



# CHAPTER III

## KINGDOMS AND EMPIRES

The world is filled with kingdoms and empires not under the sway of the Romans. Some are allies, while others have either not drawn the Empire's attention or are deemed not worth conquering. It is important to realize that certain territories are not developed and therefore actually cost more to romanize than to campaign against and conquer.

Commerce, cultural exchange and migrations occur between these countries and the Empire. In some cases, people are fleeing oppression but far more commonly they are pursuing opportunity. Different countries offer different aspects, resources and environments that can be exploited if one is knowledgeable.

### Kushan Empire

The remains of an ancient collection of tribes and kingdoms, the Kushan Empire has been forced to retreat into the Indian sub-continent. This has happened over the last five hundred years. The Kushan Empire now encompasses little more than the court at Perushapura on the Indus river. In Taxila, south of the capital, it is said the finest spices can be bought, yet surviving the bandits to return to Roman territory is difficult. Caravan guards in this region are paid well and bodyguards better. Trade is the lifeblood of what power still remains in the Kushan Empire. The silk road is still heavily travelled and with it comes the wealth of many nations. Poor administration and a weak central government has left a patchwork of laws and treatment of travellers.

Areas north of the Kushan Empire, once called Bactria, are littered with ruins and are little more than a nomads' land peopled with barbarians. Begram, located along the Hindu Kush, guards the approach to the Khyber Pass and uses its position to extort travellers and merchants. The king of Begram, Tehir Geshka, is feared for his utter lack of morality. His only master is money and he serves it well. When the gold runs dry so does Tehir's loyalty. The Kushanshah (king of the Kushans) Ardashir IV has been holding on to the remains of the Empire for fifty three years. He is desperately seeking magic to extend his life or strengthen his kingdom but has had little success.

Many of the rogue magi that survived Tiderius' purge fled to the Kushan Empire and set up their own kingdoms. Some have even offered to help Ardashir IV in exchange for legitimacy. This has helped the Empire in many ways but weakened the already flimsy central government further.

### Kingdom of Abyssinia

This kingdom was founded in the time of Alexander the Great, and has survived to modern days because of its trade relations with other countries. It relies heavily on the growth of magic in its dealings and maintains relations with the Arabic countries despite being conquered by the Romans. The Kingdom of Abyssinia is also called Axumite and is thought to have its roots in the ancient Arabic Empire of Saba. The influence of Saba is shown in the practice of matrilineal inheritance and rule. Women often, but not always, rule the Abyssinians and hierarchal lines are traced through the maternal line.

Askum is the capital and a renown center of learning. Romans travel to study with the masters of the universities of Askum, Adulis and Matara. Adulis is an influential and enormous port city on the eastern Horn of Africa. These cities are highly cosmopolitan, boasting temples to many gods, and even buddhist temples.

### Alkasas

The kingdom of Alkasas was the stuff of legends until the Norse traders came upon them. Alkasas quickly struck up a friendship with the north men that exists to the current day. Over the centuries the Alkasatians have had a stabilizing effect on the Norse, and in exchange they have supplied Alkasas with prisoners and slaves from their raids on the Roman Empire.

In the eleventh century things changed. The Alkasatians turned to dark magic. Old spells lost their appeal and a growing darkness permeated the land. The time of Constantine's sons brought some of the first outright conflicts between the Empire and Alkasas. Open warfare flared twice, once in 1244-60 and again in 1404-11; neither conflict resolved anything. There were countless raids and skirmishes, but few individuals prospered from them. The current diplomatic situation is tense as both sides have accused the other of violating the Pactum Septemtrionalis of 1411.

Alkasas is a land of evil magi located in the Baltic states on the northern edge of the empire. Its king, Alaris II, is a renown magus and skilled diplomat. His daughter, Alexis, is equally skilled, with beauty to complement her clever



mind. Alaris II is not so blessed, and is renowned for his homely appearance.

Alkasas is a land that, for the better part of the Republic and the early Empire, was thought to be a land of myth. It was used to scare children and its name was a potent curse word for bad luck. It still carries a potency in the hearts of Romans. Legions stationed on the northern frontier dioceses of Germania, Sarmatia and Scythia have a healthy respect bordering on fear for this dark land.

Part of this fear is the Alkasatians' practice of sacrificing prisoners and slaves to their goddess. This practice is thought of as barbaric but conversely the Romans view the Alkasatians as civilized in other matters. Another source of their respect for these northern people is the fearsome Terragena warriors of Alkasas. These monsters are said to be grown like millet in the fields from the blood of slaves. These creatures may turn the tide of the next conflict between Roma and Alkasas.

### Climate of Alkasas

Located far to the north Alkasas is cold and has severe winters. It does not have a large amount of arable land but uses magic that allows it to produce vast amounts of grain to feed its population. Alkasas also has few good roads, as much of the terrain is muddy, loose soil.

### Culture of Alkasas

The kingdom is organized into four duchies ruled through intermediaries of the king. Their rulers are hereditary but may be either female or male. The roots of the Alkasatian society are unknown, but they seem to have been influenced by the Jade Empire and the Greeks. Their legends speak of a disaster that befell their ancestors, forcing them to flee their homes with nothing but what they could carry. They wandered for many generations until they arrived in present day Alkasas where Hetam-munun aided them in building the first city, Hetaranum. It remains the capital of Alkasas to this day.

The common Alkasatian values many things, but they are primarily concerned with wealth and their gods. Husband to Hetam-munun and chief of these is Seratos, who has been compared to Pluto, Roman god of wealth and the underworld. Seratos demands a large amount of sacrifice from his people and the priests of his temple have considerable power in Alkasas. In theory, the king is more powerful than the priests, but they often devolve to a struggle of wealth, magic and military power. Intrigue is the nature of the conflict between the temple and the palace.

This drive for wealth is the source of the wars and raids that the Alkasas carry out against the Roman Empire. They have

ALKASAS

