



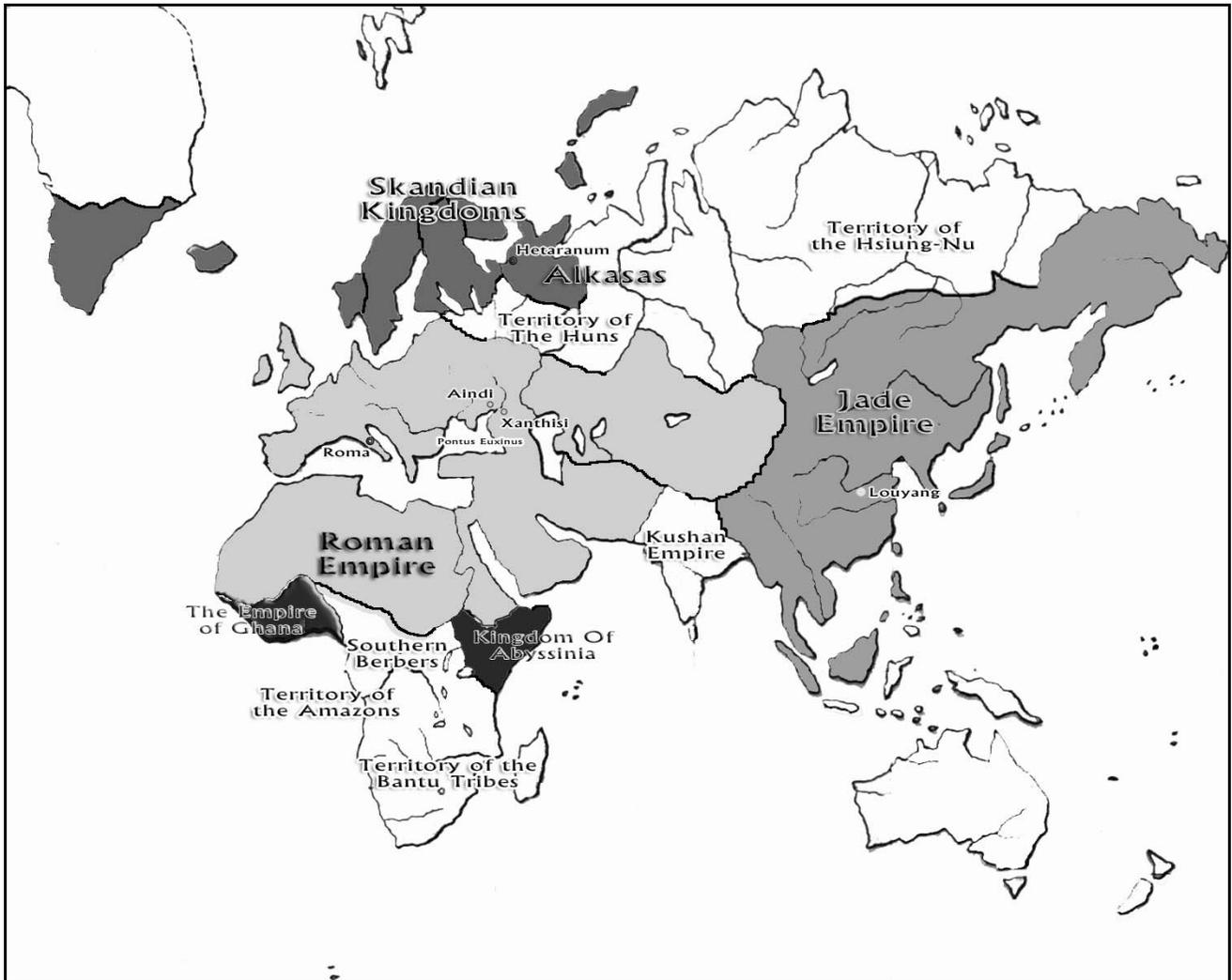
CHAPTER III : THE IMPERIUM

The details that follow are of an alternate historical time line; if a few things had gone differently, some minor some major, this is the world we could expect to see. The addition of magic within this world is an extension of what the ancient civilizations thought of as real. Magical forces were considered as real as the flowing of a river, rain from the sky or the growth of a tree. The wind spoke to those who would listen of mysteries and the trees whispered their secrets to them. The strongest expression of magic came from the less scientific cultures and it is from them that magic is first introduced.

For the Romans, the Celts show the path to using magic. As with many aspects from other cultures, the Romans adopt and internalize that which they can use and reject that which does not serve their purposes. The Chinese are introduced to their magic from external sources of Indian mystics and

Mongolian shamans, while internally they develop alchemy to a fine science. This type of magic embraces both the quantitative analysis of science and the intuitive reasoning of philosophers. The Scandinavian lands are both victim and benefactor of the Roman and Chinese magic in that their territory is permeated with magic and they are aided by the presence of their gods. Their priests wield mighty powers in the name of their gods and it aids them in defending their lands. The price they pay for this safety is that of the terrors; creatures of all forms that possess the powers of the gods. Africa resists the invasion of the Romans with the power of the native shaman and the bravery of their warriors.

The following mixes actual history with alternate history of this setting. The Romans measure their calendar from the founding of Rome in 753 B.C. The current year is 1461 A.U.C. or 708 A.D.



Government

The Empire has changed considerably since Constantine's first use of magic at the Milvian Bridge. So decisive was that battle that none dared oppose him and he became the most powerful ruler in Roman history. He needed more druids, but the Celtic tribes were reluctant to aid the Romans thoroughly. The druids led a number of revolts, but at this point the Celts

were reluctant to participate, their own division being their worst enemy. The Romans dealt with these revolts brutally. The newly reformed Praetorian Guard used insidious methods to extract information from what the Romans viewed as a perverse and barbaric cult. But the revolts did bring change, reforming the Roman view of the world. The druids had access to extensive rites and used them against the Romans. This showed the Romans, once again, that it was better to have the barbarians on their side rather than battling them. Also, it showed that these barbarians had a good grasp of how

the world actually worked. Still, even Roma's closest Celtic allies would not share their knowledge of magic.

To this end Constantine set up the Scholae Magorum to study and apply magic to the expansion of Rome. This came to haunt his descendants as an organization since it fell under the power of the Senate on Constantine's death. The path that the Romans follow to magic is different from the Celts; it is more structured and although some aspects did not fit

their view of the world, their myths, or their faiths, it did enable them to meet the challenge of an increasingly magical world.

Political Intrigue in Roma

Roma is rife with politics. It lessens to some extent in the provinces but does not disappear. There is always a patrician attempting to increase their vast fortune, advance their

agenda or increase their fame. The Imperial purple is not the only target in the Empire but it is the most obvious. Many posts in dioeceses serve to increase wealth especially in the east. Successfully dealing with the western dioeceses will often bring political allies or fame. It is not without its wealth but the eastern dioeceses far outshine the west.

There are schemes at all levels and the highest are often invisible to the novice.

Experience brings a clarity but one must possess power and leverage over others in order to play in the upper tiers of Roma's politics. These can be acquired through political service in offices

like the Augury or as the Pontifex Maximus, head of the state religion. Serving in the Senate also exposes one to opportunity as well as danger but there can be no gain without risk.

Finally, it is very important to realize that power often equates to knowledge, and not just any knowledge. To know that a Senator's wife is having an affair is only beneficial if it

