the death of the Lord of Dorria, the region reasserted its independence.

Advances were reported in Airship design.

#### COUNTY OF PEXIKI (19 I/YG)

*Her Excellency, Ixix IV, Mistress of the Coac̄toka Hive, Countess of Pexiki, Lady Amoxcali.*

**Trade:** Itaxik, Taneki

**DP:** None.

**C**ountess Ixix IV could not rouse herself to action. Continuing unemployment undermined the Pexiki economy, and there were minor peasant rebellions in the eastern reaches near Lake Exin.

#### ELECTORAL PRINCIPALITY OF ITAXIK (45 I/UR)

*Her High Majesty, Princess Chass'ika II, Mistress of the Tischak, Countess of Takkikik, Elector of Itaxik, Golden Beetle of the West.*

*Her Excellency, Kassa v, the Wily, Mistress of Calpolli, Lady Tchantli, Countess of Kachar, Protector of the Fair Isles.*

**Trade:** Pexiki, Sakkar, Taneki, Tokatl, Yax'te

**DP:** Co'atepec (T), Kachar (A), Kattok (F)

**I**taxik's (in)famous Corps of Engineers was very busy. A bridge over the Tepic River was built between the city of Teocut and Yagnarist Co'atepec on the far bank. A portion of the ruined river citadel of Kwiyatal in Nechyetti on the Miçtia were rebuilt into a bustling port town. Itaxik scholars and scribes moved quickly to preserve and catalogue the magnificent old library there.

Glasshouse technology was more or less perfected, although they've never really gotten past the reputation for fragility earned by the early designs. The Regent suggested that calling them *greenhouses*

*es*, in reference to their contents rather than their construction, might make them more popular.

A national science and technology fair was held in the capital in 1494. All manner of strange and wondrous inventions were on display by their creators. Hardly any of them exploded. The two winners were awarded valuable cash prizes, though their inventions became property of the Principality. The winners this time were both farmers who had created new, hardier food plant hybrids.

Thanks to the application of plenty of charm and large piles of cash, not to mention rather impressive presence of 27,000 Itaxik heavy horse and fifty airships, the Yagnarist rulers of Co'atepec graciously accepted the Principality's diplomatic overtures.

But it was in the halls of Tchantli where Itaxik diplomacy reached its zenith. After ceding the disputed prefecture of Cautl to the Countess of Kachar, Regent Yautlatoaya sent the eloquent Countess of Akassa to treat with the embattled Kachar government. Truly astounding amounts of gold poured into the efforts, as Itaxik at last revealed its goal: to reduce Kachar to an Itaxik dependency. After four years of negotiation, the deed was compleat, and Countess Kassa the Wily of Kachar swore fealty to the person of Princess Chass'ika II.

Sadly, many other diplomatic efforts were not so successful.

Smiling Stoat Inn franchises have begun popping up all over the Principality, with two being opened in the city of Itaxik alone.

#### *The Unexpected and Sudden End of Lady Nabari*

The venerable seer Lady Nabari was carried in a palanquin by her escorts through the ruins of Nikka in Omei. She smiled and waved at people not there and carried on conversations with the phantom images of its First Empire inhabitants. At one point, she defied her minders and descended from her palanquin, falling to her knees before an invisible figure. For several long minutes, she knelt in the mud of the time-eaten wreckage of the once-celebrated city, murmuring to those only she could see. Finally, she rose, unsteady, and her bearers

helped her back to her seat. Her chief minder, the Lady Kina, asked her what had happened.

Nabari's eyes grew misty as she gazed into the sky and said, "today are the ides of Quadrillis, in Year 12 of the Reign of the Prudent and Tranquil Emperor of the House of the Black Sun, named Chithenes. It is no less than he with whom I have spoken. He was surprised at my form, but came because tales of my wanderings had reached him on his obsidian throne. He gives me a gift, which he will..." Here she paused a moment, confused, before continuing. "He gives me a gift, which he *has* hidden in a vault deep within the city's cisterns. I will tell you where. You must fetch it."

Several of Lady Kina's men-at-arms soon brought back an impossibly ancient metal box, encased in wax, perhaps the size of a small hen. It was a complex puzzle box, of the sort once prized by collectors. Lady Nabari opened it in an instant. Inside was a medallion of iron, depicting the seal of the House of the Black Sun. If it was genuine, it could be more than 2,800 years old, and yet it appeared newly minted.

She took it into her shaking hands.

Once again, she slipped from her palanquin and began to converse with the empty air. She seemed humble. Perhaps even contrite. And then, as the medallion slipped from her fingers and fell onto the cold, hard ground, Lady Nabari faded from view and simply vanished.

Despite an intensive search in the ruined city and the nearby countryside, Lady Nabari was never seen again. In further exploration of the crypt under a crumbling local church, however, the Itaxik did discover one sarcophagus amongst the many that bore not the faded image of a long-lost Saurian notable, but that of a Malebolge, from a time when none as yet lived on Sahûl.

#### COUNTY OF KACHAR

**C**ountess Kassa resolved the Kachar government crisis by swearing fealty to the person of Princess Chass'ika of Itaxik.

#### BARONY OF SAKKAR (14 IS/IL)

*Baroness Neallatalah III of Sakkari, the Vehement, Mistress of Nelhuayotl, Heir of the Prophet, Beloved of the Light of Iluvar.*

**Trade:** Itaxik, Taneki, Yax'te

**DP:** Tosiuikka (T), Tlapan (A)

**T**he frugal and pious Sakkari continued to expand their realm. The pine forests of Petlakka-lko and Onoalikko, as well as the rolling knolls and vales of Oloua, K'soa, Poliuz, and Kwenamikkan were occupied by Sakkari troops. The trappers and herders in most of these sparsely populated regions welcomed the Sakkari garrisons, or at least paid no mind to them. In Poliuz, however, with its time-worn and imposing Urdan Cathedral at Inoga, it was a different story. The nomadic shepherds inhabiting the region shunned and avoided the Iluvarians, refusing even to sell them supplies.

Duelling Sakkari and Itaxik envoys in Pehuatoka made the Countess there feel extremely important. Regardless, she was petulant, impolite, and generally lorded it over the envoys, which this time included the Baroness of Sakkari herself. And then, when she decided the envoys were not being properly deferential, she threw a fit. Well, Baroness Neallatalah decided that she'd had quite enough of her attitude. So in 1493 she attacked. The idea was to defeat the Pehuatokan army in the field and so force the Countess to pay tribute to Sakkari. Soldiers and marines stormed ashore from the Sakkari vessels in the harbour, and after a sharp battle, they overcame the badly-led defensive forces. The Countess was slain in the attack, and while several of her hive-daughters escaped to the nearby countryside, at least one was available to take command of the region and pay tribute to Sakkari.

In Pehuatoka, it was a dark day indeed, marking the absolute nadir of a Realm which at one time stood as one of the most powerful in the west. There was wailing in the streets, and penitents huddled at the gates of the great Cathedral of Bakrata, dressed in sackcloth with ashes heaped upon their heads. Mother Verilia, there on a visitation, took pity on the

penitents and conducted services for them outside the Cathedral, under the wary gaze of the Sakkar garrison.

Mealy-mouthed Saurian envoy Lord Krinn died unexpectedly in his soup during a delicate negotiation in Tosiukka. A slightly more competent member of the diplomatic corps finished his rounds.

#### ICEMARK OF YAX'TE (15 S/IL)

*Margrave Tillein the Silent, Grand Master and Knight-Commander of the Champions of the Renewal.*

**Trade:** Itaxik, Sakkar, Taneki

**DP:** Neghas (T)

The Ice-mark built a naval academy in Firreltet on the theory that cold weather is good for midshipmen. Prudent grain storage helped the Ice-mark through the misery of the very cold year of 1494. Fortunately, their realm warmed up during the next summer.

Iluvarian missionaries flooded tributary Kikua, converting the vast majority of the population.

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## Thacia & Aret

### THE HIGH PLAINS & NORTHERN COAST

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#### ELECTORAL QUEENDOM OF THE GREAT HIVE OF

#### CHI'TIXI TIRRIX KI (38 I/YG)

*Her Most Puissant Majesty, Antaxi v, the Pleasant, Mistress of Tirrix & the Great Hive, Duchess of Chax and Tix'itikata, Countess Itax, Electoral Queen of Chi'tixi, &c., &c.*

*Her Excellency, Tannix IV, Lady Ch'tort, Countess of Carrat, Vice-regent of Western Chi'tixi.*

**Trade:** Atuburrk, Averon, Cappargarnia, Hyrágec, ID, Ingazi, Kitchat, Kommolek, Taneki, ThaceD, ThaceE, Tokatl, Urdráhahn

**DP:** Failed.

Queen Antaxi corresponded with her allies in the Twilight March, and confident that peace would once again prove an impossible ideal, continued to arm for war. Just as a defensive measure.

They also improved the quality of their cavalry and siege forces and bought them spiffy new uniforms.

On the religious front, Chi'tixi built an additional priory and enlarged their rather paltry sorcery academy.

Chi'tixi was slightly affected by the banking crisis, but their extremely fat treasury should easily make up any differences in revenue.

Because you just can't have enough war, Chi'tixi hired the Black Claw at stupendously high rates and then launched a coordinated attack into the Araxean outpost of Tichiir. Meanwhile, they also maintained their presence in the Cappargarnian war, where actual battles were fought.

#### DUCHY OF THACE (22 S/UR)

*His Grace, Willor v Agröes, Shining Star of the Steppe, Lord Goshtikka-Ourane, Baron of Brennadein, Duke of Thace.*

**Trade:** Araxes, Averon, Chi'tixi, CM, Ingazi, Hyrágec, ID, ThaceE, Tigers, Tokatl, Urdráhahn

**DP:** Nottesan (F)

Duke Biard, now in his seventies, finally began to feel the effects of his age. In his last years, he began a concerted push to complete many of the projects begun much earlier in his reign. Engineers and artisans redoubled their work on the mysterious bridge project across the Upper Húrn between the cities of Ourane and Herroc. Begun back in 1466, the structure had been long cloaked in scaffolding and canvas to keep away prying eyes. In 1492, the elderly Duke Biard presided over its unveiling. The bridge is an immense structure. The supporting pylons are carved in the image of immense trolls, bearing the weight of the bridge upon their shoulders. While great city gates, flanked by magnificent stone elephants, rise on either end of the bridge to defend the one city against the other should either be overrun, the general effect has been to draw the people of the two cities together. It is now not unusual to see residents of Ourane shopping in the Herroc market, and vice versa. The artistic beauty

of the bridge and soaring architecture has led many to call it a wonder of the age.

Towns were built in the south, Syabor in Shustanim and Rannel in Gaslar. Massive improvements were undertaken in the capital of Ourane. The academy there was endowed as a University. Cavalry quality improved. Thave was slightly affected by the banking crisis.

In 1495, Duke Biard died at age 77. He was well loved, and even his elephants mourned his passing. He was succeeded by his designated heir, the fabled Prince Willor Agröes<sup>1</sup>, the charismatic and brilliant tamer of the steppe, blood-brother of the late Agrik of Enrid, swiller of koumiss, champion throat-singer, and possibly the most talented sorcerer of the age, etc. He started his reign by naming his father's bridge after him, the *Duke Biard XIV Bridge*. Most of the locals call it the *Troll Bridge*, however.

At his coronation, the new Duke started gossiping tongues wagging when he appeared at the ceremony wearing a blindfold. The Duke continues to wear it during most of the day. He claims "it's the only way I can get anything done," whatever that may mean.

Since the new Duke never married (though constant rumours of nomadic concubines are whispered through the parlours and cafés of Ourane), the race is on to see which of his four nephews might be made heir.

Lord Garrik of Nottesan swore fealty to the new Duke, though his lands remain restive.

#### **ELECTORAL COUNTY-PALATINE OF THACE (28 S/UR)**

*His Most Excellent Maješty, Ebalondrir IV, the Mighty, Lord Goshtikka-Snamarthis, Marshal of Thacia, Governor of Thacia Maior & Minor, Electoral Count Palatine in Thace.*

**Trade:** Araxes, Atuburrk, Averno, Cappargarnia, Chi'tixi, Golmath, Hyrágec, ID, Ingazi, Kicitchat, Taneki, ThaceD, Tigers, Urdraháhn

<sup>1</sup> A nickname given him by the steppe nomads, it is a Ranad word meaning "star-shining prince". Pronounced *ag-ROE-esb*, or something very like it.

**DP:** None

**E**balondrir fell back into his lax ways, and many in the court believe he may be addicted to opium. He and his growing family remained at Carcë, while back at the capital various factions of nobles and bureaucrats vied for power.

Despite growing calls for the return of Carcë to the steppe tribes, nothing was done. When the Emperor ennobled Sar Tahnik under the title of "Lord Carcë", Ebalondrir could not be roused for comment. His wife, on the other hand, is increasingly dominating the court.

Electoral Thace was slightly affected by the banking crisis, but their extremely fat treasury should easily make up any differences in revenue. Of course, the unemployed and starving peasants may make things *slightly* more difficult if something is not done quickly.

#### **LORDSHIP OF CARCË (4 S/UR)**

*Sar Grotan Tremek, Second Lord Carcë, Master of the Horseclans, Scourge of Urda the Fierce.*

**Trade:** Araxes, ThaceD, ThaceE

**DP:** None

**S**ar Tahnik once again proposed to Electoral Thace that, should they return Carcë to his control, he would promise a hundred years of peace between their realms. Once again, there was no reply from Thace.

In response to an offer from the Emperor, Sar Tahnik dispatched 7,000 steppe cavalry under Agrik Gär to Sardarthion to serve in the Emerald Watch. The Sar became increasingly ill over the next few years, and he spent much of that time trying to ensure the election of his son as the next Sar. In 1493, Sar Tahnik, now nearly blind and occasionally ravaging, received from the Emperor a warrant of nobility with his chosen title, Lord Carcë. He gathered the clans together and convinced them to not only choose his son as the next Sar, but also to keep the title within his Clan, the Grotan.

Shortly afterwards, he died. His loss was keenly felt, as the clans regard him as little less than the fa-

ther of his country. It is not unusual for desert Urdan shrines to feature his image amongst its icons.

Deep in the south steppes, far beyond Carcë's borders, rumours of religious fanatics stirring up trouble came to the Carcë court. Are they the "Real Tigers" or some one else?

#### GRAND DUCHY OF ARAXES (22 w/UR)

*His Grace, Pangku Tramandes the Valiant, Baron Pinyerrel, Grand Duke of All Araxes.*

*Sir Ronnel Rannes, Lord Protector of the Realm.*

**Trade:** Aradéc, Atuburrk, Averno, Cappargarnia, CM, Einandhu, Golmath, Hyrágec, ID, Ingazi, Kicitchat, Taneki, ThaceD, ThaceE, Tigers, Tokatl, Urdraháhn

**DP:** Maharmeth (F), Hesketh (F)

**G**rand Duke Tramandes attempted to put his realm back in order after neglecting it for so long. Frankly, it was a bit of a mess.

He had just gotten a bit of a handle on things when Chi'tixi invaded. The Black Claw mercenaries were joined by 100,000 Chi'tixi infantry, with some airships and elephants for show. The isolated region had no choice but to surrender and pay tribute to the Chi'tixi invaders. Needless to say, ambassadors and trade delegations were withdrawn, and Araxes finds itself, oddly, at war with their northern neighbour.

The Naval and Sorcery Academies were enlarged as part of the Grand Duke's education programme. The heir, an Academy graduate and now serving as a lieutenant aboard *HGS Mermaid*, has proven himself an outstanding naval officer.

The Imperial financial crisis had a decided impact upon Araxes, but fortunately they've got quite a bit still socked away. Still, the Grand Duke has some serious questions about what happened to his investments in the Imperial Bank.

#### COUNTY OF KICITCHAT (20 I/YG)

*Her Excellency, Xant'ki IX, Lady Tchac'at, Countess of the Kicitchat Hive and Associated Dominions.*

**Trade:** Aradéc, Araxes, Atuburrk, Cappargarnia, Chi'tixi, CotI, Einandhu, Hyrágec, ID,

Ingazi, Kommolek, ThaceE, Tiryowglas, Urdraháhn

**DP:** None

**C**ountess Xant'ki signed a treaty with Adndar to end the Cappargarnian war. The terms against Cappargarnia were simultaneously more rapacious and more lenient than those proposed by Emperor Onin Zho. She sent armies, dressed in the flashy uniforms of the Twilight March, hither and yon to obtain the regions promised by both treaties.

Intensive counter-intelligence operations verging on a purge found little in the way of foreign agents, but did root out the usual war profiteers. The banking collapse hit Kicitchat fairly hard.

#### ELECTORAL GRAND DUCHY OF ATUBURRK (23 w/YG)

*His Gracious Majesty, Adhanggar Dranthes III, Count of Odol, Imperial Governor of Ardebon, Elector & Grand Duke of Atuburrk.*

**Trade:** Araxes, Cappargarnia, Chi'tixi, Einandhu, Golmath, Hyrágec, ID, Ingazi, Kicitchat, Kommolek, ThaceE, Tokatl, Urdraháhn, Zadres (3)

**DP:** Atchit'erix (F)

**G**rand Duke Dranthes sent stout Yagnarist colonists into Tarotist Tik'kitixi to bring the prefecture more in line with current Atuburrk thinking. For the moment, it appears to have worked. The town of Wottadrongo grew, and three new priories were built in areas with known Tarotist minorities.

Public works were constructed in every Prefecture, and infantry and sorcery both improved. The government, a little overwhelmed with having the entire island to deal with, expanded.

Atuburrk deposited some funds into the Imperial Bank, and various interests within the Realm were furious when their deposits were seized by Emperor Onin Zho. Needless to say, Atuburrk's economy was badly impacted by the financial crisis.

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## Central Sahul

### THE HEART OF EMPIRE

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#### THE RUIN OF THE BYRRIN (1479–1495)

(also variously known as *the Crusade of the Six Knives* and *the War of the Cappargarnian Chastisement*)

*Other than a few mopping up actions, it's pretty much down to: Raven Crusaders vs everybody.*

1491: As the atrocities of the Raven Crusaders at Tythen became known, pressure to wrap up the Chastisement increased amongst most of the combatants. Rumours of peace swirled about the Byrrin. Indeed, Imperial diplomats were known to be exchanging letters with the Cappargarnian Princess, and Adndar, fearful of a two-front war following the Raven attacks, was deep in talks with Cappargarnia as well. Additional, less substantiated rumours spoke of one or more members of the Twilight March pursuing a separate peace.

Emperor Onin Zho himself proposed post-war borders to which Cappargarnia provisionally assented. The emperor summoned Princess Tiribissi Enya to Sardarthion to conclude the treaty, promising her safe conduct on threat of Imperial displeasure to any who might try to waylay her. Chancellor Chass'ika of Itaxik herself promised to escort her to the capital.



*Proposed borders of Cappargarnia*

Cappargarnia, for her part, began the process of withdrawing her forces from some of the other regions under her control. With rebellion brewing in her western steppe reaches, Cappargarnian ally Baron Sandrim Hesiod of Ebmadh<sup>2</sup>, began the withdrawal of forces. On the way, his forces pillaged both Nertik and Ollon. Nertik reverted to

<sup>2</sup> His own lands were, of course, under Kommolek occupation.

Kitchat control the moment Sandrim's forces withdrew.

The White Lotus Company abandoned their barracks in Atch'tik and crossed the river to Plormel, where they took up defensive positions.

Similarly, Darein's Destroyers were ordered from Tapori to Djarden. Oddly enough, their Captain ignored the Cappargarnian orders. Instead, they raised banners indicating they were no longer combatants, and began marching back south to their former winter quarters in Einandhu. Tapori, meanwhile, rebelled.

The Cappargarnian high command, perhaps growing impatient with Sevas Psu's increasing disregard for little matters like *prudence*, not to mention *obedience*, ordered him to stand down the fleet on penalty of death. Given the facts that (1) his extremely ambitious nephew was captain of one of the ships in his fleet, (2) he had never been particularly close to his nephew, and (3) his nephew kept looking at him meaningfully while sharpening his dagger, Sevas Psu decided to anchor the fleet off the coast of Sondrim and bide his time.

In Einandhu, the nearly blind Ingazi representative to the House of Peers, ex-Count Palatine Gwariva Razhim, arrived unannounced at the doors of the Imperial Bank of Einandhu. Representing the bank's Board of Directors, he had come to perform a surprise audit. The officials at the bank were quite taken aback, but Razhim was adamant. The books were duly opened, and the Ingazi team went to work.

The two Electoral Princesses, Tiribissi Enya of Cappargarnia and Chass'ika of Itaxik, set out from Cappargarnia city with full pomp and circumstance, accompanied by five hundred armed retainers. They wintered in Joarbal. Oddly enough, there were reports that Tiribissi Enya had hitched a ride with the Imperial Green Fleet as it sailed upriver. There were also claims that she'd been seen on pilgrimage to the Shrine of Moroko in Endani Prefecture.

*Meanwhile, in Sardarthion...*

The Emperor grew increasingly paranoid, seeing conspiracies everywhere. Accordingly, he ordered the Emerald Watch to double the guards about his person and throughout the Palace. The five hundred of Zarkhandu's Black Blood Battalion were everywhere, monitoring even the Emerald Watch. The Emperor varied his routines, ate in random rooms and at random times, and where and when he slept, only a handful knew.

The only people who regularly saw Onin Zho were his son, Prince Tarret<sup>3</sup>, and his attaché, the Wenemet Colonel Mattahonga Lazar of the IVth Emerald Watch Regiment.

Then, in early Spring, Emperor Onin Zho gathered about himself some 10,000 infantry of the Emerald Watch and set out from Sardarthion northwards into Torsi. Not in living memory had an Emperor ridden out with a military force. No one knew what to make of it.

As Emperor Onin Zho's decrees and missives had become more and more arrogant and rigid through the years, his popularity across the empire had plummeted. The chief exception to this rule was the Imperial Demense itself, and especially the City. The citizens of Sardarthion had grown to love Onin Zho. His reform of the imperial bureaucracy had created almost a cult of learning and service amongst the middle classes, and no Emperor in centuries had lavished such attention on the welfare of the people of the City. The new Imperial Auditors were scrupulously fair and uncompromising in their duties.

It was therefore with some shock to his subjects in the Imperial Demense that the Emperor, surrounded by an army of the Emerald Watch before the opened gates of the Free City of Einandhu, issued simultaneous decrees ordering the reform of the Most Ancient and Undaunted Imperial Order of Heralds *and* the immediate seizure of the Imperial Bank of Einandhu as an "enemy combatant", to include all assets. Faced with the order to lead the

Emerald Watch into Einandhu to effect the seizure, Saurian Colonel Ephras Thimm flatly refused. He was immediately dismissed placed under arrest. The Emperor then ordered his attaché Colonel Mattahonga to carry out his orders. Backed up by 8,000 infantry of the Emerald Watch and Zarkhandu's Black Blood Battalion, Mattahonga proceeded to do exactly that<sup>4</sup>.

#### *The Plunder of Einandhu*

The Auditors swept into the offices of the Heralds, where they were welcomed with tea and cakes. Truth be told, the Heralds had not substantially changed their way of doing business in several hundred years, and they were looking forward to an independent audit to help streamline their work and to normalize the many redundancies built into their sprawling organization. The Auditors, for their part, were astounded at the amount of work ahead of them. It was in many ways a clash of cultures, but not necessarily of ideals.

The Heralds were an organization dedicated to diplomacy, communications, delivering the mail, maintaining the enormous heraldic archives, and sorting through the heraldic precedents of dozens of realms for over six hundred years. And above all the *Code*; the Heralds lived and died by the *Code*. The Auditors shared this same basic dedication to honesty, competency, and honour. Where they differed, however, was in their almost fanatical dedication to organization and efficiency. Such words were barely in the heraldic vocabulary.

The audit had barely gotten off the ground before the Emperor announced that the Heralds mission would be severely curtailed to make them "more mobile and less diverse". No longer would they be able to hold parcels or conduct any transactions not approved by the Emperor. Then Imperial troops, backed by the Black Blood Battalion, began rifling through the archives. This was the last straw. The Tiger King of Arms attempted to confront the Em-

<sup>3</sup> The Prince was ostensibly at University, but he spent an awful lot of time at the Imperial court.

<sup>4</sup> Unconfirmed reports stated that up to a fifth of the original force deserted when faced with the prospect of attacking Einandhu.

peror about this outrage, but the Emperor would see no one. The Principal Auditor protested that they could not continue to work of reform with soldiers blundering around, taking things from the vaults before the auditors even had time to catalogue them. Colonel Mattahonga assured the Principal Auditor that only “the non-records contents of the archives” were being seized. Unconvinced, the Principal Auditor attempted to appeal directly to the Emperor, but Onin Zho would not see him, lest he prove an assassin or conspirator.

Meanwhile, another audit was being interrupted at the Imperial Bank. Gwariva Razhim was busily trying to get to the bottom of the Cappargarnian loan when Imperial troops arrived. With all the efficiency of a well-oiled machine, the Emerald Watch shut down the bank’s offices, emptied out all the vaults, and gathered together every record, ledger, and receipt. The bank officials were outraged, but not half so much as Gwariva Razhim. He shouted and threatened the soldiers with legal action. He physically tried to prevent the seizing of records. He even started beating on one poor soldier with his cane. He was so insufferable and disruptive, that an officer finally had to have him restrained. Shortly thereafter, the grey-haired old Wenemet died in custody.

The Tiger King of Arms, meanwhile, had come to a momentous decision: the Emperor had overstepped his authority in defiance of custom and law. If the neutrality and honour of the Heralds were thus impugned, their very mission would be at stake. Many citizens of Einandhu urged armed resistance, and in fact the City’s Guard Captain even activated five dozen or so stone golems to toss the invaders out. The Tiger King would not be drawn into committing what he considered an illegal act, and he ordered the city guards to stand down. He needn’t have bothered, as the Emperor exercised his mystical authority to place the Heralds and the city under the Peace of the Gods. Fleeing by the river proved impossible; the Blue Fleet was now blockading the city. So instead, the Tiger King and the rest of the Heralds in Einandhu simply walked out

of the city with nothing but their cloaks and their wands of office.

The Emperor was back in his palace by Rending Day, leaving more *compliant* officers in command of Einandhu. Several trunks of seized goods accompanied him to Sardarthion. More would follow.

Meanwhile, Cappargarnia City was treated to a state visit by the Burgrave of Adndar, a distant cousin of the Electoral Princess. He quickly ingratiated himself into Cappargarnian high society, wining and dining the Senators and making fast friends of leading citizens of the Houses major.

*1492:* Sir Spennenn Wynn’s 64,000 Raven Crusaders attacked Cappargarnian Cauaros. The undefended region fell quickly. Farther east, the army of the Raven Prophet poured across the border into Tarotist Bæmûl, conquering the region and burning the priory of Thûnahd.

In Jarvaël, 2,500 Raven knights made short work of over twice as many Adndari horsemen. They had slightly more trouble with the local castles; taking horrific casualties, they barely managed to secure the region. All thought of military conversion was quietly shelved.

With the headquarters of the Heralds under Imperial military control, their vast and ungainly postal service ground to a halt. It was worst in the Imperial Demense and the rest of the Byrrin Valley, where the Heralds operations were more closely tied to Einandhu as a regional hub.

After the suppression of the bank at Einandhu and the seizure of all depositor assets, confidence in the banking industry as a whole collapsed. Merchant houses refused to honour drafts from other houses or banks. With postal service temporarily interrupted, getting information about the extent of the economic disruption proved problematic. Economic and commercial collapse was inevitable, and scarcity of trade goods soon the rule. With scarcity came hoarding, and soon basic foodstuffs became difficult to find in the towns and cities of the Byrrin Valley and the Home Provinces. To prevent mass starvation, many urban militias ventured

into the countryside to obtain foodstuffs, by force if necessary, to prevent famine. Typically, farmers reacted poorly to this turn of events, and there were dozens of minor armed clashes.

The Emperor's popularity was dropping to an all-time low, but his hard core supporters in Sardarthion were doing their best to sell the Emperor's programme. In particular, young Prince Tarret, who all but worshipped his father, wrote several pamphlets and spoke in every venue of the City's literary, political, and café scene. His speeches on the University commons drew hundreds, then thousands. The start of each speech was always the same: "A sword is strengthened in the forging by hammer blows; the great Onin Zho is reforging the sword that is the empire. Only through great trials can greatness be achieved." Prince Tarret proved a persuasive speaker. Soon, pro-Zho members of the Emerald Watch were volunteering to provide security at the events. As the economic situation worsened, paradoxically more and more joined Tarret's movement in the Emperor's support.

The Imperial Food Taster detected a deadly poison a joint of meat destined for the Emperor's table. An immediate investigation was launched to determine who was culpable. Several more violent assassination attempts, meanwhile, were easily foiled by the Emerald Watch.

#### *At the Gates of the Adndar Canal*

Vice-Admiral of the Green:

What seems to be the trouble, officer?

Adndar Canal Official:

Well, there's a toll, you know.

VAdm: A toll? But we're the Imperial fleet.

ACO: Says right here in the book: "Trade and transport tariff. A crown for every five military vessels. No exceptions."

VAdm: Well, look, we're in a bit of a hurry...

ACO: And me wife's got the vapours. We all got troubles, guv'ner.

VAdm: But we don't have the money.

ACO: Not my problem guv'ner. No pay, no passage. Pretty simple, really.

VAdm: Look, can you bill us?

ACO: Bill you?

VAdm: Right. Just send the bill to the Emperor.

ACO: Says here "no deferrals, no credit."

VAdm: OK. Hmmm. Ah! Just deduct it from your taxes, then.

ACO: Taxes?

VAdm: Right. Your city's imperial taxes.

ACO: Imperial taxes? Do we pay those?

VAdm: Well, if you don't, I wouldn't let on. I mean, I'm no revenue agent... but I know some.

ACO: I see what you mean. Well, we'll just deduct it, then.

VAdm: Right-o.

...and with that the Green Fleet negotiated the Adndar Canal into the Upper Byrrin. The Adndar Canal Official in question took a well-deserved "retirement" a few days later.

In Raven-occupied Dusios, some 7,000 steppe cavalry rode through under an Imperial flag of truce, heading ever east.

The *Procession of the Princesses*, meanwhile, continued. The small party became a magnet for assassins, with at least two attempts being made as the group passed through Triffin and Envel Prefectures. A major ambush occurred as they arrived in Sardarthion Prefecture, and despite the rousing defense of their guards, Princess Chass'ika was wounded and Princess Tiribissi Enya was slain. It was quickly discovered, however, that "Enya" was in fact a body double, sent to throw would-be assassins off the trail. Where the real Tiribissi Enya was, no one knew.

*1493:* Kicitchat forces moved to reoccupy Atch'tik. Since the withdrawal of the White Lotus Company two years earlier, the region had been functioning largely independently, but with the arrival of the army they suddenly remembered they were part of the County of Kicitchat. There were a few random executions just to keep everybody on their toes.

The Chi'tixi fleet in the Lower Byrrin landed ground forces at Tapori, quickly occupying the re-

gion. Stiff resistance was promised, but the local Lord was only recently independent of Cappargarnian occupation, and he hadn't quite figured out "how this army thing works" yet. He is now reportedly working as a jester for a Chi'tixi Colonel.

Raven Crusaders converted the population of Cauaros by the sword. And the torch. And the pitchfork.

Two Adndari armies totalling over 65,000 infantry converged in Raven-occupied Bæmûl, one from the east, one from the west. Adndar's army made short work of the garrison, and they also killed several hundred Raven missionaries who were looking rather suspicious.

The Imperial Green Fleet, together with almost 200 Tiryowgli vessels, surrounded the Cappargarnian fleet in Lake Sardath. The Vice-Admiral of the Green announced that any attack by or upon the Cappargarnian fleet would be met with force. Sir Sevas Psu died shortly thereafter, reportedly having drunk himself to death. He was succeeded in command by his vastly more talented nephew, Captain Sevas Dixit.

Through Arzhador, Dwelnaz, and Envel some 7,000 steppe cavalry rode through under an Imperial flag of truce. They wintered in the city of Adndar.

The investigation into who tried to poison the Emperor had not yet run its course when the Imperial Food Taster himself keeled over dead. Poison was suspected and job applications were few. The Deputy Imperial Food Taster soon after found more poison in a flagon of wine.

During the late summer, armed clashes between townsmen and farmers throughout the Byrrin Valley culminated in wide scale peasant rebellions in Torsi, Tanji, Krittix, and Gurvan

Winter snows began in early autumn almost everywhere in the Byrrin Valley, causing widespread crop failures. By Oçtober, blizzards were raging, exacerbating the already dire food situation. During the harsh winter that followed, many thousands starved.

### *Rending Day, 1493*

It was a cold, cold Rending Day in Sardarthion. News had arrived that Tiribissi Enya was at last in the city, having come by a circuitous route in an effort to throw potential assassins off her scent. She was scheduled to attend the Rending Day festivities, the one public event that the Emperor had not canceled, so that there might be public witnesses to her acceptance of what the Palace was calling "the Decree of Flowing Compassion".

The costumed festivities were held, as they had been for the previous thirteen years, in the ancient imperial audience hall known as the Blue Chamber. Floored in the deep blue Kranthic marble that gave the room its name and lit with the sorcerous lights of nine great hanging lanterns, it stood three stories tall. Delicately cracked blood red columns supported two balconies and a choir loft on their dizzying way to the vaulted ceiling. At one end of the great hall were massive doors, ornately carved from a single Aradécan cedar. At the other end of the hall, facing the ancient doors, was the Imperial Throne, a deceptively simple iron chair flanked by golden lion statues. It was set upon a stone daïs cut with three shallow steps, worn round and smooth by millennia of supplicants.

Like many other wonders of the ancient palace, the simplicity of the throne was a lie. At dramatic moments, the creaking works were still sometimes set into motion during Imperial audiences on state occasions. Bronze branches with chirping mechanical birds would unfold from the sides of the throne as it rose majestically into the air, elevating the Emperor to the level of the balconies. The golden lion statues on either side would roll their eyes and roar with opened mouth and quivering tongue.

But for Rending Day, the throne was stilled, and Onin Zho, Emperor of the World, sat upon it. Below the daïs to the Emperor's right were three ornate stone chairs occupied by the Imperial Chancellor and the Speaker pro-tem of the House of Peers. The third, normally reserved for the Tiger King of Arms, was empty. To the left were nine roughly hewn wooden chairs of much greater age,

each with worn carvings depicting one of Urda's nine sacred animals. No one sat in them.

The Chamber was filled with guests in fancy dress, most of whom were already stuffed to the eyeballs with food and drink. The Emerald Watch was everywhere in evidence, and if you looked carefully you might be able to spot members of Zarkhandu's elite Black Blood Battalion as well. The air about the Emperor shimmered with protective magics, and a vicious-looking lizard curled around his neck, warily eyeing the crowd. Flanking the throne were the only two people he trusted, Prince Tarret and Colonel Mattahonga Lazar. Both were armed. Just to one side stood the Emperor's chaplain with the great *Book of Rites*.

As the Emperor was giving the fourth ceremonial toast from the throne, the lizard around his neck looked up sharply towards one of the balconies. There was the barest flash of metal. Instantly, agents in the crowd were moving. Crossbows appeared in the hands of the Emerald Watch, and a volley of bolts from around the Blue Chamber converged on the same spot in the balcony. Someone screamed.

A figure in blue fell two stories and crashed to the blue marble floor with a wet thud. Instantly, two members of the Black Bloods dragged the bleeding Wenemet to the daïs. They pulled him to his knees on the shallow steps. At least six crossbow bolts were protruding from his body, and he was soaked in blood. But he was still breathing. The Black Bloods were taking no chances; while two tightly clutched his arms, two more searched him.

They found four daggers and a crimson mask.

Onin Zho laughed, and his laughter filled the great Blue Chamber, where his hundreds of guests stood in shocked silence.

Prince Tarret strode forward and kicked would-be assassin in the face, hard enough that his head snapped to one side and teeth could be heard skittering across the marble floor.

The Emperor stood. "Enough. He is mine." The Prince bowed and stood back as his father stepped forward and squatted down, bringing himself

level with the kneeling assassin. Onin Zho gently touched the Wenemet's chin. With two fingers, almost like a lover's touch, he raised the limp head, until he was eye to eye with him.

And suddenly a sword of pure black light was in the Emperor's other hand. With one long slow fluid motion, he struck the assassin's head from his shoulders.

The Emperor's guards were drenched in the blood of the assassin. Some of the crowd began moving for the exits, but the Emperor stood and addressed them, "no one is to leave. This cretin has provided us with the opportunity to one of the great rituals of the day."

The chaplain stood forward, flipping furiously through the enormous *Book of Rites*. "Ah, appendix four, page 2,934... Here it is: 'the King eats the liver of his defeated enemy'. We will need some-one..."

The chaplain was interrupted by the horrible tearing sound of Prince Tarret cutting the headless assassin's liver out with his dagger. The Emperor, a deep crimson stain upon his right sleeve, returned to the throne. The chaplain showed him the page in the *Book of Rites*. A dish was procured and the Prince placed the liver in it and brought it to his father. The Emperor raised the dish above his head and intoned the offering chant in Old Imperial before taking the liver from the dish and eating it as if it were the greatest of delicacies.

Bite after bite, the people of the Imperial Court watched with a mixture of fascination and revulsion. Only the Zarkhandu natives in the crowd seemed enthused, though the ambassadors from several Yagnarist Realms were certainly intrigued.

When he was finished, the Emperor wolfishly smiled at his Court. There was an odd blue foam at the corners of his mouth.

Finally, Tiribissi Enya, Electoral Princess of Cap-pargarnia, was admitted into the Imperial presence. She came before the Emperor, much as she had during that fateful interview back in 1482, when she had refused an Imperial knighthood. Both were older, and she no longer wore the uniform of

an admiral of the Cappargarnian Republic's Navy. As she stepped forward, Imperial scribes brought the heavy scroll containing the text of *the Decree of Flowing Compassion*.

The Emperor stood forward and took up the scroll. Then, inexplicably, he blanched, took a stumbling step backwards and reached for the throne to steady himself.

As he began violently coughing, blue foam spraying from his lips, his son and his attaché rushed to his side. The scroll dropped to the marble floor, forgotten amidst Onin Zho's wracking coughs.

There were shouts of "poison!" from the crowd. In the confusion, Tiribissi Enya was stabbed in the back, possibly by one of the Black Bloods. She died almost instantly.

Still hacking, Onin Zho fell back, missing the Imperial Throne and sitting hard upon the ground. Sapphire foam mixed horribly with the splatterings of ruby blood on his doublet. The hacking quieted, but his breathing was laboured. The attaché sent for a doctor, while the Prince cradled his father. The Emperor Onin Zho whispered a few hoarse words to his son before sagging in his arms.

Silence reigned in the great Blue Chamber for a few moments. Then, Prince Tarret stood and trumpeted a mournful wail so loud that the great lamps above seemed to vibrate. He was soon joined by the other Zarkhandu, and then by the rest of the Saurians. It was so loud that it was heard in the streets of Sardarthion, where many additional Saurians took up the trumpet: the Emperor was dead.

In the Blue Chamber, the Prince grimly cut out his own father's liver. He nodded to the Chaplain, who commenced the traditional oration normally performed by the Arch-Priest of Uldún. Afterwards, as the Chaplain's lips were ritually sewn shut, Prince Tarret took the customary repast of the old Emperor's liver.

Then he himself delivered an oration to the shocked crowd, an oration normally reserved to the special Rending Day festivities that follow the death of a King, when his successor, having eaten the old King's liver, takes up his crown and be-

comes King himself. And indeed, Prince Tarret proclaimed himself his father's successor in all his crowns and named himself *Tirach Zhur*, the honed scythe. From his father's head he pulled the Imperial Crown, and he placed it upon his own head as he sat upon the throne. From his supporters in the crowd came scattered, but enthusiastic, cries of "long live the Emperor!"

With that, the Emerald Watch cleared the chamber, and Colonel Mattahonga hustled Tirach Zhur to the Imperial apartments.

Confusion reigned in the City, as the citizens and the Imperial civil service, tried to make sense of what had happened. Was Tirach Zhur actually Emperor? Considering he had an older brother, was he even King of Zarkhandu? The answer to the first question was soon resolved, as at precisely noon the next day, the Imperial Crown suddenly appeared in its customary niche in the Mausoleum of Paharnes. The Emerald Watch immediately evicted Tirach Zhur from the Imperial apartments.

Onin Zho was entombed in the Yagnarist chapel of the Mausoleum of Paharnes the Great. His was only the second sarcophagus there, beside that of Emperor Sydath of Atuburrk.

When asked what his father's final whispered words had been, Tirach Zhur smiled ruefully and replied, "I can't say what it means, but my father's last words to me were, 'I forgot to knight the dead Wenemet.'"

### *The Cappargarnian Election*

In the dead of winter, buffeted by record snowdrifts, the hastily-appointed Collegium met. Their agenda was simple: the survival of the Republic. With Cappargarnia's military forces pounded, prefecture after prefecture falling to the Twilight March, and the status of a comprehensive peace treaty now in doubt, the Collegium's task has rarely been so momentous. For all that, the lead-up to the election was smoother than any in living memory. As the Collegium gathered, an unearthly mist began to rise from the ground, obscuring the eleventh century Farradein Palace where they traditionally

met. The fog was thick, but odder still was the fact that visitors unfamiliar with the city did not see it at all; neither did they see the Farradein Palace. When the mists faded and the Collegium emerged from their seclusion they announced the election of the charming and wealthy Burgrave of Adndar, Tiribissi Lanharnes, as Electoral Prince of Cappargarnia.

With the news, Cappargarnia's western prefectures of Ollon, Kentel, and Dahu all rebelled. They were followed by the Church of the Illimitable. The aging Pontiff Carberic VI apparently decided that the Cappargarnian alliance had run its course. Nolvonn renounced its tribute to Adndar, and the Baron there conveniently "forgot" about his previous allegiance to Cappargarnia. Winter in the Cappargarnian capital was sombre indeed.

*1494:* Mere days after the turning of the year, the Electoral envoys, descended on the Imperial Palace at dawn. Among them was Onin Zho's son, now styled as "Prince Imperial". They were met on the palace steps by Princess Chass'ika of Itaxik, Chancellor of the Empire, flanked by armed guards of the Emerald Watch. In the icy morning air, the elderly Chancellor administered the obligatory oath to the envoys, and then asked if Tirach Zhur would administer the oath to her. He did so, and the Chancellor then led them inside to the Blue Chamber. Despite the best efforts of the Palace staff, the dark stains running down the steps of the daïs could still be seen.

At the center of the vast chamber stood the nine roughly-hewn chairs, now set around a circular table carved with an intricate design depicting the Nine Sacred Animals. After each envoy had taken their seat, the Chancellor read the Golden Edict to them and then set her badge of office in the center of the table. With the Emperor dead, and her duties fulfilled, the Chancellor's term of office had run its course. She took her seat as an Elector, and the soldiers of the Emerald Watch sealed the chamber's great door.

A mere seven hours later, the great doors creaked open. Tirach Zhur, the Zarkhandu envoy<sup>5</sup>, intoned the time-honoured formula through grit teeth: "long live the unanimously elected Sovereign of Sahûl, Lord of the Nine Hills of Sardarthion, Holder of the Emerald Throne, and Emperor of All the World, His August and Imperial Majesty, Sardhan of Golmath!"

He added under his breath, but clearly audible to those nearby, "may the Empire survive it."

Following the harsh winter, the snows remained on the ground even through the summer as far north as Adndar. Peasant rebellions collapsed as most people spent their energy just finding food or keeping invaders out of their fields.

The Tiger King of Arms resurfaced in Zadres, and he reestablished command and control of the Heralds. Over the next year or so, the postal back-up was slowly, painfully straightened out. The ongoing audit actually seemed to help things along, as the Auditors identified weak links in the delivery system.

Kitchat forces quickly conquered Kentel. The locals, but recently independent of Cappargarnia, were clearly not expecting 20,000 infantry and a demon. They surrendered with alacrity. The Kitchat commander was not sure what to do with the Tarotist priory of Arcême, except to keep the demon as far away from it as possible.

A Kitchat cavalry force occupied Ollon. The inhabitants were dispirited and pillaged, and they accepted occupation with resignation.

#### *Once Again at the Gates of the Adndar Canal*

Kommolek Commodore:

Is there a problem?

Adndar Canal Official:

No problem. You pay the toll, and you're good to go.

KC: Toll? That's preposterous!

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<sup>5</sup> The Zarkhandu envoy traditionally serves as the ceremonial head of the Convocation.

ACO: That's as may be, but there's a toll, and youse gots to pay it. "Trade and transport tariff. A crown for..."

KC: Look, we're working for the Emperor...

ACO: What, the dead one?

KC: ...

ACO: So. About that toll.

KC: Look. I don't know if you've noticed the several hundred airships directly overhead.

ACO: Yeah, I wondered why it got dark so early.

KC: Well those are my friends up there, and I'd really hate it if we had to play a game of drop the rock with your nice little guard shack here.

ACO: Are you threatening me?

KC: I think I am.

ACO: Well, that's all right then. We'll just bill you. Now where should we send the bill?

KC: How about you send it to your [redacted orifice]?

ACO: Ah. That your mother's place, then?

Following a friendly fist fight and a few rounds of drinks, the Kommolek fleet passed northward through the canal. The locals hurled insults and dung<sup>6</sup> at the ships as they passed.

In the middle of a summer night, Tirach Zhur and a handful of his followers fled Sardarthion. The Black Blood Battalion, already pledged to him, marched out the following day. Their forces were augmented by a large number of additional sophonts under arms. Talk is, they're deserters from the Emerald Watch whose loyalty lay with the dynasty of Zarkhandu rather than with the office of the Emperor.

The Raven Prophet Barugh and 20,000 of his fanatical followers conquered Dwelnaz. Safe behind their mighty walls, the city folk of Hunnychar were prepared for a long siege. But the Prophet signalled a parley, and the Burgrave with a heavy armed guard met the Prophet, unarmed and alone, before the gates. They spoke for perhaps an hour before

the Burgrave's party returned to the city and firmly closed the gates behind them.

The Prophet merely sat in the road, pulled out a pipe, smoked, and waited. He finished his pipe, and, as he was standing, the gates of the city were again thrown open. The Burgrave advanced with perhaps a dozen leading citizens. Again they conferred with the Prophet. At the end of perhaps twenty minutes, the entire group, including the Prophet, returned to the city. The gates crashed shut behind them. A day passed, then two. The army outside the city gave no evidence of preparing for a siege.

On the third day, the gates of Hunnychar were thrown open, and messengers approached the army with the news: the people of the city had embraced the Raven Prophet and converted. Hunnychar fell to the Ravens without a single blow being struck. Within the year, the entire region of Dwelnaz had converted to the Raven.

From Adndar, 7,000 steppe cavalry rode out under an Imperial flag of truce. They arrived in Sardarthion in the late summer and joined the Emerald Watch.

#### *Battle of the Three Armies (Kentel)*

The snowy summer of 1494 found two armies converging on Kicitchat occupied Kentel. Cap-pargarnian ally Baron Sandrim Hesiod of Ebmadh and his 24,000 men approached from the west under flags of truce, just trying to get back to Cap-pargarnian territory. From Cauaros in the south came 50,000 Raven Crusaders under Sir Spennenn Wynn. They were *not* flying truce flags.

Baron Sandrim noted that the Yagnarists were outnumbered two to one. They had a demon with them, but given the bumbling of the Kicitchat field commanders in years past, he was uncertain whether this was a net plus. He could join with the Yagnarists and even up the field against the Ravens, or he could proceed along his merry way. On the one hand, the continuing Kommolek occupation of his homeland made the Baron loathe to help another realm of the Twilight March. On the other hand, revenge against the Ravens would be sweet

<sup>6</sup> The preferred mediæval projectiles.

## Tirach Zhur the Magnificent



indeed, and perhaps his defense of their allies might prompt Kommolek to soften its heart regarding his Ebmadh. Of course, they *were* Yagnarists, so the Baron held little hope for the latter.

Still, he would no doubt have to fight the Ravens sooner or later. Better sooner than later.

With the Raven force already in sight, the Baron offered his services and his army to the Kicitchat commander, the aged sorceress Tikitara, for the duration of the battle. She considered but a moment before accepting. With the Kicitchat pike (and demon) holding the center, the mixed Cappargarnian force took both flanks, and they grimly awaited the Raven onslaught.

The hilly terrain clearly favoured the defenders, but the Raven commander was brilliant, and his cavalry force was clearly superior to the Cappargar-

nian horse. The strength of the defenders was their infantry, for which both the Cappargarnians and the Kicitchat were deservedly famous.

As the Raven cavalry charged, the sorceress Tikitara let loose a firebolt against the enemy. Though thousands of cavalry fell, the speed of their charge was undiminished. The initial charge cost the defenders dearly, but the Cappargarnian left flank wheeled around, and the Ravens soon found themselves crushed between the hammer of Cappargarnia and the anvil of Kicitchat. The demon Nagh was a frightful sight, and many of the attackers simply fled as he approached. By the end of the day, the Ravens had fled the field, their survivors trickling back into Cauaros. Unfortunately, the sorceress Tikitara was among the slain. In the conflagration accompanying the departure of the demon, many more died.

Tikitara's successor wisely decided against pursuing the fleeing Ravens until reinforcements could be procured. Baron Sandrim continued on towards Nolvenn.

*1495:* A solid Kicitchat force of some 22,000 had little trouble with the dispirited defenders, or their castles, in hilly Dahu. They did cast a firebolt, possibly for warmth.

The army of Tirach Zhur, 3,000 pike strong, appeared at the gates of Einandhu. The army was commanded by Colonel Mattahonga Lazar, formerly of the IVth Emerald Watch Regiment. Conversations ensued between these two worthies on the one hand, and the garrison commander Colonel Turanis Akkethes. They lasted deep into the night. Come morning, Turanis called his troops together and, leaving several thousand "picked men" behind as a garrison, marched them out of the city on the road to Sardarthion. They were no sooner out of sight than the garrison flung open the gates and surrendered to Tirach Zhur.

Several weeks later, Colonel Turanis vanished, stranding his army on the road.

Meanwhile, the bank's Director from Zarkhandu was found dead in his rooms, a suicide. Tirach

Zhur ordered an immediate investigation. A curious sigil was found on the back of the suicide note, and thirteen copper coins were scattered below the swinging body.

Nolvonn, occupied by the exhausted army of Baron Sandrim, paid tribute to Cappargarnia.

An extremely large Kommolek force arrived in Chi'tixi-occupied Taporí. They swaggered about as if they owned the place, and soon irritated the commander of the Chi'tixi occupying force. Serious confrontation was avoided mostly because everybody was wearing the same uniforms and couldn't tell who was on the other side. The leaders of the various forces met and the problem soon became evident: both forces had orders to occupy the region, but neither (apparently) expected the other to be there. While they awaited clarification from their respective rulers, the Kommolek remained as guests of the Chi'tixi.

Yagnarist missionaries in Kicitchat flooded the Cappargarnian conquests. Despite the relative devoutness of the Tarotists in the area, some significant gains were made. Krittix and Thichat are now majority Yagnarist, and Karadeg, Kentel, and Dahu are fifty-fifty. Missionaries to Cauaros were simply slaughtered by the Ravens.

Yagnarist missionaries converted about a quarter of the population of Ebmadh, and about a third of the Tarotists in Taporí.

In Jarvaël, the Raven Knights burnt the Tarotist priory of Tandahr and were attempting a rather sad siege of the port city of Ogiryi. This endeavour was stopped rather abruptly by the arrival of 24,000 pikemen led by the banner of Adndar, with a hastily painted Cappargarnian Owl on a placard atop the flagpole. The Raven Knights could do nothing but charge to their deaths. That they actually did so quite impressed the young Adndari Cappargarnian Colonel Lyater D'Agee, and he ordered his men to raise a toast to them. They did so gladly.

With the audit and reform of the Heralds complete, the Principal Auditor gave his report to the new Emperor that the Heralds, "despite a bewildering number of contradictory procedures and over-

lapping competencies, the Heralds themselves have a culture imbued with and dedicated to *the Code of Chivalry*, and are above reproach in their behaviour and their professional ethics... [W]e have had the warmest cooperation with the Order in every area of this audit... The Auditors have made and the Heralds have implemented suggestions in the areas of personnel management, records keeping, and procedural normalization, but in all other areas the Heralds and their organization are exemplary. The Auditors themselves have learned much from the pursuit of this Audit." He also recommended that all items taken from the Heraldic vaults, as well as the vaults themselves, should be returned to the Heralds forthwith.

#### **ELECTORAL REPUBLIC OF CAPPARGARNIA (35 M/TA)**

*His Sublime Majesty, Tiribissi Lanharnes, Electoral Prince of Cappargarnia, Guildmaster of the Innkeepers, Hereditary Burgrave of Adndar.*

*His Excellency Tiribissi Lanharnes II, Chancellor of the Guilds Council of the Imperial Free City of Adndar.*

**Trade:** Aradéc, Araxes, Atuburrk, Chi'tixi, Duedhyn, CotI, Einandhu, Elphárec, Golmath, Hyrágec, ID, Ingazi, IOC, Kicitchat, Kommolek, ThaceE, Tiryowglas, Urdraháhn, Zadres (3)

**DP:** Ahem.

**T**iribissi Enya set out for Sardarhion with great pomp and due ceremony. Three times, in fact. She did not return. With the election of her distant cousin, Tiribissi Lanharnes, the Imperial Free City of Adndar became a dependency of Cappargarnia under his young son. In deference to the unsigned treaty with the late emperor, there is a growing movement amongst the Cappargarnian Tiribissi to change their Clan name to Erphani, though many, perhaps a majority, have not yet done so. The cobbling together of these two Tarotist city-states is fragile and the new Prince has not yet settled into the culture of his new city.

### CHURCH OF THE ILLIMITABLE (9 M/TA)

*His Great Holiness, Fenric IV, Pontiff of the Hidden Lords at Golluz.*

**Trade:** Cappargarnia, Einandhu, ID, Kicitchat, Kommolek

**DP:** None.

In 1495, newly independent Pontiff Carberic the Obscure died. The twenty-two Hierarchs of the Church gathered at Golluz during the month of September and, after the customary vigil, they were sealed into the Cathedral of Aphum to choose the new Pontiff. When the bloodied Hierarchs emerged from their seclusion, they broke all tradition by announcing that the new Pontiff was an elderly cleric from Djarden, completely unrelated to the Cappargarnian noble houses.

### IMPERIAL FREE CITY OF EINANDHU (4 M/UR?)

*His Dread Majesty, Tirach Zhur the Magnificent, Lord of Einandhu, Prince Imperial, Electoral King of Zarkhandu in Exile.*

**Trade:** Aradéc, Araxes, Atuburrk, CotI, Duedhyn, Elphárec, Golmath, ID, IOC, Kicitchat, Kommolek, Tiryowglas, Zadres (3)

**DP:** No. We're good.

Prince (King?) Tirach Zhur installed himself in the former palace of the Tiger King of Arms, appalled at the lack of comfortable furnishings, not to mention the shabby twelfth century decór.

He continues to refer to his brother as "Admiral of the Blue" or "my brother the prince", as these are the only of his titles he recognizes. He plans to use the city as a springboard to recapture Zarkhandu from "the usurpers".

A Wenemet sorcerer of great talent has joined Tirach Zhur's government. He goes by the name of Andel. There was also an odd little Malebolge in "disguise" trying to convince everybody she was the Tiger King of Arms. Most folks thinks she's just insane. Probably a Tarotist.

### THE IMPERIAL DEMENSE (12 M/UR)

*His August & Imperial Majesty, Sardhan I, the Glorious, Baron of Madran and Kamadhi, Count of Agdora,*

*Electoral and Grand Duke of Golmath, Sovereign of Sahûl, Lord of the Nine Hills of Sardarthion, Holder of the Emerald Throne, and Emperor of All the World.*

**Trade:** Aradéc, Araxes, Atuburrk, Cappargarnia, Chi'tixi, CotI, Einandhu, Elphárec, Kicitchat, Golmath, Hyrágec, Ingazi, IOC, Kommolek, ThaceD, ThaceE, Tiryowglas, Urdraháhn, Zadres (3)

**DP:** None

**IIP:** 28

*For appointments, please see Gazette.*

The Emperor is dead. Long live the Emperor. Following the winter election of 1494, Emperor Sardhan began his journey to his new capital by ship. He arrived in the autumn of 1495 and was duly crowned in a rather understated, but very interesting ceremony. The rubrics of the rite were followed faithfully, except that the crown was placed upon the old Wenemet's brow jointly by Tarotist Pontiff Mordican II of Serri and Urdan Reverend Mother Salesia.

The new emperor is old, having turned 72 shortly after his coronation, but still hale. His eyes are weak, and he is known to sport spectacles upon occasion. He keeps his ruff<sup>7</sup> in the northern style, which impressed quite a few at the Imperial Court. The style is already being emulated. After the youth and energy of Onin Zho, perhaps the City is ready for a more sedate presence. Many expect Sardhan to be a transitional Emperor.

No reforms were launched during Onin Zho's final years, except the disastrous outing in Einandhu, which the increasingly professional civil service put down to paranoia and greed. The net result of the Heralds' audit seems to be a leaner, invigou-

<sup>7</sup> Male Wenemet typically develop a ruff about their neck when they reach adulthood. Most keep it trimmed short, usually only a bit longer than the surrounding fur. In Golmath, however, the style for the past few decades has been to keep the ruff as large and impressive as possible. Stories of "ruff pieces" however must probably be discounted.

rated Heraldic Order, and an Auditors' Bureau that is even more independent and powerful.

In the Palace of the Peers, several initial meetings were held of varying worth, with representatives present from Duedhyn, Ingazi, Kommolek, Murali, Sakkar, Ducal Thace, Tiryowglas, and Tokatl. In fact, the Tokatl representative Onin Zho himself stormed into a meeting in 1492 and was respectfully escorted out. "We can't decide how to advise you," politely explained the sergeant-at-arms, "if you're there while we debate." The next year the Murali delegate stormed out for unspecified reasons.

The Urdans continued the heavy work of restoring their holy places in the city. Work on the new, ambitious *Shrine of Iurdana* continued. If all goes according to plan, it may well be the largest single building on the continent by the time it's finished.

**PRAYER:** Holy Mother, Martyr and Saint Siena, you died protecting the Cathedral of Iurdana from destruction and failed. Pray for us that we may gain divine wisdom to begin an Order in your holy name that will protect the Shrine and all of the Children of Urda.

Special services held daily at Matins.

The Imperial Geographical Society's work in the Imperial Preserve of Wanangi continues.

#### **RAVEN CRUSADERS (5 S/RA)**

*Barugh, High Prophet of the Sacred Raven.*

**Trade:** Nope.

**DP:** None.

**T**he Prophet plunged his armies into the heart of the decadent Tarotist lands to the north with mixed results. But he does have a shiny new city.

#### **PRINCIPALITY OF DUEDHYN (10 S/RA)**

*His Highness, Prince Dallyn III of Duedhyn, Baron Dhanos, Hereditary Marshal of the Order of the Sacred Raven.*

**Trade:** Cappargarnia, Einandhu, Kommolek

**DP:** Sarthes (F)

**P**rince Dallyn resolved to spark a renaissance of learning in his Principality. Accordingly, a new Primary Academy was established in Pareis, and the Sorcery Academy there was endowed as a University. Among the first group of historians trained there was one with a very impressive dragon friend named Randgrith. They spent much of their time in the new library wing.

Ah! The new library wing! Its contents took ten years to catalogue, and it was a hasty job. It contains classics long thought lost: plays by Tebbetes, the *Annals* of Vator, ancient texts on alchemy, metal craft, architecture, philosophy, mathematics, and hydraulics. Truly a wonder of the world, and open to the public. Excitement spreads, haltingly, from University to University across Sahùl. The new Murali Order of the Scroll expressed interest in copying the volumes, and publishers in Zadres are apparently falling over themselves to get a peek. Improvements to the Principality's military and sorcery are already evident.

Grandmaster Meriasek of the Order of the Raven died of natural causes in the harsh winter of 1493. The Masters of the Order gathered to choose their new Grandmaster, but found themselves seriously split between two very different candidates. Sir Kerydh of Derow, who favoured non-involvement in the ongoing crusade, and Sir Antas the Zealot, who encouraged his brothers to join in the holy crusade. Vote after vote deadlocked. Finally, tempers became heated and swords were drawn. The fight was quickly broken up by cooler heads, but the damage was done. Sir Antas led a group of knights out of the hall, announcing that he and any who cared to join him were going on crusade, and the rest of the "apostate Order" could "go hang themselves."

In all, almost a third of the knights, some 18,000 in all, left and joined Sir Antas in riding north. The remainder chose Sir Kerydh as their Grandmaster. Fortunately, none of the fortress garrisons defected. Recruitment for the Order was down sharply. Some blamed internal dissent; most blamed the weather.

The weather worsened, particularly in the very cold year of 1494, where there was snow on the ground through the summer, even at low altitudes. Fortunately, the realm warmed up during the next summer. The economic and trade crisis actually proved more problematic. Add to that issue the fact that few realms initiated trade with Duedhyn, and you have the makings for fiscal trouble.

The nomadic caribou herders of the Sarthes taiga joined Duedhyn after their diplomat married the Shaman's daughter. They've even adopted the Raven as their totem.

Reverend Mother Ixti'ati left in a huff, warning the Duedhyn Prince that with his recalcitrance he had sown the wind.

#### **BARONY OF FELL KOMMOLEK (20 w&cs/YG)**

*Baron Goesek Annavas II of Kommolek, Lord Treskaw, Burgrave of Fair Belsûnd.*

**Trade:** Aradéc, Atuburrk, Chi'tixi, CotI, Duedhyn, Einandhu, Kicitchat, Hyrágec, ID, Zarkhandu

**DP:** None.

As the Cappargarnian Doom wound down, Fell Kommolek converged naval and air assets on the Prefecture of Taporí. They found their ally Chi'tixi in control of the region.

With the commercial collapse, the harsh winters, and especially the horrible year of 1494, when snow remained on the ground throughout the summer in most of the Barony, the people of Fell Kommolek suffered. The food riots of 1494 and 1495 rocked the towns and cities. They were worst in Colledhu, but the spring of 1495 was unexpectedly early and unseasonably warm. Two bumper crops did much to calm the people.

When the Lord of Dubarha died, his heir chose not to renew his alliance with the Baron.

#### **COUNTY OF TIRYOWGLAS (23 s&w/IL)**

*His Excellency, Count Sarrík II, Baron Kwilkyn, Count of Tiryowglas, Defender of the Faith.*

**Trade:** Aradéc, Cappargarnia, Einandhu, Elphárec, Golmath, Hyrágec, Ingazi, ID, IOC, Murali

**DP:** Bronnow (F), Grenlyn (F), Antedon (F), Mawali (F)

Count Sarrík and the Iluvarian Pontiff concluded *the Concordat of Plywavon*, whereby the Prefecture of Nasvaël was deeded to the Iluvarian Orthodox Church in exchange for the Prefecture of Mawali. Mawali immediately renounced its tribute, but shortly thereafter changed their minds.

The wealthy Baron of Bronnow, Brogh Owrrík, took an early retirement and pledged full fealty to Count Sarrík, ending a long storied chapter in the Barony's history. The Baron spent his days in luxury and sloth. The idea caught on amongst Tiryowglas' other allies.

The Tiryowgli navy went to the aid of the Imperial Green Fleet as peacekeepers in Lake Sardath. Given the truly bad winters, particularly in 1494, they spent much of their time iced in port. The economic and commercial collapse following events in the Byrrin War hit Tiryowglas hard.

#### **ILUVARIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (22 IL)**

*His All Holiness, Pope Pious VIII, Pontiff of Sistrameides, Archemandrite of Ilúbir.*

**Trade:** Aradéc, Cappargarnia, Einandhu, Elphárec, Hyrágec, ID, Ingazi, Tiryowglas

**DP:** None.

Pope Pious VIII endowed a new Law College at the University of Sistrameides. There were some fireworks over the city that hadn't been seen in many a year.

Sistrameides (ITAR-TASS) Today a large group of students took to the streets to protest the actions of Emperor Onin Zho (YG). Carrying banners and shouting slogans, the students marched through the streets for more than four hours. City wardens kept a wary eye on the crowds but all was relatively peaceful. No arrests were reported.

The crowds began forming about two hours before noon on the University campus. Several student and faculty gave impassioned if slightly incoherent speeches. Afterward, the crowd took to the streets to shouts of “Hey, hey! Ho, Ho! Onin Zho has got to go!” They marched around the city until nearly tea time. Over the course of the afternoon the crowd swelled as citizens came out to watch and many joined the carnival-like atmosphere.

The rally ended when His Holiness, Pope Pious appeared on the balcony of the Library. He gave a quick benediction then asked the crowd to “quiet down please. I’m trying to read.” His Holiness returned inside and the crowd lost steam and slowly dispersed.

At the height of the confabulation, this reporter dared to enter the mob to get a first hand look and an interview with the student leaders. One of the leaders, identifying himself as Rainbow Moonshadow, had this to say. “We’re, like protesting all the stuff, you know, that the Emperor has done. With the mail stopped what am I going to do for money. Like, my parents are sending me some crowns for, you know, food and stuff.” Another rabble-rouser who refused to be identified told this reporter, “The Emperor has been acting crazy. He shouldn’t have gone after Cappagarnia like that. He should have given the sanctions more time to work. And where are all of those dangerous spell crystals we were told the Caps had? Zho lied, people died!”

Chief Rayburn Ironbottom, head of the city wardens, estimated the crowd at 2000 kindred, mostly Wenemet. When asked why the wardens didn’t put a stop to the impromptu parade he explained, “It was a rather nice day. Those academic types looked like they could use some sunlight and to air out their fur.”

Ted Burrows reporting for ITAR-TASS (Iluvarian Theologic and Regional News - That All Shall See)

### **MOST SANGUINE DUCHY OF ELPHÁREC (30 w/IL)**

*His Grace, Eparreb Tashnes III, Count of Angûron and Siddhan, Duke of Elphárec.*

**Trade:** Aradéc, Cappargarnia, Einandhu, Hyrágec, Ingazi, ID, IOC, Tiryowglas

**DP:** None.

**D**uke Tashnes was so flummoxed by the craziness going on in the Valley and the economic crisis that he spent a great deal of time hiding under the bed. Fortunately, the treasury is healthy. The great wizard Orthos of Epadh died in the snowy summer of 1494.

### **KINGDOM OF HYRÁGEC (23 w/UR)**

*Her Valiant Majesty Irrjir Sardira, the Virgin Queen, Reigning Queen of Hyrágec, Beloved of Urda.*

**Trade:** Aradéc, Atuburrk, Cappargarnia, Chi’tixi, Elphárec, Golmath, Ingazi, ID, IOC, Kitchat, ThaceD, ThaceE, Urdrahán

**DP:** Endani (F)

**Q**ueen Sardira invested in her realm’s military and expanded both the Military and Sorcery Academies. The Queen finally persuaded the young Whirripi Lord of Endani to pledge fealty to her. The financial collapse was hard on Hyrágec.

The priory of Annendar in Elanggar grew into an abbey. There were some odd reports from the Forest of Elbun that the trees were becoming somewhat more mobile than might be traditional.

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## **The Gawan Peninsula**

### **THE FEUDAL NORTHEAST**

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### **COUNTY PALATINE OF INGAZI (26 w/UR)**

*His Most Urdan Excellency, Gwariva Laharnes V, the Farsighted, Overlord of Gawan, Captain of the East Riding, Count Palatine of Ingazi.*

**Trade:** Aradéc, Araxes, Cappargarnia, Chi’tixi, Golmath, Hyrágec, ID, IOC, Kitchat,

Murali, ThaceE, Tiryowglas, Urdraháhn,  
(z)Arkhandu

**DP:** None.

Ingazi's northern airfleet continued its aggressive patrols. Massive recruitment of Ingazi's chivalry throughout the realm greatly increased the size of the army. Cavalry and infantry quality improved, and both the Air and Sorcery Academies expanded.

The Count Palatine announced the creation of a Monarchical Order of Knights Companion to honour those who have given extraordinary service to the Empire<sup>8</sup>. A maximum of nine such knights shall exist at any given time, with the Count Palatine himself among their number. All those so honoured become "Knights of the East Riding" (KER).

The initial knights of the Order are as follows:

- Count Palatine Gwariva Laharnes V of Ingazi (CER)
- Count Palatine Gwariva Razhim IX of Ingazi (Retired) (CER, Hon)
- Lord Gwariva Trmemeres of Ingazi (KER)
- Sir Besar Trandes of Trouserdale, Ingazi (KER)
- Princess Chass'ika II of Itaxik (KER)
- Lord Willor Agröš of Ducal Thace (KER)
- Sar Tahnik of the Tigers (KER)
- Lady Nabari of Itaxik (KER)
- Queen Irrjir Sardira of Hyrágec
- Count Sarrik II of Tiryowglas (KER)

Unfortunately, several of these new knights died, and there are now three open slots.

The Imperial financial crisis had a moderate impact upon Ingazi, and the Count Palatine is full of questions about what happened to his investments in the Imperial Bank.

There was a lot of volcanic activity in Thunkini; at least three separate eruptions were noted. It was

<sup>8</sup> It's unclear as to what this actually means, as the largest service ever rendered to the Empire by the Laird of Trouserdale was the sixty coppers he sent to the "Pants for Humans" charity.

nothing, of course, compared with events farther east, and ash fell on parts of Ingazi to a depth of several inches. Breathing was difficult, and many Wenemet and animals fell ill. Of course, the sunsets were spectacular, and crops are growing like gangbusters.

#### CHURCH UNIVERSAL & TRIUMPHANT (43.4 UR)

*Her All-Holiness Camleda v, the Transfigured Beetle, First Matriarch of Urda, Protector of Sahûl.*

**Trade:** Araxes, Aradéc, Atuburrk, Cappargarnia, Chi'tixi, Golmath, Hyrágec, ID, Ingazi, Kicitchat, Murali, ThaceD, ThaceE, Zarkhandu

**DP:** Failed.

Jerröe IX went on a state visit to Yiannis in 1493, just in time for the eruption of Mount Gartnir in nearby Marniyi. Ash rained down for days, and the Holy Mother was among the dead.

In Urdraháhn, panic set in. Bank and commerce failures, hard winters, and now choking ash falling from the skies. Were locusts next? Certainly the economy took a pummelling. The newly appointed Sybil, a certain Sister Perdille, came out of her ritual trance with the name of the Abbess of Our Lady of the Desert in Eremeth on her bloody and foam-flecked lips with the murmured motto "transfigured beetle".

Work began on the rebuilding of St. Mirra, as well as the on-going investigation. Many feel the Inquisition bungled the entire investigation, and the trail has gone cold.

Reverend Mother Lasiora, now given to holding conversations with people who weren't particularly there, returned to Urdraháhn briefly in 1494. She spent some time wandering around the city with a young minder. The two of them walked into an old warehouse in the docks district, from which the Reverend Mother was heard shouting "it's right there, you idiot! I'm half blind and I can see it!" She then went on her second pilgrimage to take the waters at Cannai. She reportedly slipped into a pool and simply... vanished.

In the far-off West, the exuberant sense of triumph created by the Council of Carcë quickly faded as news arrived that two Urdan Cathedrals were now in prefectures occupied by the Puritan Iluvarians of Sakkar. News that spies were nosing around at Bakrata wasn't exactly welcome, either.

Mount Pupini erupted twice.

After she had settled in, the new First Matriarch issued her first official statement:

“The Church Universal & Triumphant takes no responsibility for or claims any ties to the so-called Raven Prophet Barugh who claims Urda as his Goddess. Balance is primary in all things. We hereby proclaim that every fourth day in the week to be a day of abstinence and penance for all of Urda's children, clergy and laypersons alike, to balance the devastation being wrought by our misguided children until he stands penitent before the Holy Mother. We beseech them to forsake the leadership of this false prophet and return to the Church Universal & Triumphant's true source for their guidance.”

Copies of this statement were sent out in triplicate to all Cathedrals to be tacked on the doors. It was read from pulpits at all services throughout 1495. Given the state of the post, some Cathedrals still haven't received the notice.

#### **ELECTORAL GRAND DUCHY OF GOLMATH (50 w/TA)**

*His Maješty, Walarri Pirna the Erudite, Prince-Regent of Golmath.*

*His Great Holiness, Mordican II, Hierarch of the Fellowship of Connate Tarotišts and Pontiff of the Hidden Lords at Serri.*

*His Excellency, the Volpel Zhogian the Fearless, Baron Volpel and Count of Runazar.*

*Margrave Volpel Tregarion of Ebalon.*

**Trade:** Araxes, Aradéc, Atuburrk, Cappargarnia, Einandhu, Hyrágec, ID, Ingazi, Murali, Sidith (2), ThaceE, Tiryowglas, Urdraháhn, Zarkhandu

**DP:** Murruggappa (T), Thirri (F), Ardanyi (A)

**G**rand Duke Sardhan the Glorious closed a chapter in Golmath's history with the colonization of Kulkupa. People sought work in the cities, expanding Susa and Nydoon. The new river port of Yalish rose in Kalikadra. Naval quality improved, and the Grand Duchy's government expanded. The Academy at Golmath was endowed as a University, to much acclaim from the literati.

The Golmath highway system was extended from Thunarr into the hills of Marniyi, and in Runazar from Callam to Morcannis. If nothing else, more folks from the countryside can now get in to see proper rugby matches.

The final game of the 1495 All-East Rugby Championship once again featured those deadly rivals, the Thunarr *Thunder* and the Callam *Kilted Maniacs*. The Runazar fans were loud enough to be heard for miles. In a tight match, Callam finally defeated their rivals 10–8. The *Thunder* fans were crushed, though the Callam fans partied in the streets for days. In Runazar a national holiday was declared, in part so everybody could sober up.

Efforts continued to knit the Grand Duchy into a coherent whole. Some have doubts about the new Ardanyi ally, however, as he seems kind of fixated on Card XV.

#### **BOOM!**

**M**ount Gartnír on the border between Golmathi Marniyi and Urdan Parndri explosively erupted in 1493, laying waste to villages in both prefectures. The sound, it is said, was heard as far away as Sardarthion, and the cloud of ash and smoke fell all over the Gawan Peninsula, though it was particularly bad in the regions directly west of the site. Lava and mud flows severely damaged the Tarotist priory of Gatik in Marniyi. Subsequent earthquakes finished off the job. The ash still hanging in the sky was given credit for the gorgeous sunsets of the following year.

#### **ELECTORAL KINGDOM OF ARADÉC**

**K**ing Dirharn died suddenly in 1491, but not before ordering the construction of a new Prima-

ry Academy by the name of Specontuluvda. King Paharnes IV took the throne of one of the strongest and wealthiest Iluvian realms in modern history.

He sought to make his Kingdom even greater. The town of Brinima rose in Dalád, on Azure Coast. The Royal Road was continued into Kadra, where it connected to the city of Wanumarra. Despite considerable investments, only siege quality improved. The Naval Academy was expanded.

In the frigid winter of 1493, King Paharnes IV grew ill with the ague, and by spring of the next year, he was dead. With no designated heir, the Sansollen Clan mothers gathered in Darnuldeis to choose a King. Immediately there was controversy. The late King Paharnes had but one child, a boy named Deric, born in 1492. Most of the Clan Mothers were loathe to name a toddler as their King, so they instead looked to the wider pool of candidates, including several of Paharnes' cousins. There were several holdouts, including the toddler's mother, Queen Mayia, who continued to champion young Deric. Acrimony spread, but most of the Clan Mothers settled on a likely lad in his twenties, a charming cavalier by the name of Rhazahan.

Unfortunately, the Clan Mothers did not, perhaps, fully understand the new reality. After more than a century of descent by primogeniture, many of the Aradécian nobility simply took for granted that the choice of the mothers was a mere formality rather than any sort of real election. They began to rally to young Prince Deric and his mother.

The capital, and the massive bulk of the royal army, was firmly under the control of General Lord Tithitak Montorn. He, for one, supported the choice of the Clan Mothers.

Queen Mayia, being no fool, fled Darnuldeis with her son to avoid possible arrest. She settled in Wanumarra and soon rallied Kadra to the cause. Things were looking pretty bleak for the toddler-King, until General Sir arTirri Mathius (the Pirate Killer) declared his support for "our true and noble King Deric". The prefectures of Dimba, Pagirri, Wikyi, and Karruni immediately declared for him, and Abijar Island soon followed. In the east, a

handful of prefectures declared for Deric: Bidigapa, Palha, Milawalpayi. Although most of Aradéc continued to take direction from the capital (and therefore King Rhazahan), it was more from habit than from any sort of conviction. Despite the uneven odds, Aradéc is on a knife's edge, and the vast majority of the population could be persuaded to swing to either faction. (Civil War rules: §10.4.4)

Wanangi stopped sending yams, and the Grand Abbot of Kityara maintained neutrality by awaiting the winner of the coming struggle.

#### **KING DERIC'S FACTION (8 w/IL)**

*General Sir arTirri Mathius and*

*Queen Sansollen Mayia, Co-Regents of Aradéc.*

*His Royal Majesty, Sansollen Deric II, Baron of Wanumarra, Electoral King of Aradéc.*

**Trade:** Araxes, Cappargarnia, Einandhu, Elphárec, Golmath, Hyrárec, ID, Ingazi, IOC, Kitchat, Kommolek, Murali, ThaceE, Tiryowglas, Urdrahán

**DP:** None.

**T**hey don't have much to work with, but they are determined to prevail.

#### **KING RHAZAHAN'S FACTION (30 w/IL)**

*His Royal Majesty, Sansollen Rhazahan IV, Baron of Wanumarra, Electoral King of Aradéc.*

**Trade:** Araxes, Cappargarnia, Einandhu, Elphárec, Golmath, Hyrárec, ID, Ingazi, IOC, Kitchat, Kommolek, Murali, ThaceE, Tiryowglas, Urdrahán

**DP:** None.

**S**aving the vast majority of the army and the entire navy puts Rhazahan in good shape.

#### **BARONY OF MURRUGAPA**

**B**aron Dirdel's little realm was visited by a very ragged looking Golmathi fleet commanded by one Commodore Wooster. They had some drinks, shared some laughs, watched several tens of thousands of extremely *deprived* Golmathi soldiers and sailors paint the town red. Shortly thereafter, Baron arYarwain Dirdel paid tribute to Golmath. The po-

etry festival was a roaring success, and the golden goose quill was awarded to the Ingazi poet Gorregh Imbartes.

#### COUNTY OF MURALI (13 w/TA)

*His Excellency, Kilyara Torthes I, Baron of Karrka, Count of Murali, Lord Admiral of the Red.*

Trade: Aradéc, Golmath, Ingazi, Tiryowglas,  
Urdráhahn

DP: None.

Murali began construction on an extremely ambitious project, which they call *the Grand Library of Sahûl*. This Library will be a testament to the Empire and those who comprise it. The High Purpose of this Library is to gather, study and learn from the history of Sahûl, its peoples, and its faiths. Murali sought master artisans from each of the major faiths of Sahûl who were willing and able to assist with the design and creation of a major work of art, unprecedented in size or scale. They expect the project to take at least a quarter century.

For the management of the Library and the acquisition of items for its collection, the Count created a quasi-monastic Order open to members of all four faiths, to be known as the *Order of the Scroll*. Already, interested scholars and librarians are flocking to the little town of Intix in Karyi, where the construction began in 1491.

Murali's heir, Lord Drathnes, took over the piracy patrolling in the Antean and the Bay of Ebalon. He found none, though he did board a suspicious looking fishing vessel. It turned out to be... a fishing vessel.

The *Way of Yustomon* is spreading throughout Murali, and even beyond. Mendicants dedicated to the Way have been seen in southern Golmath, northern Runazar, and even Yundru.

Vice-Admiral of the Red Narynn Yustomon, meanwhile, went on one last mission for his Count and the Empire. Leading the Red Fleet southwards, he sailed into the icy southern waters. After picking up a Zarkhandu ally from Irusa, they went off in search of the looters of Perdóndaris. A Golmathi

fleet was intercepted, boarded, and searched, but they found little there except scurvy, green salted beef, and watery wine.

On his 75th birthday, Yustomon guided the Red Fleet around Nydoon into Narmik Bay. Days later, the grand old admiral died. He was buried at sea in the icy waters. The looters have not yet been found.

#### IATHEDEK: THE PROTECTORATE OF FRIBÆLD

Peace prevailed throughout the lands of Iathedek. At least, if it didn't nobody knew about it. Trade continued bustling along the Antean River.

#### ELECTORAL KINGDOM OF ZARKHANDU (35 s/YG)

*Her Imperial Maješty, the Empress Kwadan the Sorceress, Queen dowager of Zarkhandu.*

*His Great & Terrible Maješty, Onin Torr, Lord Sakkath, Count of Vúhlath & Mlideen, Duke of Hyáglion, Lord Admiral of the Blue, Electoral King of Zarkhandu.*

*Vahl, Margrave Draconis, Commander of the Horse Guards.*

Trade: Golmath, Ingazi, Kommolek, Sidith (2),  
Urdráhahn

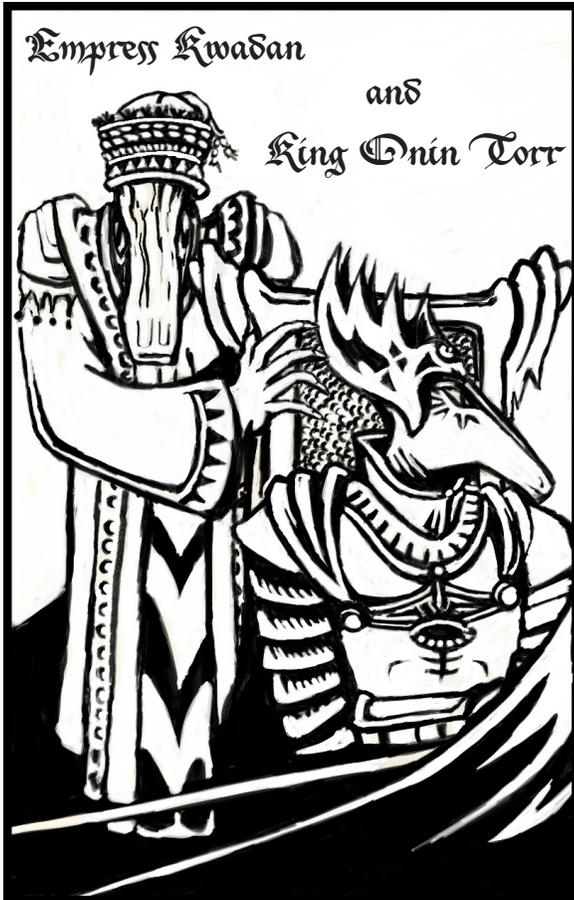
DP: None.

The Zarkhandu court and government were increasingly dominated by the Prince-Regent's mother, the Empress Kwadan, and by her fellow countrymen, the Zíman. Empress Kwadan is soft-spoken and brilliant, with a well-deserved reputation for utter ruthlessness.

Privately and not-so-privately derided as outsiders, provincials, or barbarians, Zíman candidates for offices and positions consistently crowded out the native Zarkhandu. Complaints and petitions reached the Prince-Regent about Zíman corruption at the highest levels, but they went unanswered.

Three towns were raised, Zhonak in Cuppar, Gargûl in Sleghas, and Chobar in Zodan. Large investments of cash yielded little.

The Empress marshalled the resources and manpower of the entire realm for a mysterious project.



She spoke of the coming grandeur of Zarkhandu, of a new golden age, but the local lords only saw a vast money pit in Vúhlath. Day after day the structure rose near the capital. What was it? It appeared to be a megalithic fortress of some sort, though its construction was unlike any fortress seen in Zarkhandu before. Most dismissed it as a mere folly: “damn Zíman architects are crazy, most like.” And as the Zíman grew in power and in arrogance, not a few of them were mysteriously murdered.

The discontent came to a head during the cold, cold year of 1494. As the ice continued its relentless advance, news filtered into Zarkhandu about the disaster of the previous Rending Day and the death of their beloved Emperor. Stories began to circulate that the young Tirach Zhur had partaken of his father’s liver and might be a more appropriate King

than the Prince-Regent. After all, he came of age far from the Zíman presence and was educated in Sardarthion by the great Onin Zho. Regardless, the diffident Prince-Regent was duly crowned. He took the name Onin Torr, meaning “sublime breeze”, supposedly from the ancient proverb that a tiny breeze foretells the storm. It wasn’t soon, however, before crass jokes began circulating about what exactly the “sublime breeze” might smell like.

The King was not amused.

The nobles that tried to talk to the King, to embolden him to change course, were turned away at the palace. Something clearly had to be done.

Spontaneous demonstrations against the Zíman (and incidentally in favour of Tirach Zhur) took place throughout the countryside, but the new King was now deeply involved in the mysterious project and paid no mind. In fact, an awful lot of the Zarkhandu elite were working on the project in capacity or another.

At this point, things took a turn for the serious. After protests escalated to the point of mass demonstrations in the streets of the Capital, the new King apparently grew a spine. To great cheers of the crowd, he appeared on the balcony of the palace and promised a full investigation into charges of corruption.

The next day, the King discovered his mistress in a pigsty, her limbs sawn off and her eyes put out. She was still alive when he found her, but she did not long survive. The young King cried out in anguish and took to his bed, complaining to his mother that if he could not even protect his own mistress, how could he rule a Kingdom? After that, Onin Torr indulged himself with wine and women and left government to his mother the Empress.<sup>9</sup>

The movement for Tirach Zhur became a storm. All of Zarkhandu’s tributaries renounced their tribute, except oddly for the Draconic March, where another region, Darathal, actually *joined*. It looked as though widespread rebellion might be in the

<sup>9</sup> The fact that Empress Kwadan has personally sawn off the limbs of the lithe young Saurian was an open secret within the palace.

offing, but then in 1495 Vúhlath was rocked by a series of minor earthquakes. And then the fortress, incredibly, began to rise into the skies.

The Empress called the nobles before her. “As you can see, my subjects of Zarkhandu, your friends have failed. Now witness the firepower of this fully armed and operational battle station!” And with that, the fortress, dubbed *Cleansing Storm* dropped some very large boulders on the protesters, effectively ending the public demonstrations.

The people of Hyágliion, Nombo, Timaut, and Zyleen were either braver or stupider than the rest of the country, as they rebelled, declaring that they would have no King but Tirach Zhur.

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# Imperial Gazette

Published by the Ancient and Undaunted Order of Heralds by Appointment to His Imperial Majesty



## Emperor Sardhan

The Heralds would like to take this opportunity to apologise for any interruptions to the mail service you may have experienced. We have taken steps to prevent these unfortunate service disruptions in the future. Thank you for your continued patronage. *TKA*

### APPOINTMENTS

To Governor of Ardebon: Electoral Grand Duke Adhanggar Dranthes of Atuburrk.

To Governor of Balashan, Biralis, Drazhan, Kassaria, Kastier, Kembul, Kiermon, Kinsidan, Kordier, Mondahan, Nauatidran, Yann: *by examination*.

### PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS OF THE EMPIRE

Province	Governor	Province	Governor
Agador	vacant	Kembul	vacant
Anabreis	bureaucrat	Kiermon	bureaucrat
Aradaun	bureaucrat	Kinsidan	bureaucrat
Arador	vacant	Kordier	bureaucrat
Ardebon	Atuburrk	Kumarand	bureaucrat
Artier	bureaucrat	Lambris	bureaucrat
Balashan	vacant	Larloc	bureaucrat
Belegaridor	bureaucrat	Mondahan	vacant
Biralis	bureaucrat	Muralis	vacant
Chos	Itaxik	Narchoal	bureaucrat
Dorthacia	bureaucrat	Nauatidran	bureaucrat
Dranchoal	vacant	Orinos	vacant
Dranmul	Averon	Sachon	bureaucrat
Drazhan	bureaucrat	Sardior	vacant
Endior	bureaucrat	Sistramidor	bureaucrat
Iantier	bureaucrat	Tepalis	bureaucrat
Iasedior	bureaucrat	ThaciaMaior	ThaceE
Kaidu	vacant	ThaciaMinor	ThaceE
Kanapad	vacant	Thebia	bureaucrat
Kanmul	bureaucrat	Tramelis	bureaucrat
Kaparis	vacant	Withidan	bureaucrat
Kassaria	bureaucrat	Yann	vacant
Kastier	bureaucrat		

### OPEN OFFICES

Due to death, retirement, or incapacitation of the previous office-holders, the following are now vacant:

Chancellor of the Empire and Governors as indicated.

# Imperial Strength Index

#	<i>Realm</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Forum Name</i>	<i>E-mail</i>	<i>ISI</i>
<i>The Great Powers</i>					
1	Golmath / Emperor	Paul Flinton	Free Beer	cruentidei@gmail.com	1,375.9
2	Itaxik	Michael Warner	Galen	me1451@comcast.net	1,175.3
3	Chi'tixi	Steve Cagg	Priest King	ragnarstation@hotmail.com	1,154.7
4	Araxes	Christopher Hord	chordam7	chordam7@yahoo.com	1,130.4
5	Thace, Elector	Nuno da Silva	Nuno	ndasilva23@hotmail.com	1,121.9
<i>Major Powers</i>					
6	Cappargarnia	Steven Lloyd	Blackheart	slloyd13@gmail.com	1,092.9
7	Averon	Kevin Lawrence	Averon Inc	privatej67@yahoo.com	1,083.3
8	Aradéc-Rhazahan	Charles Hurst	Xanthi	charlesh@teleport.com	1,017.5
9	Church U&T	Anne Porter	Cupcake	crabbycupcakes@gmail.com	846.1
10	Zarkhandu	Theo Moriarty	Mandala of Blood	tmoriarty@gmail.com	844.3
11	Pexiki	John Schmid	Magus	magus@spellcaster.org	829.4
12	Ingazi	Harry Jago	jago	jagoh@yahoo.com	803.5
13	Atuburk	Adam Sherman	Gonnagle	mad.angus@yahoo.com	787.1
<i>Minor Powers</i>					
14	Elphárec	Josh Buchanan	joshb	joshinstl@yahoo.com	777.5
15	Duedhyn	Alex James	Clan Dhanos of Duedyn	ClanDhanos@yahoo.com	770.7
16	Taneki	Ed Allen	Malathion	tgroove@earthlink.net	748.2
17	Thace, Duchy	Jake Roberts	Jake	jacob.roberts1@gmail.com	646.0
18	Hyrágec	Frank Thein	Frank	fthein@gmx.de	642.7
19	Tiryowglas	Mike Johnson	Minister of Defense	printermanmj@aol.com	599.9
20	Kommolek	Cortlandt Winters	Cortah	cwinters@notebookmargins.com	567.5
21	Kicitchat	James Hazeltine	Von Malvalken	jhazeltine@pleiadesmm.com	564.5
22	Murali	Corey Snow	Cyclometh	cyclometh@gmail.com	476.2
23	Church Militant	open for a player			426.4
24	IOC	Jason Pearl	redoubtable1	redoubtable1@comcast.net	389.8
<i>Miscellaneous Rabble</i>					
25	Tokatl	Shelley Woodberry	Skipperway	desrik@comcast.net	381.7
26	Sakkar	Nelson Merritt	hemmy	hemmymerritt@yahoo.com	319.0
27	Yax'te	Tyler Baumgartner	rawhidekid	tylerbaumgartner@gmail.com	316.3
28	Carcë	open for a player			269.6
29	Aradéc-Deric	open for a player			259.9
30	Einandhu	open for a player			249.8
31	Raven Crusaders	open for a cheerfully homicidal maniac			211.0
32	COI	open for a player			203.1

