

The History of the
MEDIEVAL
WORLD

ALSO BY SUSAN WISE BAUER

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The History of the
MEDIEVAL
WORLD

From the Conversion of Constantine
to the First Crusade



SUSAN WISE BAUER



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For Ben

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P a r t O n e



UNITY

Chapter One

One Empire, Under God

*Between 312 and 330,
Constantine imposes his will on the Roman empire
and gives the Christian church a hand with its doctrine*

ON THE MORNING of October 29, 312, the Roman soldier Constantine walked through the gates of Rome at the front of his army.

He was forty years old, and for six years he had been struggling to claim the crown of the *imperator*. Less than twenty-four hours before, he had finally beaten the sitting emperor of Rome, twenty-nine-year-old Maxentius, at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. Constantine's men had fought their way forward across the bridge, toward the city of Rome, until the defenders broke and ran. Maxentius drowned, pulled down into the mud of the riverbed by the weight of his armor. The Christian historian Lactantius tells us that Constantine's men marched into Rome with the sign of Christ marked on each shield; the Roman* writer Zosimus adds that they also carried Maxentius's waterlogged head on the tip of a spear. Constantine had dredged the body up and decapitated it.¹

Constantine settled into the imperial palace to take stock of his new empire. Dealing at once with Maxentius's supporters, he ordered immediate but judicious executions: only Maxentius's "nearest friends" fell victim to the new regime.² He dissolved the Praetorian Guard, the standing imperial bodyguard that had supported Maxentius's claim to the throne. He also packaged Maxentius's head and shipped it south to North Africa, as a message to the young man's supporters that it was time to switch allegiances. Then he turned to deal with his co-emperors.

His victory over Maxentius had given him a crown but not the entire

*Histories of the later Roman empire usually identify its citizens as either Christian or pagan, with "pagan" generally meaning "not Christian." There are two problems with this approach: first, the religious landscape of the early Middle Ages was far more complicated than this simple division implies; second, the label "pagan" has been resurrected in recent years with an entirely different set of associations. I have chosen to avoid the word altogether. Zosimus, often called a "pagan historian," was a follower of the old Roman religion, so I have called him "Roman" instead.

empire. Thirty years earlier, his predecessor, Diocletian, had appointed co-rulers to share the job of running the vast Roman territories—a system that had spawned multiple lines of succession. Two other men currently held parts of the empire. Licinius, a peasant who had risen through the army ranks, had claimed the title of *imperator* over the central part of the empire, east of the province Pannonia and west of the Black Sea; Maximinus Daia, who had also clawed his way up from peasant birth, ruled the eastern territories, which were constantly threatened by the aggressive Persian empire.*

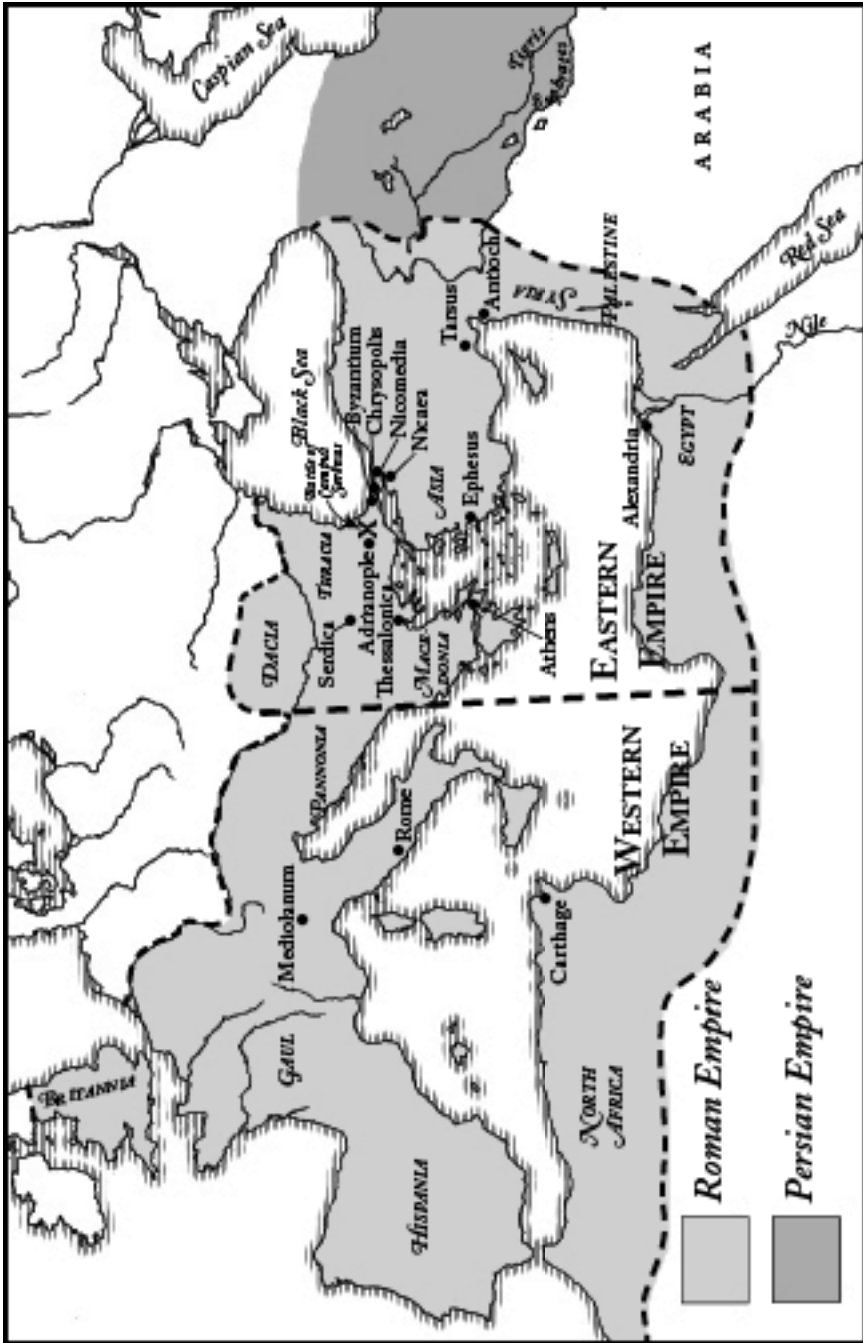
Diocletian, an idealist, had designed his system to keep power out of the hands of any one man; but he had not reckoned with the drive to power. Constantine had no intention of sharing his rule. Nevertheless, he was too smart to open two wars simultaneously. Instead he made a deal with Licinius, who was not only closer than Maximinus but also less powerful: Licinius would become his ally. In return, Licinius, now nearing sixty, would marry Constantine's half-sister, the eighteen-year-old Constantia.

Licinius accepted the deal with alacrity. In his first gesture of good faith towards his brother-in-law-to-be, he met Maximinus Daia in battle on April 30, 313—six months after Constantine entered Rome. Licinius had fewer than thirty thousand men, while Daia had assembled seventy thousand. But Licinius's army, like Constantine's, marched under the banner of the Christian God. It was a useful rallying point; Maximinus Daia had vowed, in Jupiter's name, to stamp out Christianity in his domains, and the presence of the Christian banner pointed out that the battle for territory had become a holy war.

The armies met on the poorly named Campus Serenus, outside the city of Adrianople, and Licinius's smaller army outfought Maximinus's. Maximinus Daia fled in disguise, but Licinius followed him across the province of Asia and finally trapped him in the city of Tarsus. Seeing no escape, Maximinus Daia swallowed poison. Unfortunately, he indulged in a huge last meal first, which delayed the poison's action. The historian Lactantius writes that he took four days to die:

[T]he force of the poison, repelled by his full stomach, could not immediately operate, but it produced a grievous disease, resembling the pestilence. . . . Having undergone various and excruciating torments, he dashed his forehead against the wall, and his eyes started out of their sockets. And now, become blind, he imagined that he saw God, with His servants arrayed in white robes, sitting in judgment on him. . . . Then, amidst groans, like those of one burnt alive, did he breathe out his guilty soul in the most horrible kind of death.³

*This included the administrative districts of Pannonia, Dacia, Thracia, and Macedonia.



1.1: The Empires of the Romans and Persians

Nor was it the last horrible death. Licinius then murdered Maximinus Daia's two young children, both under the age of nine, and drowned their mother; he also put to death three other possible blood claimants to the eastern throne, all children of dead emperors.

Constantine found it prudent to ignore this bloodshed. The two men met in Mediolanum (modern Milan) to celebrate Licinius's marriage to Constantia and to issue an empire-wide proclamation that made Christianity legal, which was highly necessary given that both men had now wrapped themselves in the flag of God in order to claim the right to rule.

In fact Christianity had been tolerated in all parts of the empire except the east for some years. But this proclamation, the Edict of Milan, now spread this protection into Maximinus Daia's previous territories. "No one whatsoever should be denied the opportunity to give his heart to the observance of the Christian religion," the Edict announced. "Any one of these who wishes to observe Christian religion may do so freely and openly, without molestation. . . . [We] have also conceded to other religions the right of open and free observance of their worship for the sake of the peace of our times, that each one may have the free opportunity to worship as he pleases." Property which had previously been confiscated from Christians was supposed to be returned. All Christian churches were to be turned over to Christian control. "Let this be done," the Edict concluded, "so that, as we have said above, Divine favor towards us, which, under the most important circumstances we have already experienced, may, for all time, preserve and prosper our successes together with the good of the state."⁴

The "good of the state." In Lactantius's accounts, Constantine is a servant of the Divine, and his enemies are brought low by the judgment of God Himself. Eusebius, the Christian priest who wrote Constantine's biography, reflects the same point of view: Constantine is the "Godbeloved," bringing the knowledge of the Son of God to the people of Rome.⁵

Eusebius was Constantine's friend, and Lactantius was a starving rhetoric teacher until Constantine hired him as court tutor and changed his fortunes. But their histories are motivated by more than a desire to stay on the emperor's good side. Both men understood, perhaps before Constantine had managed to articulate it even to himself, that Christianity was the empire's best chance for survival.

Constantine could deal with the problem of multiple emperors; he had already eliminated two of his three rivals, and Licinius's days were numbered. But the empire was threatened by a more complex trouble. For centuries, it had been a political entity within which provinces and districts and cities still maintained their older, deeper identities. Tarsus was Roman, but it was also an Asian city where you were more likely to hear Greek than Latin on

the streets. North Africa was Roman, but Carthage was an African city with an African population. Gaul was a Roman territory, but the Germanic tribes who populated it spoke their own languages and worshipped their own gods. The Roman empire had held all of these dual identities—Roman and *other*—together, but the centrifugal force of the *other* was so strong that the borders of the empire were barely containing it.

Constantine didn't put the cross on his banner out of an attempt to gain the loyalty of Christians. As the Russian historian A. A. Vasiliev points out, it would have been ridiculous to build a political strategy on "one-tenth of the population which at that time was taking no part in political affairs."⁶ Nor did Constantine suddenly get religion. He continued to emboss Sol Invictus, the sun god, on his coins; he remained *pontifex maximus*, chief priest of the Roman state cult, until his death; and he resisted baptism until he realized, in 336, that he was dying.⁷

But he saw in Christianity a new and fascinating way of understanding the world, and in Christians a model of what Roman citizens might be, bound together by a loyalty that transcended but did not destroy their own local allegiances. Christianity could be held side by side with other identities. It was almost impossible to be thoroughly Roman and also be a Visigoth, or to be wholeheartedly Roman and African. But a Christian could be a Greek or a Latin, a slave or a free man, a Jew or a Gentile. Christianity had begun as a religion with no political homeland to claim as its own, which meant that it could be adopted with ease by an empire that swallowed homelands as a matter of course. By transforming the Roman empire into a Christian empire, Constantine could unify the splintering empire in the name of Christ, a name that might succeed where the names of Caesar and Augustus had failed.

Not that he relied entirely on the name of Christ to get what he needed. In 324, Licinius provided Constantine with the perfect excuse to get rid of his co-emperor; the eastern ruler accused the Christians in his court of spying for his colleague in the west (which they undoubtedly were) and threw them out. Constantine immediately announced that Licinius was persecuting Christians—illegal, according to the Edict of Milan—and led his army east.

The two men met twice: the first time near Adrianople, the site of Licinius's own victory against the former eastern emperor Maximinus Daia, and the final time two months later, on September 18, at Chrysopolis. In this last battle, Licinius was so thoroughly defeated that he agreed to surrender.⁸ Constantine spared his life when Constantia pleaded for him, instead exiling him to the city of Thessalonica.

Constantine was now the sole ruler of the Roman world.

HIS FIRST ACTION as solitary emperor was to guarantee the unity of Christian belief. Christianity would not be much help to him if it split apart into battling factions, which it was in danger of doing; for some years, Christian leaders in various parts of the empire had been arguing with increasing stridency over the exact nature of the Incarnation, and the quarrel was rising to a crescendo.*

The Christian church had universally acknowledged, since its beginnings, that Jesus partook in both human and divine natures: “Jesus is Lord,” as J. N. D. Kelly remarks, was the earliest and most basic confession of Christianity. Christ, according to the earliest Christian theologians, was “indivisibly one” and also “fully divine and fully human.”⁹ This was a little like simultaneously filling one glass to the brim with two entire glassfuls of different liquids, and Christians had wrestled with this paradox from the very beginning of their history. Ignatius of Antioch, who died in a Roman arena sometime before AD 110, laid out the orthodox understanding in a series of balanced oppositions:

There is one Physician who is possessed both of flesh and spirit;
both made and not made;
God existing in flesh;
true life in death;
both of Mary and of God. . . .
For “the Word was made flesh.”
Being incorporeal, He was in the body;
being impassible, He was in a passible body;
being immortal, He was in a mortal body;
being life, He became subject to corruption.¹⁰

But other voices offered different solutions. As early as the second century, the Ebionites suggested that Christ was essentially human, and “divine” only in the sense that he had been selected to reign as the Jewish Messiah. The sect known as Docetists employed Greek ideas about the “inherent impurity of matter”¹¹ and insisted that Christ could not truly have taken part in the corruption of the body; he was instead a spirit who only *appeared* human. The Gnostics, taking Docetism one step further, believed that the divine Christ and human Jesus had formed a brief partnership in order to rescue humankind from the corrupting grasp of the material world.[†] And while

*The Incarnation is the central doctrine of Christianity: that God came to earth in the person of Jesus Christ.

†A dizzying number of religions and practices can be classified as “gnostic”: generally a gnostic religion is one that requires its followers to search out a high level of knowledge (gnosis) which only a select few can ever truly attain. Interested readers may want to consult Karen King’s *What*

Constantine and Licinius fought over the crown, a Christian priest named Arius had begun to teach yet another doctrine: that since God was One, “alone without beginning, alone true, alone possessing immortality, alone wise, alone good, alone sovereign,” the Son of God must be a created being. He was different from other created beings, perhaps, but he did not share the *essence* of God.¹²

Arius, who served in the Egyptian city of Alexandria, had been gathering followers and vexing his bishop,* who had finally excommunicated him. This created a potentially serious and major breach, one that might well separate a large group of Christians from the main body of the Christian believers. Constantine, learning of the split, sent a letter to Egypt strongly suggesting that the two men sit down and work out their differences: “Restore me then my quiet days, and untroubled nights, that the joy of . . . a tranquil life may henceforth be my portion,” he wrote.¹³

But neither the bishop nor Arius was willing to yield, and in desperation Constantine called together a council of church leaders to settle the question. He first intended to have the council at the city of Nicomedia, but a severe earthquake unsettled the city while the bishops were on their way to the meeting; buildings collapsed, hundreds died where they stood, and flames from hearths and braziers were flung into the dry frames of the houses, where the blaze spread so rapidly that the city became, in the words of Sozomen, “one mass of fire.”¹⁴

Such a sudden and disastrous event suggested to many that God was not pleased with the coming council, and the travelling bishops halted in their tracks and sent urgent inquiries to the emperor. Would he call off the council? Should they proceed?

Reassured by the churchman Basil that the earthquake had been sent not as judgment but as a demonic attempt to keep the church from meeting and settling its questions, Constantine replied that the bishops should travel instead to Nicaea, where they arrived in late spring of 325, ready to parley.

Settling theological questions by way of council was not a new development for Christianity; since the time of the apostles, the Christian churches had considered themselves smaller parts of a whole, not individual congregations. But never before had an emperor, even a tolerant one, taken the step of summoning a church council on his own authority.¹⁵ In 325, at Nicaea, the Christian church and the government of the west clasped hands.

Is Gnosticism? (Belknap Press, 2005), particularly the first chapter, “Why Is Gnosticism So Hard to Define?”

*Since the earliest days of Christianity, each Christian church had a senior leader, an “overseer” (*episkopos*) or “bishop” who assumed ultimate responsibility for the flock. By the fourth century, each city containing a Christian church had a bishop who represented all of the Christians in that particular geographic area.

One might wonder why Constantine, who didn't have any trouble reconciling his belief in Apollo with his professed Christianity, cared about the exact definition of Christ's Godness. In all likelihood, his interest in this case wasn't theological but practical: to keep the church from splitting apart. A major breach would threaten Constantine's vision of Christianity as a possible model for holding together a disparate group of people in loyalty to an overarching structure. If the overarching structure cracked, the model would be useless.

Which probably explains his decision to be anti-Arian; taking the temper of the most influential leaders, he realized that the most powerful bishops disagreed with Arius's theology. Arianism essentially created a pantheon of divinities, with God the Father at the top and God the Son as a sort of demiurge, a little lower in the heavenly hierarchy. This was anathema to both the Jewish roots of Christianity and the Greek Platonism which flourished in most of the eastern empire.*

Directed by their leading bishops and by the emperor himself to be anti-Arian, the assembled priests at Nicaea came up with a formulation still used in Christian churches today: the Nicene Creed, which asserts the Christian belief in "one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible":

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
 the only-begotten Son of God,
 begotten of the Father before all worlds,
 God of God,
 Light of Light,
 Very God of Very God,
 begotten, not made,
 being of one substance with the Father
 by whom all things were made.

It was a formulation that, in its emphasis on the divinity of Christ, shut the door firmly on Arianism.

And it had the imperial stamp on it. In laying hold of Christianity as his tool, Constantine had altered it. Constantine's ineffable experience of the divine at the Milvian Bridge had proved useful in the moment. But ineffable experiences are notoriously bad at binding together any group of people in common purpose for a long time, and the empire, now tenuously held

*Platonic philosophy had no place for ranked divinities, all of whom belonged to the divine realm (the realm of the Ideal), but some of whom were less ideal than others.

together by a spider-web linkage, needed the Christian church to be more organized, more orderly, and more rational.

Christians, in return, would have had to be more than human to resist what Constantine was offering: the imprint of imperial power. Constantine gave the church all sorts of advantages. He recognized Christian priests as equal to priests of the Roman religion, and exempted them from taxes and state responsibilities that might interfere with their religious duties. He also decreed that any man could leave his property to the church; this, as Vasilev points out, in one stroke turned “Christian communities” into “legal juridical entities.”¹⁶

Further tying his own power to the future of the church, he had also begun construction of a new capital city, one that from its beginning would be filled with churches, not Roman temples. Constantine had decided to move the capital of his empire, officially, from Rome and its gods to the old city of Byzantium, rebuilt as a Christian city on the shores of the pass to the Black Sea.¹⁷

All at once Christianity was more than an identity. It was a legal and political constituency—exactly what it had not been when Constantine first decided to march under the banner of the cross. The church, like Constantine’s empire, was going to be around for a little while; and like Constantine, it had to take care for its future.

After his condemnation at the Council of Nicaea, Arius took to his heels and hid in Palestine, in the far east of the empire. Arianism did not disappear; it remained a strong and discontented underground current. In fact, Constantine’s own sister became a champion of Arian doctrines, rejecting her brother’s command to accept the Nicene Creed as the only Christian orthodoxy.¹⁸

She may have been motivated by bitterness. In 325, within months of the Council of Nicaea, Constantine broke his promise of clemency to her husband Licinius and had him hanged. Unwilling to leave any challengers to his throne alive, Constantine also sent her ten-year-old son, his own nephew, to the gallows.

Four years later, he officially dedicated the city of Byzantium as his new capital, the New Rome of his empire. Disregarding the protests of the Romans, he had brought old monuments from the great cities of the old empire—Rome, Athens, Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus—and installed them among the new churches and streets. He ordered Roman “men of rank” to move to his new city, complete with their households, possessions, and titles.¹⁹ He was re-creating Rome as he thought it should be, under the shadow of the cross. The emblem of Daniel in the lion’s den, the brave man standing for his God in the face of a heathen threat, decorated the fountains in the public squares; a picture of Christ’s Passion, in gold and jewels, was embossed on the very center of the palace roof.²⁰

By 330 Constantine had succeeded in establishing one empire, one royal family, one church. But while the New Rome celebrated, the old Rome seethed with resentment over its loss of status; the unified church Constantine had created at Nicaea was held together only by the thin veneer of imperial sanction; and Constantine's three sons eyed their father's empire and waited for his death. Chapter Two

T I M E L I N E I

ROMAN EMPIRE

<p style="text-align: center;">Diocletian (284–305)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Maxentius (306–312)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Licinius (308–324)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Battle of the Milvian Bridge (312)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Constantine (312–337)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Battle of Campus Serenus (313)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Council of Nicaea (325)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Maximinus Daia (308–313)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Edict of Milan (313)</p>
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Seeking the Mandate of Heaven

*Between 313 and 402,
the Jin cling to the Mandate of Heaven,
while the northern barbarians aspire to seize it*

AS CONSTANTINE WAS UNITING his empire in the west, the eastern empire of the Jin* was disintegrating. Its emperor, Jin Huaidi, had been forced into captivity and servanthood. In 313, at the age of twenty-six, he was pouring wine for his masters at a barbarian feast, and his life hung by a thread.

The Jin empire was a young one, barely fifty years old. For centuries, the old Han dynasty had held the Chinese provinces together in one sprawling and unified whole, the eastern parallel to the Roman empire in the west. But by AD 220, the Han had fallen to rebellion and unrest. The empire fractured apart into thirds, and the Three Kingdoms that took over from the Han—the Cao Wei, the Shu Han, and the Dong Wu—were unstable, shifting and battling for control.

The northernmost of the Three Kingdoms, the Cao Wei, was controlled by

*The Jin dynasty is sometimes transcribed “Chin”; “Jin” is the Pinyin transcription. As in the first volume of this series, I have chosen to use Pinyin transcription for Chinese characters unless another transcription for a particular name is so familiar that use of the Pinyin might cause confusion (i.e., the Yangtze river becomes Chang Jiang in Pinyin, but I have chosen to retain the better-known romanization for clarity’s sake).

I have also used only one name for each emperor. Typically, a Chinese emperor was known by his birth name until his accession, when he took an imperial name. He was then awarded a posthumous name, and after the Han dynasty, emperors were often given a temple name as well. Some emperors were also known by courtesy names (adopted later in life to indicate maturity). This is confusing for the general reader, so in most cases I have chosen to use the imperial name to refer to each emperor even before his accession. For clarity’s sake, I have given each emperor his dynasty’s name for a prefix, even though this is not customary for some of the dynasties and emperors we will encounter later. Emperor Huaidi of the Jin dynasty thus appears as Jin Huaidi; Emperor Ruizong of the Tang dynasty will be referred to as Tang Ruizong.



2.1: *The Three Kingdoms*

its generals; the kings who sat on the Cao Wei throne were young and easily cowed, and did as they were told. In 265, the twenty-nine-year-old general Sima Yan decided to claim the Cao Wei crown for himself. His entire life he had watched as army men pulled the puppet-king's strings. The commanders of the Cao Wei army, including his father and his grandfather, had led in the conquest of the neighboring kingdom of the Shu Han, reducing the Three Kingdoms to two; Cao Wei dominated the north, but its generals remained crownless.

Unlike them, Sima Yan did not intend to spend his career as puppet-master. He already had power; what he craved was legitimacy, the *rightful* power to command—the title that accompanied the sword.

According to the *Three Kingdoms*, the most famous account of the years after the fall of the Han, Sima Yan buckled on his sword and went to see the emperor: the teenager Wei Yuandi, grandson of the kingdom's founder. "Whose efforts have preserved the Cao Wei empire?" he asked, to which the young emperor, suddenly realizing that his audience chamber was crowded with Sima Yan's supporters, answered, "We owe everything to your father and grandfather." "In that case," Sima Yan said, "since it is clear that you can't defend the kingdom yourself, you should step aside and appoint someone who can." Only one courtier objected to this; as soon as the words left his mouth, Sima Yan's supporters beat him to death.

The *Three Kingdoms* is a romance, a fictionalized swashbuckling account written centuries later; nevertheless, it reflects the actual events surrounding the rise of the Jin dynasty. Wei Yuandi agreed to Sima Yan's plans; Sima Yan built an altar, and in an elaborate, formal ceremony, Wei Yuandi climbed to the top of the altar with the seal of state in his hands, gave it to his rival, and then descended to the ground a common citizen.

That day the entire body of officials prostrated itself once and again below the Altar for the Acceptance of the Abdication, shouting mightily, “Long live the new Emperor!”¹

The ceremony had transformed Sima Yan into a *rightful* ruler, a divinely ordained emperor, holder of the Mandate of Heaven. Wei Yuandi, stripped of the Mandate, went back to ordinary life. He died some years later in peace.

Sima Yan took the royal name “Jin Wudi” and became the founder of a new dynasty: the Jin. By 276, he was confident enough in his grasp on his empire to launch a takeover bid against the remaining kingdom, the Dong Wu.

The power of the Dong Wu had been dwindling under an irrational king who had become unbearably cruel; his favorite game was to invite a handful of palace officials to a banquet and get them all drunk, while eunuchs stationed just outside the door wrote down everything they said. The next morning he would summon the officials, hungover and wretched, to his audience chamber and punish them for every incautious word.² By the time the Jin armies arrived at the Dong Wu capital of Jianye, his subjects were ready to welcome their conqueror.

This story, which comes from the Jin’s own official chronicles, probably tells us more about Jin Wudi than about his opponent. Jin Wudi, desperate for legitimization, knew his history. He knew that for thousands of years, dynasties had risen through virtue and fallen through vice. Emperors ruled by the will of Heaven, but if they grew tyrannical and corrupt, the will of Heaven would raise up another dynasty to supplant them. Jin Wudi wanted a greater justification than force to help him dominate the Dong Wu.

Nevertheless, force brought him into the city. The Jin armies, planning on making the final push into Jianye by river, found their way blocked by barriers of iron chain. So they sent flaming rafts, piled high with pitch-covered logs, floating down into the barriers; the chains melted and snapped, and the Jin flooded into Jianye.³ The tyrannical emperor surrendered. The era of the Three Kingdoms was ended; by 280, all of China was united again under the Jin.⁴

This was the empire which lasted barely half a century.

Jin Wudi died in 290, leaving as heir an oldest son who was, in the words of his disgusted subjects, “more than half an idiot.” Unwisely, he also left behind twenty-four other sons (he had overindulged himself in wives and concubines), all of whom had been awarded royal titles of one kind or another.⁵ At once, war broke out. Wife, father-in-law, step-grandfather, uncles, cousins, and brothers all jockeyed to control the half-wit who sat on the throne.

The chaos that swallowed up the Jin empire from 291 to 306 was later known as the Rebellion of the Eight Princes. In fact, far more than eight royal relatives were jockeying for control, but only eight of them managed to rise



2.2: *The Jin*

to the position of regent for the idiot emperor, a position that gave them the crown de facto. In the middle of all this, the emperor himself survived until 306. Finally, an unknown assassin brought his miserable life to an end with a plateful of poisoned cakes.⁶

After his death, a faction supporting his youngest half-brother managed to get its candidate crowned. The new emperor, Jin Huaidi, was an intelligent, educated, and thoughtful young man, not particularly interested in self-indulgence or tyranny. But he was fighting against rough odds. The Rebellion of the Eight Princes had moth-eaten his empire into fragility, and various claimants to the throne were still lurking nearby, with their own personal armies behind them. There was also danger to the north, where a slew of tiny states ruled by warlords aspired to conquer the greater kingdom below them. The Chinese to the south gave these the collective name “Sixteen Kingdoms,” although their number was fluid.

In the end, it was one of the Sixteen Kingdoms, the Hanzhao, that brought the frayed Jin empire down. Hanzhao armies pushed constantly south, raiding Jin land. By 311, they had reached the walls of the Jin capital Luoyang itself.

Luoyang, stripped and wrecked by civil war, was not well equipped to withstand siege. The Jin armies fought a dozen desperate engagements with

the Hanzhao invaders outside the walls; but the people inside were starving, and the gates were finally thrown open. Jin Huaidi fled, hoping to reach the city of Chang'an and take refuge there. Instead, he captured on the road and hauled back as a prisoner of war to the new capital city of the swelled Hanzhao kingdom, Pingyang.⁷

There, the Hanzhao ruler, Liu Cong, dressed him as a slave and forced him to serve wine to officials at royal banquets. Jin Huaidi spent two miserable years as a palace slave, but visitors to the court were shocked to see the man who held the Mandate of Heaven forced into servitude. That the Mandate had come to him by way of threat and manipulation made no difference; its mantle still covered him. An upswell of feeling that Jin Huaidi should be freed began to trouble Liu Cong's court. Liu Cong, who had already proved that his sword was stronger than Jin Huaidi's mandate, responded by putting the Jin emperor to death.⁸ Three years later, he marched down to Chang'an, where the surviving Jin court had gathered, and conquered it.

The brief dominance of the Jin had ended. But the Jin name itself survived. Sima Rui, another Jin relative, was in command of a sizable Jin force quartered at the city of Jianye. He was the strongest man around, and in 317, after a gap in the Jin emperorship, his soldiers pronounced him emperor. He took the imperial name "Jin Yuandi," and although his reign was short, he was succeeded by his son and grandsons in an unbroken imperial line that ruled from Jianye over a shrunken southeastern domain.*

Neither the Hanzhao nor any of the other Sixteen Kingdoms tried to bring a final end to the Jin, possibly because the land south of the Yangtze didn't lend itself to fighting on horseback (the preferred method of northerners, inherited from their nomadic ancestors). As far as the Jin were concerned, the river now marked the boundary between *real* China and the northern realm of the barbarians. Despite the short history of their empire, the Jin emperors attempted to prove that the Mandate was theirs by keeping the torch of ancient Chinese civilization burning. The court at Jianye modelled itself on the old traditions of the Han, bringing back rituals of ancestor worship that had faded during the chaotic decades of civil war and playing host to Confucian scholars who taught, in the traditional manner, that the enlightened man was he who recognized his duties and carried them out faithfully. Holding on to Confucius's promise that a virtuous ruler will gain more and more authority over his people (moral authority, Confucius taught, would roll out from the righteous ruler like wind, bending his subjects to obedience as wind bends

*Jianye is also known as Jiankang. The Jin dynasty held power from 265 to 420; the latter half of the Jin rule, when Jin power was pushed to the southeast, is known as the period of the Eastern Jin (317–420). Sometimes the earlier part of the dynasty (265–316) is called the Western Jin to distinguish the two eras.

grass), the Jin emperors struggled to live rightly and follow the ancient rituals. “Guide the people by virtue,” the *Analects* had promised, “keep them in line by rites, and they will . . . reform themselves.”⁹ The promise that virtuous government would always triumph held the Jin court together, even in the face of defeat by the northern barbarians.

“BARBARIAN” was a moveable term; the harder the Jin fought to distinguish themselves from the uncivilized warriors to the north, the more those uncivilized warriors wanted to be just like the Jin.

In the latter half of the fourth century, the most ambitious of the northern “barbarians” was Fu Jian, chief of the Qianqin. Fu Jian had aspirations to be truly Chinese. He had founded Confucian academies in his state and had reformed the government of his kingdom so that it was run along Chinese lines; his capital city was the ancient Chinese capital of Chang’an; his chief minister, the ruthless Wang Meng, was Chinese.¹⁰

As soon as he inherited the rule of the Qianqin, in 357, Fu Jian began to launch attack after attack on the nearby Sixteen Kingdoms. After twenty years of fighting, he had absorbed most of them, almost uniting the north of China under a single crown; and he intended to absorb the Jin as well.

In 378, the northern army of the Qianqin marched south against the Jin borders. The Jin emperor, Jin Xiaowudi, fought back, but over the next few years he lost his border cities, one at a time. By 382, Fu Jian of the Qianqin was ready to make a final assault. He marched south with an enormous force: according to the chroniclers of his day, 600,000 foot-soldiers and 270,000 cavalry, historical hyperbole that nevertheless points to an army of unprecedented size.¹¹

With a much smaller force, Jin Xiaowudi came north to meet him and put up a desperate defense of the core of the Jin empire. The armies clashed at the Fei river (now dry), in an epic encounter that became one of the most famous in Chinese history: the Battle of the Fei River. “The dead were so many,” says one account, “that they were making a pillow for each other on the ground.”¹²

To the shock of both kings, the smaller Jin force triumphed. With that defeat, Fu Jian’s bid to reunify China was over. His fledgling Chinese-style government had never been firmly established; his empire was held together with the sword, and each war of conquest strained the existing government a little bit more. “You have had so many wars lately,” one of his advisors had warned him before the invasion of the Jin, “that your people are becoming dissatisfied, and hate the very idea of fighting.” Once defeated, Fu Jian began to lose territories to rebellion and revolt, one at a time. Two years after his loss at the Fei river, Fu Jian was strangled by one of his own subordinates.¹³

The strangler was named Tuoba Gui. Like Fu Jian himself, he was of northern stock; his ancestors were nomads of the Xianbei tribe, and the Tuoba family name testified to his “barbarian” origins. His own native state, the Dai state, had been conquered by Fu Jian ten years earlier; his grandfather had been its prince until Fu Jian annexed the state as part of his growing northern empire.

Now Tuoba Gui declared Dai’s independence. He changed its name from the Xianbei “Dai” to the Chinese “Bei Wei,”* and he changed his own family name from the Xianbei “Tuoba” to the Chinese “Yuan.” With his Chinese identity firmly in place, he then began his own campaign to conquer and unify the north.

Meanwhile the Jin army faced another challenge on its other frontier. Around 400, a pirate named Sun En began to recruit a navy, finding his crew among the sailors and fishermen who lived along the coast.¹⁴ For two years, the pirate fleet sailed along the shore, raiding, burning, and stealing, earning the name “armies of demons” from the shore-dwellers. The Jin emperor put the duty of crushing the rebellion into the hands of his generals, who managed to defeat the demon army in 402—and who, in the process, gained more and more power for themselves.

The weakness of the eastern Jin throne, the increasing chaos along its northern frontiers, and the constant shifts in power in the north: China was in constant flux. A monastic movement began to gather force, giving those who followed it a way to remove themselves completely from the disorder that surrounded them.

The monastic impulse in Buddhism went all the way back to the Buddha himself, who is said to have established the first community of monks so that the “path of inner progress” could be followed without distraction.¹⁵ The monasticism of the early fifth century was centered around the teachings of the newly developed Amitabha sect. By 402, two revered monks—the native Hui-yuan and an Indian monk named Kumarajiva—were spreading teachings of the Amitabha, the “Buddha of Shining Light,” who lived in the Western Paradise, the Pure Land, “a sphere without defilement where all those who believed in the Buddha were to be reborn.”¹⁶

Compared with the nasty uncertain present, the Western Paradise was a particularly lovely place; and just as the Western Paradise was far, far away from the battling northern kingdoms and the failing Jin, so the monastic communities that began to grow in the early fifth century were far, far removed from any involvement in court politics. To join a monastic community was to renounce the world and give up all ownership of private property: to cut all

*Or “Northern Wei,” to distinguish it from an earlier kingdom also known as “Wei.”

ties of interest and ambition that bound you to the culture, the society, or the kingdom on the outside of the monastery. But monasticism also provided a refuge. You might give up the chance of bettering yourself—but in exchange, you gained peace.

The followers of the Amitabha had nothing to do with earthly power; Hui-yuan rarely even left the monastery, and his students joined him in escape from the world.¹⁷ Their practice was entirely different from that of the Christians in the west. There, Christianity had begun to serve the needs of the emperor; but in the land of the Jin, Hui-yuan argued, successfully, that Buddhist monks should be exempt from the requirement to bow to the emperor. They had chosen to exist in a different reality, where neither the battles in the north nor the warring in the south had any real importance.

T I M E L I N E 2	
ROMAN EMPIRE	CHINA
	Fall of Han (220)/Rise of Three Kingdoms: Shu Han, Cao Wei, Dong Wu
	Wei Yuandi (260–265) Destruction of Shu Han (263) Fall of Cao Wei/Rise of Jin (265) Jin Wudi (265–290)
	Destruction of Dong Wu (280) Unification under the Jin (280–316)
Diocletian (284–305)	Rebellion of the Eight Princes (291–306)
Maxentius (306–312) Licinius (308–324)	Jin Huaidi (307–313) Liu Cong of the Hanzhao (310–318)
Maximinus Daia (308–313) Battle of the Milvian Bridge (312)	Fall of unified Jin (316) Jin Yuandi (317–323)
Constantine (312–337) Battle of Campus Serenus (313)	Fu Jian of the Qianqin (357–385)
Edict of Milan (313)	Battle of the Fei River (383)
Council of Nicaea (325)	Rise of Bei Wei (386) Tuoba Gui of the Bei Wei (386–409)

Chapter Three

An Empire of the Mind

*Between 319 and 415,
the Guptas of India conquer an empire
and resurrect Sanskrit to record its greatness*

WHILE THE JIN were trying to re-create themselves in their shrunken domains, while Constantine ruled from his new city on the Black Sea, India was a sea of battling subkingdoms and tribal states. No religion, or idea, or emperor united the patchwork of tiny countries. The Mauryans, the last dynasty to claim a large part of the subcontinent as their own, were long gone. The north of India had been conquered and reconquered by wave after wave of foreigners: Greeks, central Asians, Parthians.¹

Unified rule had lasted a little longer in the south, where a dynasty called the Satavahana had managed to keep control over the Deccan, the desert south of the Narmada river. But by the third century, the Satavahana empire too had collapsed, giving way to a series of competing dynastic families. Even farther south, a line of kings called the Kalabhra was slowly building a more lasting dynasty that would hold power for more than three hundred years and swallow the entire southern tip of the subcontinent; but this kingdom left few inscriptions and no written history behind it. Throughout the rest of India, small states stood elbow to elbow, none of them claiming much more territory than the next.²

In 319, a very minor king of one of those small jostling states passed his throne to his son. We know the name of the father, Ghatokacha, but it is not entirely clear where his original territory lay—possibly in the ancient kingdom of Magadha, near the mouth of the Ganges, or perhaps a little farther to the west.

Ghatokacha's single most important accomplishment in life was to make a match between his son, Chandragupta, and a royal princess from the Licchavi family, which had once ruled a small kingdom of its own and still controlled land to his north.³ So when Chandragupta inherited the throne from his father in 319, he had a little bit more than most other petty Indian kings: he

had not only his own kingdom but also the alliance of his wife's family. This proved just enough. He began to fight, and over the next years he conquered his way from Magadha through the ancient territories of Kosola and Vatsa, building himself a small empire centered on the Ganges. As a reward he gave himself the title *maharajadhiraja*, "Great King of Kings" (a claim that somewhat anticipated the reality).⁴

In 335, Chandragupta died and his crown went to his son Samudragupta. In Samudragupta's hands, the little empire reached the critical mass that it needed in order to spread across the Indian countryside. Over the forty-five years of his reign, Samudragupta expanded his empire outwards in an irregular circle from his father's possessions, encompassing almost all of the Ganges river in his kingdom. He also campaigned his way south, into the land of dynasties that had not yet come to their full strength. These dynasties (the Pallava on the southeastern coast, the Satavahana in the Deccan, the Vakataka, just to the west) were not quite powerful enough to keep Samudragupta out, and were forced one by one to pay him tribute.

Ruling from his capital city Pataliputra, at the great fork in the Ganges river, Samudragupta carved the names of his conquests on one of the ancient stone pillars erected long ago by Asoka the Great himself. Asoka had scattered these pillars around his own empire, using them for inscriptions later known as the Pillar Edicts; Samudragupta inscribed his own victories right over top of Asoka's words.

Samudragupta *needed* to connect himself, explicitly, with the glorious past. He was facing an enormous challenge: holding together a geographically far-flung empire populated by lots of minor warleaders, kings, and tribal chiefs who were stubbornly holding on to their own power, their own bloodlines, their own identity. Constantine had tackled this same problem by gathering his empire together under the banner of the cross, but Samudragupta had a two-prong strategy instead. First, he did not insist on the same power and control that Constantine asserted for himself. He called himself "conqueror of the four quarters of the earth,"⁵ but the larger the boast, the smaller the truth. Samudragupta did rule over more land than any Indian king before him, but he was not the master of his empire. Most of the "conquered" land was not folded into his empire; to the north and the west, he wrung tribute money out of the "conquered" kings and then pulled his armies back and let them rule their territories, as before, with only nominal acknowledgment of his victory. He did not even attempt to conquer the stubbornest of the independent strongholds: the lands of the Shaka, which lay in western India and were governed by the descendents of Scythians, roaming nomadic tribes from north of the Black Sea.

The land directly under Samudragupta's rule was nothing to sneeze at;

it was, in fact, the biggest Indian empire since the collapse of the Mauryans four centuries earlier. But in the days of their most powerful king, Asoka the Great, the Mauryans had controlled almost the entire subcontinent. By contrast, Samudragupta's empire, barely a fifth of the land south of the Himalaya mountains, was a pale shadow of former glory.

Once Samudragupta counted his tributaries though—the surrounding kingdoms that had agreed to pay him off on an annual basis—his kingdom tripled in size. So he found it simplest to ignore the difference between empire and tributary land. As far as he was concerned, he had conquered his neighbors to the south and west. Had India been facing imminent outside invasion, this would not have worked. But, guarded for the moment by the mountains, Samudragupta had the luxury of lifting his hands away from the “conquered” lands. He could have a form of emperorship without the headaches thereof.

Thus, under the Gupta rule, India arrived at what is sometimes called a golden age, and sometimes the classical age of Indian civilization. The label points us towards the second part of Samudragupta's strategy, already hinted at by his use of Asoka the Great's old pillar: he made conscious use of nostalgia, trying to create from the past a core that would exert a gravitational pull on the far edges of his empire.

The Gupta kings had been turning towards the past for their power for some years already. In the decades leading up to Samudragupta's reign, the ancient language Sanskrit had become more and more widely recognized as the language of scholarship, court, government, and even economics. Sanskrit had come down into India long ago, trickling across the mountains from the central Asian war tribes that had seeped into India (their relatives had gone east into Persia and become Persian). It had, as languages do, mutated, changed, and mingled with other languages: it had given birth to simplified “languages of everyday use” such as Magadhi and Pali, both so-called *prakrits*, or “common tongues.”⁶ But, well into its mutation, the original archaic form of the language had made an unprecedented comeback. By AD 300, Sanskrit was the language of public record; by the time of Samudragupta's conquests, Sanskrit was also the language of the court and the preferred speech of philosophers and scholars.⁷ The Hindu scriptures known as the Puranas, the law codes, the epic tales of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata: all were written in Sanskrit.

The keepers of Sanskrit were the *brahmins*, the educated Hindu upper class of Gupta society. Buddhism was alive and well in India: Buddhists were building monuments and carving caves, leaving their mark on the Indian landscape. But Sanskrit's dominance shows that the brahmins were firmly at the top of the world, at least in northern India.

Which goes a long way to explain why the Gupta age, inaugurated by

Chandragupta and brought to its peak by Samudragupta, is so often looked back upon as a golden age and the classical period of Indian culture. Romila Thapar points out that both of these terms are suspect, implying as they do an entire structure of historical understanding. A “golden age” is when “virtually every manifestation of life reached a peak of excellence,” and a “classic period” implies a certain height from which a culture declines. To discover either in the past first requires that historians define excellence and height: Hindu chroniclers defined as both Hindu and Sanskritic. In those terms, the Gupta age was indeed golden.⁸

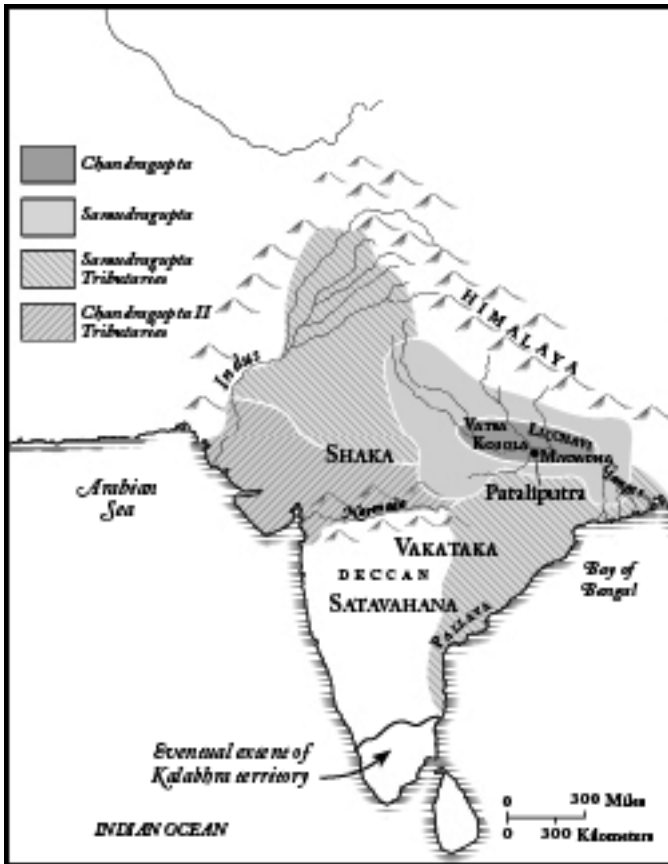
In fact, the Guptas themselves were not exactly “Hindu,” since this is a name that encompasses an elaborate later system. They built Hindu temples and wrote their inscriptions in Sanskrit, but they also erected Buddhist stupas and supported Buddhist monasteries. Hinduism and Buddhism, both systems for understanding the world, were not yet enemies, and Samudragupta, content with nominal rule over his outskirts, had no pressing political need to enforce a rigid religious orthodoxy.

But the official inscriptions of the Gupta court were Sanskrit, and Samudragupta used Hindu rituals in conquest, in victory, as tools of his royal power. It was useful to him to ally his reign with a glorious past: a learned past, an honorable past, a past of victory. Nostalgia and conservatism marked Samudragupta’s reign.

And like so many movements of nostalgia and conservatism, his was based on a total misunderstanding of what had come before. The inscriptions of his victories are a case in point. Asoka’s conquests had pushed the Mauryan empire outwards to its greatest extent, but his campaigns had killed hundreds of thousands (particularly in the south), and once his kingdom was secure he had been overwhelmed with remorse and regret. Turning away from war and victory, he had spent the remainder of his rule pursuing virtue and righteousness. And as part of his penance, he had carved his guilt in Pillar Edicts throughout his land: “The slaughter, death and deportation of the people is extremely grievous,” he mourned, “. . . and weighs heavy on the mind.”⁹

Samudragupta too wanted to be a great king; he hoped to set himself in line with Asoka the conqueror, carving his own accomplishments side by side with the victories of the Mauryan emperor. But he seems to have used the pillar without understanding the faint traces of the edict already on it. Unwittingly, he set his triumphs and his boasts of victory next to Asoka’s regrets and repentance.¹⁰

WHEN SAMUDRAGUPTA DIED, sometime between 375 and 380, a brief struggle for the throne followed. Coins from the period show, not an orderly progression from father to son, but the interpolation of another royal name: one Prince Ramagupta. Two centuries later, the play *Devi-Chandra-gupta* (from



3.1: *The Age of the Gupta*

which only a few paragraphs survive) suggested that Ramagupta schemed to kill his younger brother Chandragupta, namesake of the kingdom's founder. The younger Chandragupta had carried out a daring offensive against the Shaka enemies to the west, infiltrating the Shaka court in woman's dress and assassinating the Shaka king. This made him so popular that Ramagupta decided to get rid of him. Discovering the plot, Chandragupta stormed into the palace to confront his brother and killed him in the heat of anger.¹¹

Chandragupta became king as Chandragupta II in 380. Eight years after his accession, Chandragupta II added the Shaka to the list of Gupta tributaries. Like his great-grandfather, he also made an alliance: between his daughter Prabhavati and the Vakataka dynasty of minor kings in the western Deccan. This sideways strategy led to a partial enfolding of the Vakataka into the Gupta empire: Prabhavati's husband died, not too long after their marriage, and Prabhavati became regent and queen, ruling the lands of the Vakataka under her father's direction. Master of two more Indian domains, Chan-

dragupta commemorated his new reach by giving himself the name “Vikramaditya,” “Sun of Prowess.”¹²

Like his father, Chandragupta II never tried to assert much more than nominal control over the outlying areas of his empire; like his father, he refused to enforce a strict Hindu orthodoxy. The Chinese monk Faxian, on a pilgrimage to collect Buddhist scriptures for his monastery, arrived in India sometime between 400 and 412. He was struck by the peace and prosperity that this *laissez-faire* style of government brought:

The people are numerous and happy; they have not to register their households, or attend to any magistrates and their rules; only those who cultivate the royal land have to pay (a portion of) the grain from it. If they want to go, they go; if they want to stay on, they stay. The king governs without decapitation or (other) corporal punishments. Criminals are simply fined, lightly or heavily, according to the circumstances (of each case). Even in cases of repeated attempts at wicked rebellion, they only have their right hands cut off. The king’s body-guards and attendants all have salaries. Throughout the whole country the people do not kill any living creature, nor drink intoxicating liquor, nor eat onions or garlic.

Travelling to Pataliputra, the Gupta capital, he was even more impressed with both the wealth and the spirituality of its inhabitants: “The inhabitants are rich and prosperous,” he wrote, “and vie with one another in the practice of benevolence and righteousness.” As for the city itself, where Chandragupta II’s palace stood, he calls it “[t]he city where King Asoka ruled,” and praises Chandragupta II for taking the same position as the earlier king towards Buddhism: “The Law of Buddha was widely made known, and the followers of other doctrines did not find it in their power to persecute the body of monks in any way.”¹³ Like his father, Chandragupta II had managed to associate himself with the glorious and partly mythical past.

Chandragupta II ruled for nearly four decades. After his death in 415, he became a legend: the wise king Vikramaditya, subject of heroic tales and mythical songs. He left behind him an empire that, though at its core not much larger than in the days of Samudragupta, claimed nominal control over the southeast, west, and north, covering all but the southwest quarter of the subcontinent. It was an empire where control was untested, where orthodoxy was untried, and where loyalty was not needed: an empire of the mind.

T I M E L I N E 3

CHINA	INDIA
Fall of Han (220)/Rise of Three Kingdoms: Shu Han, Cao Wei, Dong Wu	
Wei Yuandi (260–265) Destruction of Shu Han (263) Fall of Cao Wei/Rise of Jin (265) Jin Wudi (265–290)	
Destruction of Dong Wu (280) Unification under the Jin (280–316)	
Rebellion of the Eight Princes (291–306)	
Jin Huaidi (307–313) Liu Cong of the Hanzhao (310–318)	
Fall of unified Jin (316) Jin Yuandi (317–323)	Chandragupta (319–335)
	Samudragupta (335–c. 380)
Fu Jian of the Qianqin (357–385)	
Battle of the Fei River (382)	Chandragupta II (c. 380–415)
Rise of Bei Wei (383) Tuoba Gui of the Bei Wei (386–409)	
	Faxian journeys to India

Chapter Four

The Persian Threat

*Between 325 and 361,
Shapur II of Persia challenges the Roman empire,
Constantine plans the first crusade,
and his heirs fight each other for power*

NOW THAT HE HAD MOVED his capital city eastward, Constantine was face to face with his most dangerous enemy: the king of Persia.

Shapur II had been king since he was in the womb. His father, Hurmuz, had died a month before Shapur's birth, and the Persian noblemen and the priests of the state religion, Zoroastrianism, had crowned the queen's pregnant belly. Until he turned sixteen, Shapur and his empire were controlled by regents who were more concerned for their own power than for the greater good of Persia. So Persia had been unable, during Constantine's rise to power, to do much in the way of seizing land for itself.

In fact, it had been forced into defending itself from southern invasion: tribes of kingless and nomadic Arabs who had lived in the Arabian peninsula for centuries were now driven northward by a sinking water table. Because of the harshness of their own native land, says the Arab historian al-Tabari, they were the "most needy of all the nations," and their raids were growing more troublesome: "They seized the local people's herds of cattle," al-Tabari laments, "their cultivated land, and their means of subsistence, and did a great deal of damage . . . with none of the Persians able to launch a counterattack because they had set the royal crown on the head of a mere child."¹

This lasted only until Shapur attained his majority, which he did early. In 325, he told his army commanders that he would now take over the defense of the empire. He selected a thousand horsemen to act as a strike force against the Arab invaders, under his personal command. "Then he led them forth," al-Tabari writes, "and fell upon those Arabs who had treated Fars as their pasture ground . . . wrought great slaughter among them, reduced [others of] them to the harshest form of captivity, and put the remainder to flight." He then pursued them, sending a fleet of ships across the Persian Gulf to Bahrain,

landing in eastern Arabia, and shedding “so much of their blood that it flowed like a torrent swollen by a rainstorm.”² His forces reached as far as the small oasis city of Medina, where he took captives.

Nevertheless, it was not this force at arms that impressed al-Tabari the most. Shapur’s wisdom, al-Tabari tells us, was first seen when, as a young man, he watched his people crossing a bridge over the Tigris, pushing against each other on the crowded span. This struck him as inefficient.

So he gave orders for another bridge to be built, so that one of the bridges could be used for people crossing in one direction and the other bridge for people crossing from the opposite direction. . . . In this way, the people were relieved of the necessity of endangering their lives when crossing the bridge. The child grew in stature and prestige in that single day, what for others would have taken a long period.³

Running an empire the size of Persia required more than skill with a sword; it took administrative ability. Inventing a new traffic pattern was an innovation. Shapur II was intelligent and shrewd, and fully able to withstand Constantine’s plans to dominate the known world.

Constantine’s move to Byzantium was silent testimony that he intended to challenge Persia’s hold on the east. But his first approach to Shapur II was relatively polite. As soon as Shapur II shook off his regents, Constantine sent him a letter suggesting in respectful but unambiguous terms that Shapur refrain from persecuting the Christians in Persia. “I commend [them] to you because you are so great,” Constantine wrote, tactfully. “Cherish them in accordance with your usual humanity: for by this gesture of faith you will confer an immeasurable benefit on both yourself and us.”⁴

Shapur II agreed to show mercy to the Christians within his border, but this tolerance became increasingly difficult as time went on. Not long after Constantine’s missive, the African king of Axum became a Christian—an act that proclaimed his friendship with the Roman empire as loudly as it proclaimed his hope of heaven.

THIS KING was named Ezana, and the kingdom he ruled lay just west of the Red Sea.* On the other side of the narrow strait at the sea’s southern end

*The kingdom of Axum lay in the area also known, in Greek and Latin sources, as Abyssinia and Ethiopia. The Romans had also used “Ethiopia” to refer to Nubia, the southern Egyptian kingdom; and sometimes Axum is simply called “Ethiopia.” In the same way, the Himyarite kingdom of Arabia lies in the area also known as Yemen, and sometimes is referred to as Yemen. I have avoided using either Ethiopia or Yemen when talking about the kingdoms of the fourth and fifth centuries, since both terms serve as more general geographic labels.

was Arabia, and in the 330s Arabia was filled with Persian soldiers. Shapur the Great, who had driven the invading Arabs out of his southern realm at the beginning of his reign, had continued an enthusiastic campaign into the Arabian interior. For his entire reign, al-Tabari tells us, Shapur was “occupied with great eagerness in killing the Arabs and tearing out the shoulder-blades of their leaders; this was why they called him *Dhu al-Aktaf*, ‘The Man of the Shoulders.’”⁵ Ezana’s conversion assured him of Constantine’s support, should Persian aggression move across the water.⁵

For the moment, Shapur left the African kingdom alone. Instead, his soldiers invaded Armenia.

Armenia, which had been a kingdom for nearly a millennium, had long suffered from its position on the eastern frontier of Rome. For centuries, Roman emperors had either allied themselves with the Armenian kings or invaded the kingdom in an effort to make it part of the empire; the eastern kingdoms of the ancient Persians and Parthians had done the same, hoping to make Armenia a buffer against Roman expansion.

At the moment, Armenia was independent, but once again squeezed between two large and expanding empires. It was not at war with either Rome or Persia, but it tended towards friendship with the Roman empire. The king of Armenia, Tiridates, had been baptized by a monk named Gregory back in 303, before Christianity was politically useful.⁶ When Constantine made Christianity the religion of the empire, Armenia’s ties with its western neighbor grew even stronger.

Agents of Shapur the Great—who was increasingly worried that a Christian Armenia would never again serve as an ally of the Persian empire—managed to convince Tiridates’s chamberlain to turn traitor. In 330, the chamberlain poisoned his king. Unfortunately for the Persians, this did not turn Armenia away from Christianity; instead, Tiridates became a martyr (and eventually a saint), and his son Khosrov the Short became king.

Since the indirect approach had failed, Shapur sent soldiers. The 336 invasion of Armenia failed—the soldiers withdrew—but Shapur had conveyed a clear message to Constantine: he didn’t intend to relinquish the border areas to Rome, even if those border areas were Christian.

Converting to Christianity had now gained all sorts of fraught political implications, and Shapur decided to crack down on Christianity in his own empire. In Persian eyes, Christians were increasingly likely to be double agents working for Rome. The systematic persecution of Persian Christians, mostly on the western frontier, began early in 337.

⁵The “tearing of the shoulders,” a custom that seems to have been peculiar to Shapur II, did not necessarily kill the victim; instead it left the sword-arm, used to fight against the Persian king, useless and dangling.

The attacks were recorded by the Persian Christian Aphrahat, who lived at the monastery Mar Mathai, on the eastern bank of the Tigris river. Shapur, he wrote to a fellow monk who lived outside Persia, caused “a great massacre of martyrs,” but the Persian Christians were holding strong; they believed that they would be blessed with a “great reward,” while the Persian persecutors would “come to scorn and contempt.”⁷

To the west, Constantine was plotting to make those words come true. He was preparing an invasion, but this invasion would be a crusade; his justification was that the Christians of Persia needed his help. He planned to take with him a portable tabernacle, a tent in which bishops (who would accompany the army) would lead regular worship, and he announced that he would be baptized (something he hadn’t yet gotten around to) in the river Jordan as soon as he reached it. It was the first time that a ruler had planned to wield the cross against an outside enemy.⁸

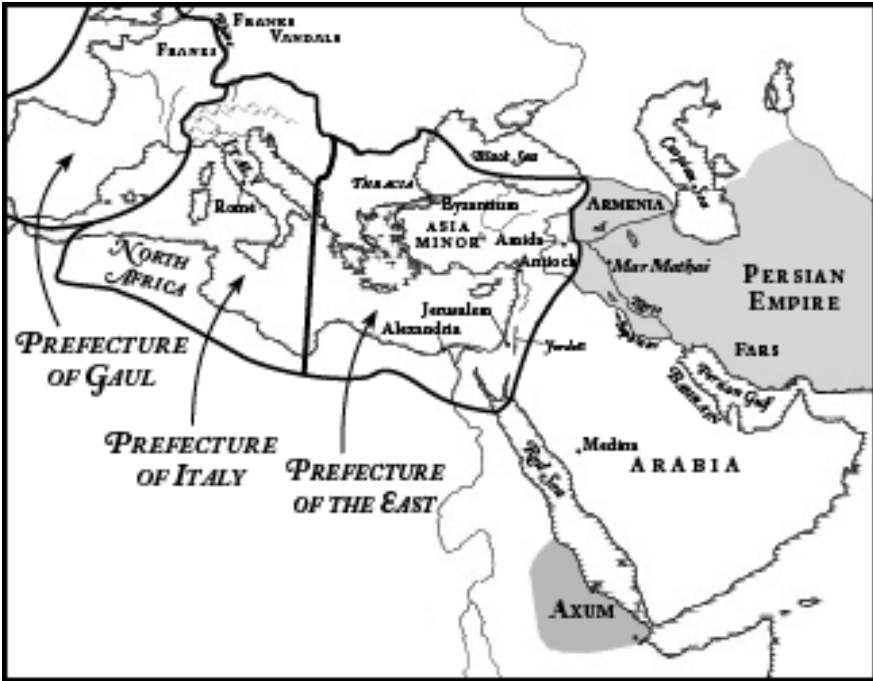
But before he could depart on his crusade, he grew sick; and on May 22, 337, Constantine the Great died.

The name of his city was changed from Byzantium to Constantinople, in his honor, and he was buried there in a mausoleum he had prepared at the Church of the Holy Apostles. The mausoleum had twelve symbolic coffins for the twelve apostles in it, with Constantine’s as the thirteenth. Later historians called this an act of massive hubris, but the burial had its own logic: Constantine, like the apostles, was a founder of the faith. “He alone of all the Roman emperors has honoured God the All-sovereign,” Eusebius concludes, “. . . [H]e alone has honoured his Church as no other since time began. . . . [H]is like has never been recorded from the beginning of time until our day.” He had married Christianity and state politics, and in doing so had changed both forever.⁹

AS SOON AS NEWS of Constantine’s death spread eastward, Shapur invaded Armenia again. This time he succeeded; Armenia’s Christian king, Khosrov the Short, was forced to run for his life towards the Roman border. Shapur installed a Persian puppet in his place. The buffer kingdom was, at least temporarily, his.¹⁰

The Roman response was not immediate because Constantine’s heirs were busy trying to kill each other in Constantinople. Constantine, canny politician in life, had made no definite arrangements for the succession; it was almost as though he expected to live forever. Instead, he left behind three sons and a nephew who had all been given the title of Caesar, who had all ruled for him in various parts of the empire, and who could all claim the right to the throne.

No impartial historian records exactly what happened in the weeks after Constantine’s death, but by the time the bloodshed ceased, Constantine’s nephew, both of his brothers-in-law, and a handful of high court officials



4.1: *The Romans and Persians*

had been murdered. Constantine's three sons—Constantine II (twenty-one), Constantius (seventeen), and Constans (fourteen)—had come to some sort of family agreement that left the three of them alive and all possible competitors or naysayers dead.¹¹ The only exception was their five-year-old cousin Julian, who was being raised in a castle in Asia Minor, well away from the purge.

In September, the three sons had themselves acclaimed as co-emperors in Constantinople. The empire was again divided, this time into three parts (or prefectures). Constantine II took the Prefecture of Gaul; Constans took the Prefecture of Italy, which included not only Rome but also North Africa; and Constantius took the entire Prefecture of the East along with the region of Thracia, which meant that he got Constantinople. Almost at once, Constantius reinvaded Armenia and put Khosrov the Short back on his throne.

Fourteen-year-old Constans, despite his age, soon showed that he was not to be trifled with. In 340, his brother Constantine II tried to take Italy from him; Constans went to war against his older brother, ambushed him in the north of Italy, and killed him. Now the empire was again divided into two, between Constans in the west and Constantius in the east.

Constans was a staunch supporter of the Christian church; nevertheless, he was unpopular with everyone. His personality was so foul that even the church historians, normally fulsome about any Christian emperor, disliked him. He

managed to survive for another ten years, but in 350, at age twenty-seven, he was murdered by his own generals.¹²

Rather than throwing their support behind the remaining brother, Constantius, the generals then acclaimed a new co-emperor: an officer named Magnentius. Constantius marched west to get rid of the usurper, but it took two years of fighting before Magnentius was defeated. He killed himself rather than fall into Constantius's hands. By 352, Constantius (like his father) was ruler of the entire empire.

Meanwhile, of course, Constantius had been away from his eastern border; and Shapur had taken advantage of his absence to reclaim Armenia yet again. The son of Khosrov the Short had been ruling as a Roman ally; Shapur invaded, captured the king, put out his eyes, and allowed his son to ascend the throne only on the condition that he remain subject to Persian wishes.¹³

Constantius did not immediately answer this challenge. He had problems to solve, the most pressing of which was finding an heir. He had no son, so in 355 he appointed his surviving cousin Julian to be Caesar and heir. Julian, now twenty-three, had been squirreled away in Asia Minor, being carefully trained in Christianity by the tutor Mardonius.

Constantine preferred to reside in Constantinople, so he put Julian in charge of affairs on the western side of the empire. Here, the young man campaigned so successfully on the Rhine front that the army became his enthusiastic supporter; when he reduced taxation in the west, the people loved him too.

While Julian's popularity grew, Constantius's waned. Like his father, Constantius was a Christian; unlike his father, he was supportive of Arianism, now officially a heresy. In the same year that he appointed Julian as his Caesar, Constantius wielded his imperial authority to get rid of the bishop of Rome, an anti-Arian churchman named Liberius who disapproved of Constantius's beliefs. In Liberius's place, he appointed a bishop of his own choosing.

This was a serious matter, as the bishop of Rome was probably the most influential priest in the entire Christian church. The bishops of Rome considered themselves the spiritual heirs of the apostle Peter, and they considered Peter to be the founder of the Christian church. For some decades already, the bishop of Rome had claimed the right to make decisions that were binding on the bishops of other cities.*

This privilege was far from unchallenged; the bishops of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, all cities that could boast a Christian community as old as the Christian community in Rome, resented the assumption that Rome was the center of the Christian world. Nevertheless, all of the bishops could

*This belief was based on Matthew 16:18, where Jesus says to Peter, "Upon this rock I will build my church." The Roman church interpreted this as saying that Peter was the founding apostle of the Christian church; since Peter then went to Rome to preach, the Roman Christians also considered Rome the birthplace of the church.

agree that Constantius ought not to appoint and remove *any* bishop at will. Constantius, paying no attention to their objections, called a church council of his own in 359 and announced at it that Arian Christology was now orthodox. Neither Roman bishop—either the deposed one or the newly appointed one—was invited.

None of the churchmen were pleased with this high-handedness, which seems to have stemmed from real theological conviction (certainly Constantius reaped no political benefits by meddling in church affairs in this way). Constantius fell into disfavor, particularly with churchmen in the western half of the empire, where anti-Arian sentiment was strongest. So when Constantius, alarmed by Julian's swelling popularity, demanded that Julian in the west reduce his armed force by sending some of his troops eastward, Julian banked on his cousin's growing unpopularity in the west and his own stellar reputation and refused. The army on the Rhine, backing him up, elevated him to the post of co-emperor.

This put the empire back under two emperors, a situation that neither man found bearable. But Julian was not anxious to launch an out-and-out attack on Constantius, who (after all) had Constantinople and most of the east on his side. For his part, Constantius didn't dare leave the eastern borders and march west against Julian. The Persian threat was too immediate; Shapur's army was already approaching the Roman borders.

The Roman soldier Ammianus Marcellinus, who later wrote a history of the Roman wars with Persia, had been sent secretly into Armenia (now Persian-controlled) to spy on the Persian advance. From the top of a cliff, he spotted the armies advancing: "the whole circuit of the lands filled with innumerable troops," he remembers, "with the king leading the way, glittering in splendid attire."¹⁴ The Roman army burned the fields and houses in front of the approaching enemy to prevent them from finding food, and made a stand at the Euphrates river; but the Persians, advised by a Roman traitor who had gone over to their side, made a detour north through untouched fields and orchards.

The Romans pursued them, and the two armies finally met at the small walled city of Amida, in Roman territory. The city was good for defense, since (as Ammianus Marcellinus explains) it could only be approached by a single narrow pass, and the Romans took up a defensive position in the gap. But a detachment of Persian cavalry had managed, without the Romans' knowledge, to get around behind the city, and the Romans found themselves jammed into the pass, attacked from both sides. Ammianus, fighting in the middle of the throng, was trapped there for an entire day: "We remained motionless until sunrise," he writes, ". . . so crowded together that the bodies of the slain, held upright by the throng, could nowhere find room to fall, and that in front of me a soldier with his head cut in two, and split into equal

halves by a powerful sword stroke, was so pressed on all sides that he stood erect like a stump.”¹⁵

Finally Ammianus and the other surviving Roman soldiers made it into the city. The Persians attacked the walls with archers and with war elephants: “frightful with their wrinkled bodies and loaded with armed men, a hideous spectacle, dreadful beyond every form of horror.” Amida withstood the siege for seventy-three days. The streets were stacked with “maggot-infested bodies,” and plague broke out within the walls. The defenders kept the wooden siege-engines and the elephants at bay with burning arrows, but finally the Persians heaped up mounds of earth and came over the walls. The inhabitants were slaughtered. Ammianus escaped through a back gate and found a horse, trapped in a thicket and tied to its dead master. He untied the corpse and fled.¹⁶

Constantius was forced to surrender not only Amida but also at least two other fortresses, a handful of fortified towns, and eastern land. Meanwhile, Julian still threatened in the west. Suspended between two hostile powers, Constantius didn’t dare turn his back on one to attack the other.

A fever solved his dilemma. On October 5, 361, Constantius died from a virus, his body so hot that his attendants could not even touch him. Julian was sole emperor, by default, of the entire Roman empire.

T I M E L I N E 4		
INDIA	ROMAN EMPIRE	PERSIAN EMPIRE
	<p>Diocletian (284–305)</p> <p>Maxentius (306–312)</p> <p>Licinius (308–324) Maximinus Daia (308–313)</p> <p>Battle of the Milvian Bridge (312)</p> <p>Constantine (312–337)</p> <p>Battle of Campus Serenus (313) Edict of Milan (313)</p>	<p>Shapur II (309–379)</p>
<p>Chandragupta (319–335)</p> <p>Samudragupta (335–c. 380)</p>	<p>Council of Nicaea (325)</p> <p>Khosrov the Short of Armenia (330–338)</p> <p>Constantine II (337–340) Constantius (337–361) Constans (337–350)</p> <p>First Council of Constantinople (359)</p> <p>Julian (360/361–363)</p>	
<p>Chandragupta II (380–415)</p> <p>Faxian journeys to India</p>		

Chapter Five

The Apostate

*Between 361 and 364,
Julian tries and fails
to restore the old Roman ways*

AS SOON AS JULIAN took control of Constantinople, it became clear that his Christian education had been entirely unsuccessful. He had been in correspondence for some years with the famous rhetoric teacher Libanius, who guided him in his study of Greek literature and philosophy, and had been in secret sympathy with the old religion of Rome for most of his adult life.

Now he openly announced himself as an opponent of Christianity. His baptism, he said, was a “nightmare” that he wished to forget. He ordered the old temples, many of which had been closed under the reign of the Christian emperors, to be reopened. And he decreed that no Christian could teach literature; since a literary education was required for all government officials, this would eventually have guaranteed that all Roman officials had received a thoroughly Roman education.¹

It also meant that the Christians in the empire would become chronically undereducated. Most Christians refused to send their children to schools where they would be indoctrinated in the ways of the old Roman religion. Instead, Christian writers began to try to create their own literature, to be used in their own schools: as A. A. Vasiliev writes, they “translated the Psalms into forms similar to the odes of Pindar; the Pentateuch of Moses they rendered into hexameter; the Gospels were rewritten in the style of Plato’s dialogues.”²

Most of this literature was so substandard that it disappeared almost at once; very little has survived.

This was an odd kind of persecution—and one that reveals Julian’s essential likeness to his Gupta counterparts, kings he would never meet. Julian was a conservative. He wanted to bring back the glorious past. He wanted to draw a line clearly between Roman and non-Roman; it was a disappearing line, thanks to Constantine’s decision to unite his empire by faith rather than by their pride in “Romanness,” and Julian wanted it back. He wanted to rebuild

the wall of Roman civilization against not only the Christians but all who did not share this same tradition. “You know well,” Libanius had written to him, back in 358, “that if anyone extinguishes our literature, we are put on a level with the barbarians.” To have no literature was to have no past. To have no past was to be a barbarian. As far as Julian was concerned, Christians were both barbarians and atheists; they had no literature, and they did not believe in the Roman gods.³

Julian did realize that the old Roman religion would need updating if it were to compete with the unifying power of the Christian church. So he pursued two strategies. First, he stole the most useful elements of the Christian church for the Roman religion. He studied the hierarchy of the Christian church, which had proved relatively good at holding far-flung congregations together, and reorganized the Roman priesthood in the same way. And he ordered Roman priests to model the worship of the Roman gods on the popular Christian services, importing discourses (like sermons) and singing into the old Roman rituals. Worship of Jupiter had never looked more like worship of Jesus.

His second strategy was more subtle. He allowed all of the Christian churchmen who had been banished at various times for being on the wrong side of the Nicene-Arian debate to return. He knew they were incapable of getting along; and sure enough, serious theological arguments were soon breaking out. It was the flip side of Constantine’s methods; Julian was capitalizing on Christianity’s power to divide, not its power to unify.⁴

For all of this, he earned himself the nickname “Julian the Apostate.”

Ironically, his political problems forced him to recognize the rights of barbarians to Roman privileges at the same time that he was restoring the old ideas of Romanness. Unable to fight simultaneously with Shapur on his east and with invading Germanic tribes to the north, he had no choice but to allow the Germanic tribes of the Franks to settle in northern Gaul as *foederati*, Roman allies with many of the rights of Roman citizens.

With the threat of the Franks averted, Julian launched a Persian campaign. In 363, he marched east with eighty-five thousand men—not only Romans, but also Goths (Germanic tribes who had been *foederati* since the days of Constantine) and Arabs, who were anxious to get their revenge on Shapur for his shoulder-tearing. He also brought traditional soothsayers and Greek philosophers with him, in place of the priests and tabernacle Constantine had planned to use. The two groups complicated the enterprise by falling out with each other; the soothsayers insisted that the omens were bad and the army should withdraw, while the philosophers countered that such superstitions were illogical.⁵

At the Persian border, he divided his forces and sent thirty thousand of his men down the Tigris, himself leading the rest down the Euphrates by means of ships,

constructed on the banks of the river where it ran through Roman territory and launched downstream. The idea was that they would meet at Ctesiphon, the Persian capital (on the east bank of the Tigris, a bit south of Baghdad) and perform a pincer move on the Persians.

According to Ammianus, the Roman fleet was an amazing sight: fifty war galleys and a thousand supply ships with food and bridge-building materials. Shapur, alarmed by the size of the approaching army, left his capital city as a precaution, so when Julian arrived he found the king gone. The armies built bridges across the Tigris to the east bank and laid siege to Ctesiphon anyway. The siege dragged on and on. Shapur, safely away from the action, rounded up additional men and allies from the far corners of his empire and returned to fight the besieging army. Julian was forced to retreat back up the Tigris, fighting the whole way and struggling to keep his men alive; the Persians had burned all of the fields and storehouses in their path.

The retreat took all spring. By early summer, the Roman soldiers hadn't yet made it back to their own border. They were starving, wounded, and constantly harassed by the Persians who pursued them. One June day, during yet another Persian ambush, Julian was struck by a Persian spear that lodged in his lower abdomen. He was carried back to camp, where he slowly bled to death: one of only three Roman emperors to fall in battle against a foreign enemy.*

Ammianus Marcellinus, who was with the army, describes a beautifully classical death: Julian, resigned to his fate, carrying on a calm discussion about the "nobility of the soul" with two philosophers until he died. The Christian historian Theodoret insists that Julian died in agony, recognizing too late the power of Christ and exclaiming, "Thou hast won, O Galilean!"⁶

Of these two equally unlikely accounts, the Christian version comes closest to describing the situation. Julian's army was stranded, besieged, and in need of leadership and rescue. After a bit of arguing and milling around, the officers dressed one of their generals, a dignified and kindly man named Jovian, in the imperial robes and proclaimed him emperor.⁷ Jovian, aged thirty-three, was a Christian.

From this point on, Christian emperors would rule the empire. The old Roman religion would never again dominate the Roman court. Not that this brought an end to the striving; it simply meant that the battle between past and the present, the old Rome and the new empire, went underground.

Jovian was a pragmatist. Instead of fighting, he put on his crown and asked Shapur for a parley. The treaty, once concluded, allowed the Roman army to go home in peace. In exchange, Jovian agreed to hand over to the Persians all Roman land east of the Tigris, including the Roman fortress of Nisibis.

*The other two were Valerian (Persia, 260) and Decius (Goths, 251).

Nisibis would become the center of Persian assaults against the Roman frontier; it never returned to western control.⁸

The army limped westward under Jovian's command, to face scorn and fury from the Romans back home. The treaty was condemned as shameful, a disgrace to Rome, an unacceptable conclusion to Julian's bold and disastrous campaign.

Jovian himself never even returned to Constantinople. Once he was back in Roman land, he paused at the city of Antioch and started to work at once to chart a middle way. He revoked all of Julian's anti-Christian decrees, but rather than replacing them with

equally restrictive decrees against the Roman religion, he declared religious toleration. He was, himself, unabashedly faithful to the Nicene Creed, but he had decided to remove religion from the center of the empire's politics. Christian, Greek, Roman: all would have equal rights to worship and to take part in government.⁹

But it was too late. Religious and political legitimacy—religious and political claims to rule—were intertwined at the empire's center. A very strong and charismatic emperor (which the nice-minded Jovian was not) might have managed to hold on to power and proclaim religious tolerance at the same time, but Jovian's political authority was already weak, thanks to the unpopular treaty with Persia. His only hope for hanging on to power was to use religious authority in its place, establishing a strict religious orthodoxy as the center of his power.

His refusal to do so meant that he had no authority at all. In 364, eight months after his elevation to the imperial crown, he died in his tent while he was still making his slow way back towards the eastern capital. Reports of the cause were suspiciously varied; he was said to have died of fumes from a badly vented stove, from indigestion, from a "swollen head." "So far as I know," Ammianus remarks, "no investigation was made of the death." The Roman throne lay open for the next claimant.¹⁰



5.1: *The Persian Campaign*

T I M E L I N E 5		
INDIA	ROMAN EMPIRE	PERSIAN EMPIRE
		Shapur II (309–379)
	Battle of the Milvian Bridge (312)	
	Constantine (312–337)	
	Battle of Campus Serenus (313)	Edict of Milan (313)
Chandragupta (319–335)	Council of Nicaea (325)	
		Khosrov the Short of Armenia (330–338)
Samudragupta (335–c. 380)	Constantine II (337–340)	Constantius (337–361)
		Constans (337–350)
	First Council of Constantinople (359)	
	Julian (360/361–363)	
	Jovian (363–364)	
Chandragupta II (380–415)		
Faxian journeys to India		

Chapter Six

Earthquake and Invasion

*Between 364 and 376,
natural disaster and barbarian attacks
trouble the Roman empire*

JOVIAN'S DEATH MEANT that the Roman empire had three emperors in four years: a "ferocity of changeable circumstances," Ammianus Marcellinus calls it, a time when Rome's religion and Rome's frontiers had shifted as quickly as Rome's chief official.

No one supported the claim of Jovian's infant son. Instead, the army (which had become, without design, representatives for the entire empire) chose another officer to be the next emperor.

Valentinian was forty-three, a lifelong soldier and a zealous Christian, something that makes it slightly difficult to get an accurate portrayal of him from the contemporary sources. The historian Zosimus, a devotee of traditional Roman religion, remarks grudgingly that Valentinian was "an excellent soldier but extremely illiterate"; the Christian historian Theodoret rhapsodizes that Valentinian was "distinguished not only for his courage but also for prudence, temperance, justice, and great stature."¹

What the empire needed at this point was not a learned leader but an experienced general, and Valentinian's decisions suggest that his army service hadn't necessarily qualified him to be emperor. He was at Nicaea when the army acclaimed him; before setting out for Constantinople to be crowned, he decided to declare a co-emperor. This was a soldier's precaution. Life was cheap along the roads in the eastern provinces, and Valentinian had no heir.

According to Ammianus, he gathered his fellow officers together and asked what they thought of his younger brother and fellow soldier Valens. There was a silence at this, until finally the commander of cavalry said, "Your highness, if you love your kin you have a brother, but if you love the state look carefully for a man to invest with the purple."²

It was advice that Valentinian decided to ignore. He gave his brother the imperial title and put him in charge of the eastern empire as far as the prov-

ince of Thracia; then he travelled to Italy, where he set up his court not in Rome, but in Milan.

This was a brief reorientation to the west, with the senior emperor taking up residence in Italy and the junior emperor in the east, although Valens settled not at Constantinople, but at Antioch, on the Orontes river. And it almost immediately became clear why the commander of cavalry had reservations. The empire had all sorts of military problems. Germanic tribes were invading Gaul and pushing across the Danube; the Roman holdings in Britannia were under attack by the natives; the North African territories were suffering from the hostility of the tribes to the south; and Shapur, claiming that the treaty he had sworn with Jovian was nullified by Jovian's death, was getting ready to attack the east.³

But Valens, in the east, was apparently more worried about inner purity than outer threat. His older brother Valentinian held to Nicene Christianity but was tolerant both of Arian Christians and of adherents to the traditional state religion. In fact, one of Valentinian's most aggressive moves was to pass a law restricting evening sacrifices to the gods, but as soon as one of his pro-consuls pointed out that many of his subjects held to these ancient customs as a way to define themselves as part of Roman society, Valentinian immediately ordered everyone to disregard his brand new regulation.⁴

But the younger Valens belonged to the Arian branch of Christianity, and he was entirely intolerant of any other form of doctrine. He began a war of extermination against the Nicene Christians in Antioch: exiling their leader, driving out the followers, and drowning some of them in the Orontes. This gave the Persians even more freedom to harass the eastern border, since the inexperienced and preoccupied Valens did little to garrison the fortresses on the east. Valens, Zosimus says, had so little experience with governing men that he could not "sustain the weight of business." The soldier Ammianus puts it even more succinctly: "During this period," he writes, "practically the whole Roman world heard the trumpet-call of war."⁵

And then catastrophe struck.

At dawn on July 21, 365, an earthquake rumbled from deep beneath the Mediterranean Sea, spreading along the seabed and rising up to the Roman shores. On the island of Crete, buildings collapsed flat on their sleeping occupants. Cyrenaica was shaken, its cities crumbling. The shock travelled up to Corinth, shivering its way across to Italy and Sicily on the west, Egypt and Syria to the east.⁶

As Romans all around the coast began to pick their way through the rubble, putting out fires, digging out possessions, and mourning their dead, the water on the southern coast—right at Alexandria, on the Nile delta—was sucked suddenly away from the shore. The people of Alexandria, diverted, went out

to the waterfront to see. “The sea with its rolling waves was driven back and withdrew from the land,” remembers Ammianus Marcellinus, “so that in the abyss of the deep thus revealed men saw many kinds of sea-creatures stuck fast in the slime; and vast mountains and deep valleys. . . . Many ships were stranded as if on dry land, and many men roamed about without fear in the little that remained of the waters, to gather fish and shells with their hands.”

The entertainment lasted a little less than an hour. “And then,” Ammianus writes, “the roaring sea, resenting, as it were, this forced retreat, rose in its turn; and over the boiling shoals it dashed mightily upon islands and broad stretches of the mainland and levelled innumerable buildings in the cities and wherever else they were found. . . . The great mass of waters, returning when it was least expected, killed many thousands of men by drowning.”⁷

When the tsunami receded, ships lay in splinters all along the shore. Bodies had been tossed into streets and across the tops of buildings and floated face down in the shallows. Several years later, Ammianus, travelling to a nearby city, saw a ship that had been thrown two full miles inland; it still lay on the sand, its seams coming open with decay.

In the wake of the destruction, both Valens and Valentinian struggled to hold their domains together. Valens was challenged by the usurper Procopius, a cousin of the dead emperor Julian, who managed to convince the Gothic soldiers in the army to support his claim to the eastern crown. Valens sent a frantic message west to his brother Valentinian, asking for help; but Valentinian was far away on the battlefield, fighting the Alemanni (another Germanic tribal federation) in Gaul, and he did not have soldiers to spare.⁸

With the help of substantial bribing, which turned Procopius’s two chief generals and part of his army against him, Valens managed to defeat Procopius in battle at the city of Thyatira. Once he had the rebel in his hands, he had Procopius torn apart. He also executed Procopius’s two chief generals, piously condemning them for their helpful treachery.⁹

Traditional Roman chroniclers, like Ammianus, found in Procopius’s usurpation an explanation for the horrible wave; they simply moved the wave forward in time, placing it after the revolt and insisting that the rebellion had caused an upheaval in the natural order of things. Christian historians who write of the tsunami were more likely to blame it on Julian the Apostate; God was punishing the empire for Julian’s misdeeds. Libanius, Julian’s old friend, suggested that Earth was mourning Julian’s death; the quake and wave were “the honour paid him by Earth, or if you would have it so, by Poseidon.”¹⁰

Christian or Roman, they all set out to make sense of the devastation. There had to be a reason for it. There was no place in either the Roman or the Christian world for an event that was not a direct response to human action—no place in either world for random evil.

THE NATURAL DISASTER was followed, in short order, by a series of political catastrophes: barbarian attacks that pushed into Roman territory and chipped away at the edges of Roman power.

Valens initiated the first catastrophe by declaring war on the Goths. The Gothic soldiers in the army had supported the usurper Procopius, and he wanted to punish them.

Up until this point, the Romans and Goths had worked out a means of coexisting; the Goths provided soldiers for the Roman army, and in return were allowed to settle in Roman land with some of the privileges of Roman citizens. And they had become increasingly Christian over the past decades. Their native bishop Ulfilas had invented an alphabet and had used it to translate the Bible into their own language, and Ulfilas, like Valens himself, was a zealously Arian Christian. (Nicene Christianity, he preached, was an “odious and execrable, depraved and perverse . . . invention of the Devil.”)¹¹

None of this kept Valens from launching his punitive campaign against the Gothic-settled lands. His war of revenge began in 367 and dragged on for three full years without any particular resolution. It was a bad time to start a war against a people who were inclined to be friendly; in the west, Valentinian was already fighting the Alemanni. Late in 367, as Valens fought against the Goths, the Alemanni surged across the Rhine and attacked Valentinian on his own ground. Valentinian managed to defeat them in a pitched battle, but lost so many men that he was unable to push the invaders back out.

Meanwhile, the Roman holdings in Britain were also under barbarian attack.

In this case, the “barbarians” were the tribes who lived to the north. Back in AD 122, the Roman emperor Hadrian had drawn a line between civilization and wilderness by building a wall across the island. Roman Britain—the province of “Britannia”—was south of the wall. Six towns in Britannia had been given the status of full Roman citizenship.* The largest, Londinium, had twenty-five thousand inhabitants and a complex Roman infrastructure: shipping lines, baths and drainage, military installations.¹²

To the north, as far as the Romans were concerned, lay only wilderness.

The tribes who lived north of Hadrian’s Wall, as well as on the smaller island west of Britannia, had arrived on British shores as invaders, perhaps in 500 BC. Now *they* were the natives (a thousand years of habitation has a funny way of rooting a people into their land), masters of scores of tribal kingdoms. The strongest tribes were the Picts and Caledones (“red-haired and large-limbed,” wrote the Roman historian Tacitus). On the western island,

*The six towns were Eboracum (modern York), Verulamium (St. Albans), Glevum (Gloucester), Lindum (Lincoln), Camulodunum (Colchester), and Londinium (London).

which had never been invaded by Romans, the Venii dominated the south from their capital city of Tara, while the Uluti controlled much of the north.¹³

Britannia had been troubled for more than a century by land invasions from northern Picts, as well as piratical raids launched by tribes on the western island.* In the fourth century, these were joined by sea attacks from another Germanic tribe: the Saxons, who came from the lands north of Gaul and sailed across the ocean to plunder the eastern coast of Britannia.

The Roman official who was in charge of defending Britannia from these attacks was the Dux Britanniarum. He was aided by a special commander called the Comes Litoris (“protector of the shore”), whose job was to keep the Saxons away from the southeastern coast. But in late 367, while Valentinian was frantically beating back the Alemanni and Valens was deadlocked with the Goths, the British defenses in Britannia fell apart, and barbarians poured into the country from all four sides.¹⁴

It was a carefully planned and coordinated attack; Ammianus Marcellinus calls it the *Barbarica Conspiratio*, the “Barbarian Conspiracy.” Roman garrisons stationed at Hadrian’s Wall, who had been fraternizing with the Picts for years, allowed Pictish soldiers to cross over into Roman Britain. At the same time, pirates from the western island landed on the coast, and Saxons invaded both southeast Britannia and northern Gaul. Both the Dux Britanniarum and the Comes Litoris were overwhelmed; in the past decades, Roman forces in Britannia had been slowly depleted by transfers to the army over on the mainland.¹⁵

Although he had his hands full of Alemanni, in 368 Valentinian sent the experienced general Theodosius the Elder over to Britain to try to retake the



6.1: Britain and Ireland

*These pirates were known to the Romans as “Scoti,” from the word in their own language that means “plunderers.” This confuses the issue, as the Scoti were not from the modern land of Scotland, but rather from the island now known as Ireland. So technically the “Scots,” at this point, were Irish.

Roman provinces. Theodosius the Elder went, obediently, taking with him as vice commander his son Flavius Theodosius. He established himself at Londinium, from where he waged a year-long war that finally restored Roman control of Britannia. "He warmed the north with Pictish blood," one Roman poet wrote, admiringly, "and icy Ireland wept for the heaps of dead." New forts were built along the southeastern coast, with towers where guards could keep an eye out for the approach of Saxon ships.¹⁶

But all was not well. The invasions had ravaged cities and burned settlements, wiped out entire garrisons, and destroyed the trade that had once existed between Britannia and the northern tribes. The Pictish villages near the Wall had now been burned, their people slaughtered, and along the border the Roman garrisons had shut themselves into crude and isolated fortresses.¹⁷

Back in the Roman empire proper, the royal brothers were forced to make peace with their barbarian enemies. Valens gave up on conquering the Goths in 369 and swore out a treaty with their leaders; in 374, Valentinian made peace with the Alemanni king, Macrianus. But almost immediately, yet another barbarian war broke out.

The year before, Valentinian had ordered new forts built north of the Danube, in land that belonged to the Germanic tribe known as the Quadi. The Quadi were not much of a threat ("a nation not greatly to be feared," Ammianus calls them), and when the fort-building began, they sent a polite embassy to the local commander, asking that it stop. The complaints were ignored; the embassies were sent again.¹⁸

Finally the Roman commander, apparently unable to think of a better solution, invited the Quadi king to a banquet and murdered him. This atrocious mishandling of the affair so infuriated the Quadi that they joined together with their neighbors and stormed across the Danube. None of the Roman farmers who lived on the frontier were expecting the attack: the invaders "crossed the Danube while no hostility was anticipated, and fell upon the country people, who were busy with their harvest; most of them they killed, the survivors they led home as prisoners."¹⁹

Valentinian, furious with the incompetence of the commander who had started the fight, recalled Theodosius the Elder and his son Flavius from Britannia and sent them to the trouble spot. He arrived shortly after, breathing fire and promising to punish his wayward officials. But when he saw the devastation of his frontier with his own eyes, he was horrified. He decided to ignore the murder of the Quadi king and launch a punitive invasion instead. He himself led the attack; Ammianus says, disapprovingly, that he burned villages and "put to death without distinction of age" all Quadi civilians he could get his hands on.²⁰

In fact, his behavior suggests that he had lost touch with reality in some

frightening way. He cut off a groom's hand after the horse the groom was holding for him reared up as he tried to mount; he had an inoffensive junior secretary tortured to death because of an ill-timed joke. He even ordered Theodosius the Elder, who had served him so well in Britannia, put to death after Theodosius lost a battle, and exiled his son Flavius to Hispania. Finally, the Quadi sent ambassadors to negotiate for a peace. When they tried to explain that they had not been the original aggressors, Valentinian grew so enraged that he had a stroke. "As if struck by a bolt from the sky," Ammianus says, "he was seen to be speechless and suffocating, and his face was tinged with a fiery flush. On a sudden his blood was checked and the sweat of death broke out upon him." He died without naming an heir.²¹

The western empire was temporarily without leadership, and the officers on the frontier hastily suspended all hostilities with the Quadi. Valens sent word that Valentinian's son, the sixteen-year-old Gratian, should inherit the crown and reign as co-emperor with his little brother, four-year-old Valentinian II.

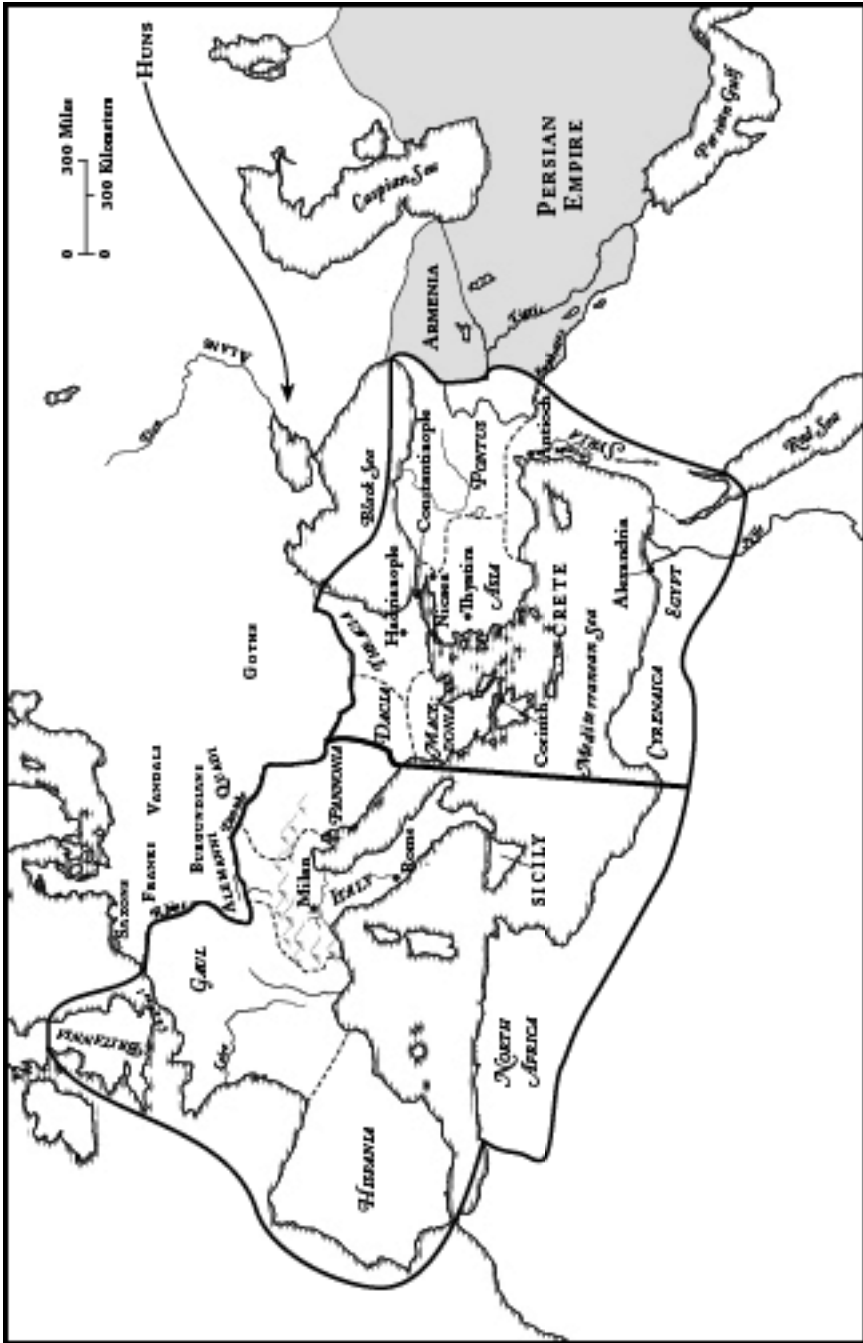
Gratian's first act (one that showed amazingly good judgment) was to recall Flavius Theodosius, son of the dead Theodosius the Elder, from Hispania and to put him in charge of the defense of the northern frontier. Flavius Theodosius had learned to fight in Britannia, and he proved to be a brilliant strategist. By 376, a year after Valentinian's death, he was the highest ranking general in the entire central province.

His skill was needed. The Romans had begun to hear rumors of a new threat: the merciless advance of nomadic enemies from the east, fearless fighters who slaughtered and destroyed, who had no religion, no knowledge of right and wrong, not even a proper language. All the tribes east of the Black Sea were in agitation. The Alans, a people who had lived for centuries east of the Don river, had already been driven from their land. The king of the Goths, himself a "terror to his neighbors," had been defeated. Refugees were crowding to the northern side of the Danube, asking to enter the security of Roman territory.²²

The Huns had arrived at the distant edges of the western world.

To the Romans, who had never seen them, they were as frightening as earthquake and tsunami, an evil force that could barely be resisted. Historians of the time had no idea exactly where these frightening newcomers came from, but they were sure it was somewhere awful. The Roman historian Procopius insists that they were descended from witches who had sexual congress with demons, producing Huns: a "stunted, foul and puny tribe, scarcely human and having no language save one which bore but slight resemblance of human speech."²³

The story isn't original; Procopius borrowed it from the book of Genesis, which says that in the times of wickedness before the Great Flood, "the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them." The church fathers believed that this described the union of fallen angels—demons—



6.2: The Barbarian Approach

who slept with human women and fathered children who brought great evil to the world. Now the Christian interpretation of history had been married to the threatening present: the Huns were not just barbarians, but demons out to destroy the Christians of the Roman empire, the kingdom of God on earth.²⁴

The Huns were still distant, though, and the immediate problem was what to do with the refugees. Valens received an official delegation of Goths asking permission to settle in the Roman land on the other side of the Danube. He had already been forced to make peace with the Goths, and now he decided to permit the immigration. In return, the newcomers could farm the uncultivated land in Thracia and provide additional soldiers for the Roman army (as other Gothic peoples who had settled in the empire had agreed to do).²⁵

With the dam of the Roman border breached, new waves of fleeing Goths poured across the Danube. The Roman officials who were in charge of the new settlers were quickly overwhelmed by the paperwork. Taxes were mishandled; money was misappropriated; the newcomers wiped out food supplies and began to go hungry. Within two years, Valens's decision led, yet again, to war with the barbarians. An army of angry Goths stormed through Thracia, spreading a "most foul confusion of robbery, murder, bloodshed, and fires," killing, burning villages, taking captives, and heading for the walls of Constantinople.²⁶

Valens set out from Antioch to go to the defense of his city; in the west, young Gratian started east to help his uncle. Before he could arrive with his reinforcements, the paths of Valens and the Goths intersected at the city of Hadrianople, west of Constantinople—a city named after Hadrian, the emperor who had built a wall against barbarians.

On August 9, 378, Valens plunged into the battle among his men and was killed. Two-thirds of his army fell with him; the Roman soldiers were thirsty and starving after their forced march. Valens was not wearing the imperial purple, and his body was so badly disfigured that it was never identified. The ground, says Ammianus, was ankle-deep in blood. All during the next night, the people of Hadrianople could hear coming from the dark the wails of the wounded and the death rattles of the dying left on the battlefield.

The Goths laid siege to the city, but they had less experience with sieges than with hand-to-hand combat, and soon withdrew. They tried the same at Constantinople, and again found that they had no hope of breaking down the walls. So they withdrew; but the point had been made. The Roman empire was far from all-conquering. Earthquake and flood could wreck it; a distant band of barbarians could disrupt it; and a ragged band of exiles could bring down the emperor.

T I M E L I N E 6		
INDIA	ROMAN EMPIRE	PERSIAN EMPIRE
		Shapur II (309–379)
	Battle of the Milvian Bridge (312)	
	Constantine (312–337)	
	Battle of Campus Serenus (313)	Edict of Milan (313)
Chandragupta (319–335)	Council of Nicaea (325)	
		Khosrov the Short of Armenia (330–338)
Samudragupta (335–c. 380)	Constantine II (337–340)	Constantius (337–361)
		Constans (337–350)
	First Council of Constantinople (359)	
	Julian (360/361–363)	
	Jovian (363–364)	
	Valentinian (364–375)	Valens (364–378)
	The Gothic War (367–370)	
	Gratian (375–383)	Valentinian II (375–392)
Chandragupta II (380–415)		
Faxian journeys to India		

Chapter Seven

Refounding the Kingdom

*Between 371 and 412,
Goguryeo adopts Buddhist principles and Confucian teachings
and defeats its neighbors*

ALL THE WAY to the east—beyond Constantinople, beyond Persia and India, past the empires of the Jin and the Bei Wei—another king struggled to recover from defeat. In 371, the young king Sosurim inherited the crown of the kingdom of Goguryeo, and with it a shattered and demoralized country. He had no firm foundation on which to rebuild; his army had been devastated, his officers killed in battle, his land laid waste.

His answer arrived in 372 in the hands of a monk.

The kingdom of Goguryeo lay on the peninsula east of the Yellow Sea. The ancestors of its people had probably come from the Yellow river valley long before, but the cultures of China and of the peninsula had been separate for centuries.* The people of the peninsula claimed an ancient and distinguished heritage. According to their own myths, the first kingdom in their land was Choson, created by the god Tan'gun in 2333 BC—the era of the oldest Chinese kingdoms.

Before its collapse, the Chinese dynasty of the Han had captured the land across the north of the peninsula and had settled Chinese officials and their families there. In the south, three independent kingdoms formed: Silla, Goguryeo, and Baekje. Meanwhile, on the very southern tip of the peninsula, a fourth set of tribes—the Gaya confederacy—resisted attempts by its neighbors to fold it into the increasingly strong monarchies.

The kingdom of Goguryeo had always been the most aggressive and the most troublesome to the Han, who had hoped to keep the kingdoms south of their colonies from developing too much power: “By temperament,” the

*Linguistically, the peoples of the peninsula were separate from the Chinese quite early; their language belonged to the “Tungusic” group of languages, which is different from the “Sinitic” group of languages to which “Old Chinese” (or “Archaic Chinese”), the oldest form of written Chinese, belongs.



7.1: Goguryeo at its Height

Romance of the Three Kingdoms remarked, “the people [of Goguryeo] are violent and take delight in brigandage.”¹ By the time the Han empire fell, its control over its lands in old Choson had shrunk to a single administrative district: Lelang, centered around the old city of Wanggomsong—modern Pyongyang.

Lelang outlasted its Han parent, surviving until 313. In that year, the ruler of the kingdom of Goguryeo, the ambitious and energetic king Micheon, pushed his way north and captured Lelang, adding it to his own territory and ousting the remaining Chinese forces. This made Goguryeo, under King Micheon, three times the size of any of its neighbors. It was the most powerful, the most dominant of the Three Kingdoms of Korea.

Which made it the biggest target as well. King Micheon died in 331, leaving his son Gogugwon on the throne. King Gogugwon was apparently not a warrior equal to his father; he followed a thirty-year policy of inaction, during which Goguryeo was sacked twice. In 342, armies from the Sixteen Kingdoms took thousands of prisoners and broke down the walls of its capital city, Guknaesong; in 371, the crown prince of Baekje led an invading army all the way up to Wanggomsong.

Shaken out of his withdrawal, King Gogugwon of Goguryeo came out in person to fight his neighbor. He was killed defending the Wanggomsong fortress. Baekje claimed much of Goguryeo’s territory as its own; and Sosurim, son of the defeated king, grandson of the great Micheon, was left with the shrunken shambles of Goguryeo.

Not long after he came to the throne, a Buddhist monk travelling from the west arrived at his court. This monk, Sun-do, brought with him gifts and Buddhist scriptures, along with the assurance that the practice of Buddhism would help to protect Goguryeo from its enemies. King Sosurim welcomed

Sun-do and listened to him, and in 372 embraced the faith as his own. The following year, he established the T'aehak: the National Confucian Academy, patterned on Chinese principles.²

Buddhism and Confucianism, essentially very different, formed a useful hybrid for Goguryeo. Sun-do taught Sosurim and his court that discontent, unhappiness, ambition, and fear were *samskrita*, conditions of the mind that were nonexistent: the enlightened student recognized that in fact there was no discontent, no unhappiness, no ambition, no fear. The kingdom of Goguryeo was itself *samskrita*, a conception that had no ultimate reality. Should King Sosurim and his officials truly understand this, they would be able to function in the world while recognizing (in the words of the Zen master Shengyan) that “the world and phenomena have no true existence.” Their decisions would not be shaped and tainted by the desire for gain, the desire for security, the desire for happiness.³

Confucianism, on the other hand, accepted the reality of the physical world and taught its adherents how to live properly, with virtue and responsibility, within it. The principles of Buddhism gave Goguryeo a new unity, a spiritual oneness; the principles of Confucianism gave King Sosurim a tested framework for training new army officers, secretaries, accountants, and bureaucrats—everything a state needed to prosper. Buddhism was the philosophy of the monk, Confucianism the doctrine of the training academy.

And since Buddhism was not a creedal religion—one with a written statement of faith to which its believers assented—the two different ways of thinking existed, harmoniously, side by side. Buddhism, unlike Christianity, was never viewed by its practitioners as exclusive, a system that demanded the relinquishment of all opposing beliefs. So although King Sosurim made Buddhism his own, he did not make it an official state religion; this would have given it an exclusive authority, which made no sense within the Buddhist framework.⁴

Goguryeo was no longer teetering on the edge of dissolution; King Sosurim was hauling it back from the brink, refounding it as a state. But it would be some time before the foundation he was building would be solid enough to support a campaign of conquest and expansion.

Meanwhile, Baekje remained the most powerful state on the peninsula, under the rule of Geunchogo, the king who had launched the invasion that killed Sosurim's father. Baekje's borders had swollen to encompass much of the south, and King Geunchogo (like his northern neighbor) needed to put into place practices that would keep the territory united under a single king. Never before had the crown of Baekje passed from father to son; one warrior after another had claimed it through strength. But a battle over the succession would, in all likelihood, result in Baekje losing territory, thanks to its leaders

putting their energy into inside politics rather than outside expansion. King Geunchogo, protecting his conquests, declared that his crown should pass to his son. When he died in 375, his arrangements held firm. The throne passed first to his son and then (after his son's early death) to his grandson Chimnyu.⁵

In 384, the Indian monk Malananda, on a pilgrimage through China, came from the Jin to Baekje. When King Chimnyu heard of his approach, he came out to meet Malananda and took him into the capital city to listen to what he had to say. And, like King Sosurim, he too accepted the teachings of Buddhism.⁶

For both kings, Buddhism held a sheen of antiquity, a flavor of ancient Chinese tradition. Both kings ruled over relatively new kingdoms, and in these kingdoms, all things Chinese were more desirable. Buddhism carried with it the resonance of centuries of inherited authority, a faint echo (by way of the Jin) of the distant and glorious past.

By the time Sosurim's nephew Guanggaeto came to the throne in 391, the foundation laid by his predecessors was strong enough to support conquest; and the spread of Buddhist philosophy did nothing to convince Guanggaeto that he should forego ambition and earthly gain. Barely a year after his coronation, Guanggaeto organized an attack against Baekje, which just decades before had seemed impregnable.

He had managed to make an alliance with the third kingdom on the peninsula, Silla. In 391, Silla was ruled by King Naemul, a man of forethought. He had already sent diplomats to the Jin court across the sea; now he responded to Guanggaeto's overtures with friendship, happy to have an ally against the constantly encroaching Baekje.

The armies of Silla and Goguryeo joined together and stormed through Baekje. The kingdom was unable to resist for long; Baekje was overwhelmed by the combined armies of its neighbors. In 396, the king of Baekje handed over a thousand hostages to guarantee his good behavior, and agreed to pay homage to King Guanggaeto.

The rest of Guanggaeto's rule was spent in conquests so extensive that Guanggaeto earned himself the nickname "The Great Expander." Between 391 and 412, the Expander conquered sixty-five walled cities and fourteen hundred villages for Goguryeo, recovered the northern land that had been taken away decades before, and made Baekje retreat to the south. His deeds are carved on the stone stele that still stands at his tomb, the Guanggaeto Stele, the first historical document of Korean history: "With his majestic military virtue he encompassed the four seas like a spreading willow tree," it tell us. "His people flourished in a wealthy state, and the five grains ripened abundantly." His own words are preserved in the temple he built to commemorate his victories: "Believing in Buddhism," the dedicatory inscription reads, "we seek prosperity."⁷

T I M E L I N E 7				
ROMAN EMPIRE	PERSIAN EMPIRE	GOGURYEO	BAEKJE	SILLA
	Shapur II (309–379)	Micheon (300–331)		
Battle of the Milvian Bridge (312)				
Constantine (312–337)				
Battle of Campus Serenust (313)	Edict of Milan (313)			
Council of Nicaea (325)		Gogugwan (331–371)		
Khosrov the Short of Armenia (330–338)				
Constantine II (337–340)	Constantius (337–361)			
	Constans (337–350)			
			Geunchogo (346–375)	
First Council of Constantinople (359)				Naemul (356–402)
Julian (360/361–363)				
Jovian (363–364)				
Valentinian (364–375)	Valens (364–378)			
The Gothic War (367–370)				
Gratian (375–383)	Valentinian II (375–392)	Sosurim (371–384)		
		The arrival of Buddhism		
			Chimnyu (384–385)	
		Guanggaeto (391–413)		

Chapter Eight

The Catholic Church

*Between 378 and 382,
Gratian rejects the old Roman religion,
while Theodosius tries to legislate brotherhood and unity*

FIVE MONTHS AFTER the death of Valens, the emperor Gratian appointed a new ruler for the east: Flavius Theodosius, who now became Emperor Theodosius I. Gratian's younger brother Valentinian II, technically his co-emperor, was still only seven years old, and he needed a competent colleague.

The greatest threat to the east, Persian invasion, was diminishing. In 379, Shapur the Great of Persia died after a spectacularly long reign of nearly seventy years and was succeeded by his elderly brother Ardashir II, who was more concerned with hanging on to his crown than with invading foreign parts. Instead, both Gratian and Theodosius turned to ensure that the Roman empire would survive. The Goths to the north were growing steadily more powerful, but the more immediate problem was the ongoing tendency of the Roman coalition to pull apart from the inside; Constantine's hope for an empire held together by faith was still unrealized.

Gratian, a devout Christian, soon found himself at odds with the Roman senators who still held to the traditional Roman state religion. Four years after the Battle of Hadrianople, Gratian made it quite clear to the Senate that he would not allow the Roman gods to undermine the empire's Christian faith. In 382, he removed the Altar of Victory from the Senate building in Rome. It had stood there since Augustus's defeat of Antony and Cleopatra four hundred years before, as tribute to the goddess of victory. The senators protested, but Gratian stood firm. He also removed the title *pontifex maximus*, high priest of the Roman state religion, from his list of titles; and when the sacred robes were brought to him, as was traditional, for him to put on, he refused to don them. In doing so he was rejecting not just the Roman gods, but the entire Roman past; as Zosimus points out with asperity, the kings of Rome had accepted the title *pontifex maximus* since the days of Numa Pompilius a thousand years before. Even Constantine had put on the robes. "If the

emperor refuses to become Pontifex,” one of the priests is said to have muttered at the time, “we shall soon make one.”¹ Whether Gratian’s power could survive the hostility of the senators remained to be seen.

To the east, Theodosius was forced to deal with the destructive power of Christian division. Arguments about the Arian take on the divinity of Christ, as opposed to the Nicene understanding, had spread to the lowest levels of society. “Everywhere throughout the city is full of such things,” complained the bishop Gregory of Nyssa, in a sermon preached at Constantinople,

the alleys, the squares, the thoroughfares, the residential quarters; among cloak salesmen, those in charge of the moneychanging tables, those who sell us our food. For if you ask about change, they philosophise to you about the Begotten and the Unbegotten. And if you ask about the price of bread, the reply is, “The Father is greater, and the Son is subject to him.” If you say, “Is the bath ready?,” they declare the Son has his being from the non-existent. I am not sure what this evil should be called—inflammation of the brain or madness or some sort of epidemic disease which contrives the derangement of reasoning.²

To restore the empire to the vision of Christian unity that Constantine had seen so clearly, Theodosius turned to law. He used the legal structures of the ancient Roman state to support the Christian religion (never mind that it was diametrically opposed to the ancient Roman traditions); he used the power of the emperor to shape the Christian faith so that the Christian faith could shape the empire. The interweaving of the two traditions continued to change both of them in ways that would prove impossible to undo.

Two years after taking the throne, in the year 380, Theodosius declared that Nicene Christianity was the one true faith, and threatened dissenters with legal penalties. In doing so, he called into being a single, unified, *catholic* (the word means universal, applying to all humankind) Christian church. “He enacted,” writes the Christian historian Sozomen, “that the title of ‘Catholic Church’ should be exclusively confined to those who rendered equal homage to the Three Persons of the Trinity, and that those individuals who entertained opposite opinions should be treated as heretics, regarded with contempt, and delivered over to punishment.”³

Long before Theodosius, Christian bishops had distinguished the *ecclesia catholica* from the *haeretici*, the heretics, those who were by belief outside of the stream of true Christian doctrine. But never before had “heretic” been defined by law. Now, “heretic” had a legal definition: someone who did not hold to the Nicene Creed. “All of the people shall believe in God within the concept of the Holy Trinity,” the law declared, “and take the name catholic

Christians. Meeting places of those who do not believe shall not be given the status of churches, and such people may be subject to both divine and earthly retribution.”⁴

Theodosius actually believed that he could legislate his subjects into believing only in a Nicene-defined deity. He was a clever politician, but his theological reasoning was often naive. Sozomen, for example, writes that when Theodosius convened a church council the following year (381), as a follow-up to the issuing of the law, he brought together the “presidents of the sects which were flourishing” so that they could discuss their differences: “for he imagined that all would be brought to oneness of opinion, if a free discussion were entered into, concerning ambiguous points of doctrine.”⁵

This was wildly optimistic, and as anyone who has ever been involved in church work could predict, it didn’t work. But Theodosius soldiered on. Now that his law had been passed, he could start enforcing uniformity on a practical level. He took all of the meeting places and churches of the non-Nicene Christians and handed them over to the Nicene bishops, a material gain for those fortunate priests. He threatened to expel heretics who insisted on preaching from the city of Constantinople and to confiscate their land. He didn’t always carry through on these threats; Sozomen remarks, approvingly, that although he had enacted severe punishments for heresy into law, the punishments were often not applied: “He had no desire to persecute his subjects;

he only desired to enforce uniformity of view about God through the medium of intimidation.”⁶

Theodosius was finding that it was easier to announce unity than to actually create it. In many ways, the Goths were easier to deal with than heretics; all he had to do was kill them.

While he was convening councils and making doctrine, Theodosius was also directing a fight against Gothic invasion. The Goths had become such a problem that Gratian, in the west, had agreed to transfer the most Goth-infested part of his western empire—three dioceses in the central province of Pannonia—over to the eastern empire so that Theodosius would be responsible for driving the Goths out.



8.1: *The Transfer of Pannonia*

Unfortunately the army was not quite strong enough to take on this extra task, so Theodosius managed to beef it up with an innovative strategy: he recruited barbarians from some regions to fight against barbarians in other regions. He would hire Goth mercenaries from Pannonia, transfer them over to Egypt, and then bring Roman soldiers from Egypt over to Pannonia to fight other Goths. The definition of “Roman soldier,” like the definition of “Roman,” was becoming increasingly nebulous, even while Theodosius managed to make the definition of “Christian” more restrictive.⁷

The thinness of the line between Roman and barbarian became more obvious in 382, when, after four years of fighting against the Goths, Theodosius decided that too much energy was going to the war, and made a peace treaty with them instead. The treaty allowed them to exist, within the borders of the Roman empire, under their own king. The Gothic king would be subject to him as emperor, but the Goths themselves would not have to answer to any Roman official; and when they fought for Rome, they would do so as allies, rather than as Roman soldiers in regular Roman army units subject to regular Roman officers.⁸

By 382, Theodosius could claim that he had reduced the chaos in the eastern part of the empire to order. The Christian church was unified, the Goths were at peace, all was right with the world.

But all of Theodosius’s solutions had the appearance, not the reality, of victory. In fact, the Goths were not subdued. Arianism (not to mention a score of other heresies) was not dead. The Christians of the empire were not united. And even the leadership of Theodosius’s newly created Catholic church was in debate. As part of his church council in 381, Theodosius had announced that the bishop of Constantinople was equal to the bishop of Rome in authority, “because Constantinople is the New Rome.”⁹ This law might be on the books, but in 382—even as Theodosius celebrated his victories—the bishops of the older cities, the traditional centers of Christianity, were objecting to the exaltation of the relatively young bishopric in Constantinople.

So did the bishop of Rome, who called his own council in Rome in 382 and announced that the bishop of Rome was the leader of all other bishops, including the upstart at Constantinople. The churchmen in Rome agreed, and the bishop of Rome ordered his secretary, a young man named Jerome, to record the decision. The Roman council also agreed that Jerome, who was good with languages, should start working on a new Latin translation of the Scriptures.

This was a direct response to the attempt to make the Greek-speaking east equal to the west; the council at Rome had now declared that Latin, the language of the west, was the proper language for Scripture (and the proper language for public worship as well). Theodosius had declared all Christians to be one, but the eastern and western halves of his catholic church were beginning to pull apart.

T I M E L I N E 8					
GOGURYEO	BAEKJE	SILLA	ROMAN EMPIRE	PERSIAN EMPIRE	
Micheon (300–331)					Shapur II (309–379)
			Battle of the Milvian Bridge (312)		
			Constantine (312–337)		
			Battle of Campus Serenus (313)		Edict of Milan (313)
			Council of Nicaea (325)		
Gogugwon (331–371)					Khosrov the Short of Armenia (330–338)
			Constantine II (337–340)	Constantius (337–361)	Constans (337–350)
Geunchogo (346–375)					
		Naemul (356–402)	First Council of Constantinople (359)		
			Julian (360/361–363)		
			Jovian (363–364)		
			Valentinian (364–375)	Valens (364–378)	
Sosurim (371–384)			The Gothic War (367–370)		
The arrival of Buddhism					
		Chimnyu (384–385)	Gratian (375–383)	Valentinian II (375–392)	
			Theodosius (378–395)		Ardashir II (379–383)
Guanggaeto (391–413)					

P a r t T w o



FRACTURES

Chapter Nine

Excommunicated

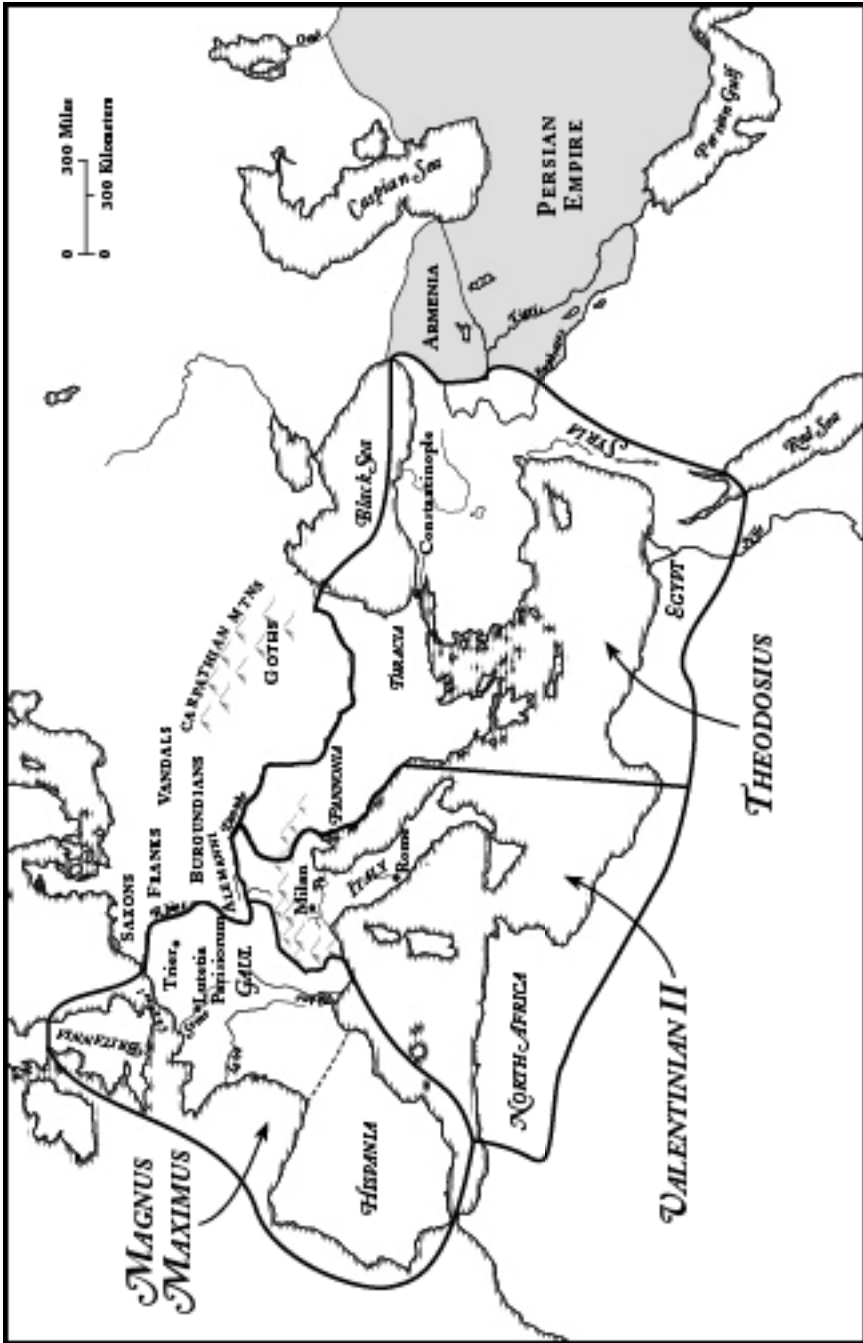
*Between 383 and 392,
a Spaniard becomes king of the Britons,
and Theodosius discovers
that he has underestimated the power of the church*

IN 383, THE ROMAN ARMY in Britain rebelled and proclaimed a new emperor: Magnus Maximus, their general.

At first Magnus Maximus possessed only the loyalty of the troops in Britannia; he was, in effect, the king of the Britons—despite being a Roman citizen and a Spaniard by birth. But it seems likely that he had exercised a king-like power in isolated Britannia for some years. His name pops up in Welsh legends, where he is known as Maccsen Wledig, a half-legendary figure who stars in the epic *Breuddwyd Maccsen*. In the tale, Maccsen Wledig is in Rome, ruling as emperor, when he dreams of a beautiful maiden who must become his wife; he searches for her and eventually crosses the water to Britain, where he finds her and marries her. He then spends seven years building castles and roads in Britain—so long that a usurper back in Rome takes his throne from him.

The faint whisper of historical truth in this myth is that Magnus Maximus did in fact claim the title “Emperor of Rome” while still in Britain, and undoubtedly had spent a good portion of his time as a Roman commander building roads and developing the Roman infrastructure on the island. Possibly Magnus Maximus also allowed tribes from the western island (modern Ireland) to settle on the western coast of Britain, a combination of cultures that produced the country of Wales; this would explain his appearance in Welsh tales of the country’s origin, where he shows up so often that John Davies calls him a “ubiquitous lurker.”¹

At this point Britain had not yet been Christianized. The Roman army in Britannia was thoroughly committed to the old Roman state religion, discontented that both senior Roman emperors, Gratian and Theodosius, were Christian. Maximus, on the other hand, was unabashedly Roman in his beliefs; when the army acclaimed him, he announced his loyalty to Jupiter



9.1: The Empire in Thirds

and then gathered up his forces and headed for Gaul, hoping to possess the throne of the west in fact and not simply in name.

An echo of this campaign appears in Geoffrey of Monmouth's thoroughly unreliable *History of the Kings of Britain*, in which King Arthur sails with his army to Gaul and fights against the Roman tribune who governs it. In that version of the tale, Arthur triumphs (after laying waste to the countryside) and sets up a royal court at the old Roman fortress town Lutetia Parisiorum, on the Seine. In the real world, Magnus Maximus marched into Gaul and arrived at Lutetia Parisiorum, where Gratian met him in battle. Part of Gratian's army—the part that wanted an emperor who worshipped Jupiter rather than the Christian God—defected to Maximus's side, and the remainder were defeated. Gratian fled and died not long afterwards, either captured and killed by Maximus's soldiers or assassinated by one of his own officers.²

This left Maximus in control of Gaul, and he declared himself emperor of Gaul and Hispania as well as Britannia. The empire was divided into three: Magnus Maximus in the far west, Theodosius in the east, and Gratian's younger brother and former co-emperor, Valentinian II, still hanging on to power in Italy and North Africa.

Now that he was in control of part of the western mainland, Maximus sent Theodosius an official message, emperor to emperor, suggesting that they be allies and friends. The invasion had happened too quickly for Theodosius to block it, and now that it was a fait accompli, he decided that it would be prudent to accept Maximus's offer. He and Maximus were old acquaintances, as it happened; they had fought together in Britannia as young men. He agreed to recognize Maximus as a legitimate emperor, and for four years, the three emperors ruled side by side, with Theodosius as the senior Augustus. "Nevertheless," writes Zosimus, "he was at the same time privately preparing for war, and endeavouring to deceive Maximus by every species of flattery."³

Preparing for war involved negotiating with the Persians; Theodosius didn't want to head west and immediately find his eastern border under attack. Ardashir II, the elderly brother of the great Shapur, had been deposed by the Persian noblemen at court after four years of inefficiency; now Shapur's son Shapur III sat on the throne. The issue most likely to cause another war between the two empires was control of Armenia, so Theodosius sent an ambassador to Shapur III's court to negotiate a settlement.⁴

The ambassador was a Roman soldier named Stilicho, who had been born in the northern parts of the empire. His mother was Roman, but his father was a Vandal—a "barbarian," a native of the Germanic peoples who lived just north of the Carpathian Mountains. Unlike the Goths, the Vandals were not a present trouble to the Roman empire. Nevertheless, in the eyes of many Romans, Stilicho carried with him the taint of the barbarian. The historian Orosius,

who disliked him, used his parentage to condemn him; he was “sprung from the Vandals, an unwarlike, greedy, treacherous, and crafty race.”⁵

But Theodosius trusted him, and in return Stilicho—at that time still in his twenties—performed an impressive negotiating feat. In 384, Shapur III agreed to divide the control of Armenia between the two empires. The western half of Armenia would be ruled by a Roman-supported king, the eastern half by a king loyal to Persia. Theodosius was grateful; when Stilicho returned, Theodosius promoted him to general and married him to the fourteen-year-old princess Serena, Theodosius’s own niece and adopted daughter.

The treaty with the Persians allowed Theodosius to continue his preparations for war with the western usurper. Meanwhile, Magnus Maximus was making plans to move east, against the court of Valentinian II. Maximus wanted to be true emperor of the west, and as long as Valentinian II was still in Italy, his legitimacy was shadowed.

Valentinian II was only fifteen, and the real power in Italy was held by his generals and his mother, Justina. In 386, Justina gave Maximus the excuse he needed to invade Italy. She was herself an Arian Christian, which put her at odds with the orthodox bishop of Milan, Ambrose. They had quarrelled off and on for years, but in 386, Justina (by way of her son) issued an imperial order commanding Ambrose to hand over one of the churches of Milan to the Arians so that they could have their own meeting place. Ambrose indignantly refused, upon which Justina upped her demands and asked for another, more central and more important church instead: the New Basilica.

She sent officials to the Basilica on the Friday before Palm Sunday (the beginning of Holy Week, the most important week in the church calendar), while Ambrose was teaching a small group of converts in order to prepare them for baptism. The officials started to change the hangings in the church; Ambrose carried on, apparently ignoring them.

This invasion of the church by imperial officials infuriated the Nicene Christians in Milan, and they gathered at the church to protest. The demonstrations spread. Holy Week was taken up with riots in the streets, armed arrests of citizens (“The prisons were filled with tradesmen,” Ambrose wrote to his sister later), and a larger and larger turnout of imperial soldiers. Ambrose couldn’t get out of the Basilica because it was surrounded by soldiers, so he staged an involuntary sit-in with his congregants. He passed the time by preaching that the church could never be controlled by the emperor; the church was in the image of God, it was the body of Christ, and since Christ was fully God (a slap at the Arians), the church was itself one with the Father.⁶

Finally, Valentinian II intervened and ordered the soldiers out. But he was unhappy with Ambrose’s power, even more than with the defeat of the Arian takeover: “You would deliver me up in chains, if Ambrose bade you,”

he snapped at his court officials, and Ambrose was deeply afraid that the next thing coming down the pike would be an accusation of treason.

When Maximus got wind of the unrest, he announced his plans to attack. “The pretext,” writes the church historian Sozomen, “was that he desired to prevent the introduction of innovations in the ancient form of religion and ecclesiastical order. . . . He was watching and intriguing for the imperial rule in such a way that it might appear as if he had acquired the Roman government by law, and not by force.”⁷

Considering that Maximus had originally campaigned in the name of Jupiter, his new pose as defender of the Nicene faith undoubtedly rang a little hollow. But this shows the extent to which Christianity, in the late Roman empire, had already become the language not just of power but of legitimacy. Maximus didn’t merely want to be emperor. He wanted to be a *real* emperor, a lawful emperor, and in order to have any chance to assert this, he had to align himself with the Christian church. Even while Ambrose preached that the church was separate from the power of the emperor, the emperors wielded the church as a weapon against each other.

As Maximus marched across the Alps towards Milan, Theodosius marched west with his own army—and Valentinian II and Justina fled from Italy into Pannonia, taking with them Valentinian’s sister Galla and leaving Milan open to Maximus and his armies. When Theodosius arrived in Pannonia, Justina offered to give Theodosius her daughter Galla if he would drive Maximus out. Theodosius accepted; Galla was reputedly very beautiful, but in addition the marriage related him, the rough ex-soldier from Hispania, to the Valentinian dynasty.

He then marched the rest of the way to Milan, sending ahead of him plenty of information about the size and lethal skill of his army. Possibly Maximus had not expected Theodosius to actually leave the eastern border and come all the way west. In any case, by the time Theodosius reached Milan, Maximus’s men were so thoroughly intimidated that his own soldiers took Maximus captive and handed him over. The war was resolved without a single battle. Theodosius executed Maximus, bringing an end to the reign of the first king of the Britons. He also sent an assassin, his trusted general Arbogast, to find Maximus’s son and heir. Arbogast found the young man in Trier and strangled him.⁸

The whole invasion had worked out pretty well for Theodosius. He now had a whole new level of power over the west; he was Valentinian’s brother-in-law and deliverer, and he staged a triumphal procession to Rome in which he took center stage. He then departed, taking his beautiful young wife with him and leaving his general Arbogast (now back from strangling Maximus’s son) to be Valentinian’s new right-hand man.

Like Stilicho, Arbogast was of “barbarian” descent. His father was a Frank, and so although he could pursue a shining career in the army, he had no hope of ascending to the imperial throne. Theodosius’s most trusted aides tended to be half (or more) barbarian; they could not challenge their master for the crown. Arbogast was an experienced soldier by this time, and Valentinian II, accustomed to being dominated, was helpless against him. Arbogast took over the administration of the empire, reporting directly to Theodosius in the east, while Valentinian II sat in his imperial throne as little more than a figurehead.

In essence, Theodosius now had control over the entire empire, and he turned his attention again to the project of unification. On his return to Constantinople, he began to issue the Theodosian Decrees—a set of laws designed to bring the whole Roman realm into line with orthodox Christian practice. The first decree, issued in 389, was a strike at the very root of the relationship between the old Roman religion and the Roman state: Theodosius declared that the old Roman feast days, which had always been state holidays, would now be workdays instead. Official holidays then, as now, were ways of laying out the mythical foundations of a nation, of pointing citizens towards the high points of the past that helped to define the present. Theodosius was not just Christianizing the empire; he was beginning to rewrite its history.

In this he was slightly out of step with the mood of the west. Back in Rome, the senators had already applied three times to the imperial court in Milan, asking that the traditional Altar of Victory (removed by Gratian) be reinstalled in the Senate. The appeals had been led by Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, the prefect (chief administrative officer) of the city of Rome. He begged Valentinian to preserve the customs of the past: “We ask the restoration of that state of religion under which the Republic has so long prospered,” he wrote. “Permit us, I beseech you, to transmit in our old age to our posterity what we ourselves received when boys. Great is the love of custom.”

But even more central to the argument of Symmachus was his understanding of faith; he could not see why it was necessary, for the triumph of Christianity, to do away with all reminders of the old Roman religion. His appeal continues:

Where shall we swear to observe your laws and statutes? by what sanction shall the deceitful mind be deterred from bearing false witness? All places indeed are full of God, nor is there any spot where the perjured can be safe, but it is of great efficacy in restraining crime to feel that we are in the presence of sacred things. That altar binds together the concord of all, that altar appeals to the faith of each man, nor does any thing give more weight to our decrees than that all our decisions are sanctioned, so to speak, by an

oath. . . . We look on the same stars, the heaven is common to us all, the same world surrounds us. What matters it by what arts each of us seeks for truth?⁹

This was indeed the question, and Theodosius would have answered that as long as the citizens of the empire searched for truth by many means, they would have no single loyalty to hold them together. Already the division of the empire into two or three parts had sounded the death-knell for any chance that the empire would be held together by any identity as Roman citizens; already the Western Roman Empire and the Eastern Roman Empire had begun to assume different characters.

Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, opposed the applications; his answer to Symmachus laid out the exclusive theology that made Christianity so useful to the emperors.

What you are ignorant of, that we have learnt by the voice of God; what you seek after by faint surmises, that we are assured of by the very Wisdom and Truth of God. Our customs therefore and yours do not agree. You ask the Emperors to grant peace to your gods, we pray for peace for the Emperors themselves from Christ. You worship the works of your own hands, we think it sacrilege that any thing which can be made should be called God. . . . A Christian Emperor has learned to honour the altar of Christ alone. . . . Let the voice of our Emperor speak of Christ alone, let him declare Him only Whom in heart he believes, for the king's heart is in the Hand of God.¹⁰

Ambrose was a hard and uncompromising man, but he understood what was at stake. *The altar of Christ alone*: it was the only hope for unification that Theodosius had left, and it was a powerful hope.

Yet this power for unity was not without its complications for Theodosius. In 390, the year after the first of the Theodosian Decrees was issued, he ran afoul of the church he was trying to make use of, and Ambrose excommunicated him—the first time that a monarch was ever punished by the Christian church for a political action.

The action was a fairly straightforward, if cruel, act of retaliation. Over in Pannonia, a Roman governor had run into troubles at a tavern; drinking late one night, he had “shamefully exposed” himself, and a charioteer sitting next to him at the bar had “attempted an outrage.”¹¹ The routine drunken pass turned into an incident when the governor, embarrassed, arrested the charioteer and threw him in jail. Unfortunately, he was one of the most popular contestants in a chariot race to be run the next day, and when the governor

refused to release him in time for him to compete, his fans rioted, stormed the governor's headquarters, and murdered him.

Theodosius cracked down immediately and put to death everyone who had a hand in the riot—a purge that swept up a number of people who had simply been standing around watching. Ambrose was appalled by this injustice. When Theodosius next arrived in Milan to check on the affairs in the western part of his domain, Ambrose refused to allow him to enter the church either for prayer or for the celebration of the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, the rite that separated believers from unbelievers.

The Christian historians who record this merely say that Theodosius then confessed his sin, did penance, and was restored. But what passes almost as a footnote is the fact that it took Theodosius eight months to do so. Standing on the steps and looking at Ambrose's unyielding face, Theodosius must have realized that his decrees were having an unintended consequence. The single, catholic church held his empire together because it was greater than the state, greater than any national loyalty, greater than any single man.

It was greater than the emperor.

Theodosius's eight months of reflection were eight months in which, in all likelihood, the future of Christianity hung in the balance. Had Theodosius been able to think of any better strategy, he could simply have refused Ambrose's demands. But in doing so he would have had either to turn his back on the Eucharist—which would have condemned his soul—or to deny Ambrose's authority—which would have revealed that the Christian church was, in fact, not bigger than the emperor. "Educated as he had been in the sacred oracles," concludes the Christian historian Theodoret, "Theodosius knew clearly what belonged to priests and what to emperors."¹²

What belonged to emperors was not sufficient to hold the empire together. Theodosius finally went back to Milan, subjected himself to Ambrose's religious authority, accepted the several months of penance that Ambrose prescribed, and was readmitted to the fellowship of the church. He then ordered all Roman temples closed and abandoned so that Christians could knock them down and build Christian churches instead. He commanded that the fire once guarded by the Vestal Virgins in the Roman Forum be officially dowsed. He announced that the Olympic Games would be held one final time before their permanent cancellation.

Finally he announced that any act of worship made in honor of the old Roman gods would be an act of treachery against the emperor himself. The church might be greater than the emperor, but the emperor could still corral its loyalty and direct it to his own ends.¹³

T I M E L I N E 9				
GOGURYEO	BAEKJE	SILLA	ROMAN EMPIRE	PERSIAN EMPIRE
	Geunchogo (346–375)		Constantine II (337–340)	Constantius (337–361)
		Naemul (356–402)		Constans (337–350)
			First Council of Constantinople (359)	
			Julian (360/361–363)	
			Jovian (363–364)	
Sosurim (371–384)			Valentinian (364–375)	
The arrival of Buddhism			Valens (364–378)	
			The Gothic War (367–370)	
			Gratian (375–383)	
			Valentinian II (375–392)	
			Theodosius (378–395)	
	Chimnyu (384–385)			Ardwashir II (379–383)
			Magnus Maximus (383–388)	Shapur III (383–388)
Guanggaeto (391–413)			Theodosian Decrees	